

rich in wit and satire, is set in a world where personal relationships are governed by self-interest, manipulation, and materialism. At the centre of the narrative is a society obsessed with social standing, wealth, and appearance—where love and marriage are less about affection and more about financial security and social advancement. This reflects a broader societal preoccupation in 18th-century England, where the upper class maintained power and prestige through carefully orchestrated alliances and inheritance arrangements. Congreve's characters—clever, manipulative, and morally ambiguous—are deeply engaged in a world of deceit, double-dealing, and schemes, using their wit and charm to navigate the treacherous waters of aristocratic society. The central figures, Mirabell and Millamant, represent a delicate balance between genuine affection and the practical concerns of marriage. Their negotiations over the terms of their relationship—humorously portrayed as a “contract”—reveal the play's deeper critique of the institution of marriage as a social and financial transaction rather than a personal or emotional commitment.

The play's setting in Restoration England is crucial to understanding its social commentary. The late 17th and early 18th centuries were a period of significant change, marked by the emergence of new economic forces, the rise of the middle class, and the spread of Enlightenment ideas that emphasized reason, individualism, and merit. These intellectual and economic shifts began to challenge the traditional aristocratic order, which had long been based on lineage, land ownership, and the maintenance of power through social stratification. Congreve's work captures this tension between the old and the new, between the aristocracy's desire to cling to traditional hierarchies and the emerging values of a society increasingly influenced by commerce, personal agency, and meritocratic ideals.

The wit and cynicism in *The Way of the World* not only entertain but also expose the moral vacuity of a society where appearances are paramount, and true virtue is rare. Beneath the play's comic surface lies a sharp critique of the emptiness of social conventions and the superficial nature of aristocratic life. Marriage contracts, dowries, and inheritances are at the heart of the characters' motives, revealing how the upper class maintained their wealth and status through calculated alliances rather than emotional bonds. Congreve also reflects the broader intellectual currents of the Enlightenment, using satire to question established norms and institutions. His characters, especially the witty and independent Millamant, embody the emerging values of personal liberty, wit, and reason, pushing back against the rigid social expectations placed upon women in particular. In this sense, *The Way of the World* is more than just a comedy of manners—it is a subtle reflection on the changing intellectual and social landscape of its time.

Thus, *The Way of the World* not only encapsulates the foibles and follies of its contemporary society but also serves as a critique of the contradictions that underpin 18th-century English life. By satirizing the aristocratic pursuit of wealth, status, and power, Congreve offers a window into a society grappling with both the weight of its traditions and the pressures of modernity. His play remains a vital and insightful reflection on the nature of human relationships, social ambition, and the moral complexities of a world in transition.

### **Aims and Objectives:**

- To explore how *The Way of the World* reflects the social values and norms of early 18th-century English society.
- To analyze the portrayal of marriage and gender roles as central themes in the play.
- To investigate the play's critique of class relationships and the superficiality of the aristocracy.
- To examine how satire is employed as a tool for social commentary in the play.

### **Methodology:**

The methodology for analyzing *The Way of the World* as a reflection of 18th-century English society involves the interpretation of the text as a primary source and the study of research articles on the play as the secondary source. A literary analysis will be conducted through close reading of the text focusing on themes such as marriage, social status, and gender dynamics while exploring how satire and irony are used to critique the aristocracy. Key characters like Mirabell and Millamant will be analyzed as representations of specific social classes and behaviours. Second, historical contextualization will situate the play within the norms of post-Restoration England, exploring how it mirrors the values and social structures of the time, particularly in terms of marriage as a transactional institution.

### **Analysis:**

William Congreve's *The Way of the World* is a sophisticated comedy of manners that reveals the social dynamics, power struggles, and moral ambiguities of 18th-century English aristocracy. Its intricate plotting, vibrant characters, and biting wit make it not just a reflection of the society it portrays but also a critique of the values and hypocrisies of that time. This deeper analysis will focus on the themes of manipulation, social contract theory, the performance of identity, and the critique of morality, highlighting Congreve's use of language and character dynamics to reveal underlying truths about 18th-century society.

### **Manipulation as a Social Strategy:**

At the heart of *The Way of the World* is a society built on manipulation, where characters often deceive one another to achieve their desires, whether for love, money, or power. This manipulation reflects the shifting alliances and deceitful nature of aristocratic society, where the line between genuine affection and self-interest is often blurred. Throughout the play, Congreve showcases how characters deploy manipulation as a social strategy to maintain control over their relationships and social status.

Mirabell's elaborate scheme to marry Millamant and secure her fortune is a prime example of this theme. While he is genuinely in love with Millamant, his method of winning her hand involves deceiving her guardian, Lady Wishfort. His plan requires the assistance of Waitwell, who poses as Sir Rowland, a wealthy suitor for Lady Wishfort. This deception is essential for Mirabell to secure Millamant's inheritance, revealing how even love is mediated through manipulation and calculated moves in this society. Mirabell's manipulation is not done out of cruelty but necessity. In Act 2, Scene 1, he justifies his actions to Fainall, saying: "My love is all the reason I shall give, and that's all the defence I shall make" (Congreve). This line reveals the tension between genuine emotion and social strategy. While he loves Millamant, he must operate within the constraints of a society that values wealth and power above love, thereby forcing him into manipulative behaviour. The line also hints at how characters often rationalize manipulation as being in service of love or other noble goals.

Fainall, however, represents a darker form of manipulation. His motivations are purely selfish, driven by greed and resentment. He uses his wife, Mrs Fainall, and his lover, Mrs Marwood, to further his schemes of financial gain. In Act 5, Scene 2, he declares, "My revenge is complete," (Congreve). When he believes he has successfully trapped Lady Wishfort into signing over her estate to him. Unlike Mirabell, who manipulates out of love, Fainall's actions are cold and calculating, reflecting the darker side of a society obsessed with power and control.

### **Social Contract and Negotiation in Relationships:**

One of the play's most significant reflections on 18th-century society is its portrayal of relationships as contracts. The famous "proviso scene" in Act 4, Scene 4, where Mirabell and Millamant negotiate the terms of their marriage, which serves as a direct metaphor for the social contract theory popularized by philosophers such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In this scene, marriage is depicted not as an emotional bond, but as a formal arrangement between two individuals who agree on certain rights and responsibilities. Millament's insistence on retaining her autonomy within marriage is a radical stance for the

time, reflecting the shifting views on gender roles and personal freedom. She declares, “I’ll lie a-bed in a morning as long as I please, and “I won’t be called names after I’m married” (Congreve). These demands illustrate her desire to maintain her independence and resist the traditional, subservient role expected of wives. Millamant’s wit and charm enable her to make these demands without appearing rebellious, reflecting the nuanced ways women in 18th-century society navigated their limited roles. The negotiation between Mirabell and Millamant reflects the broader theme of power dynamics within marriage. Mirabell’s willingness to agree to Millamant’s terms demonstrates his respect for her autonomy, suggesting that their relationship is built on mutual respect rather than domination.

Congreve’s portrayal of relationships as contracts also critiques the commodification of marriage during this period. Marriages were often arranged for financial or social gain, rather than love, with women treated as property to be traded between men. Millamant, however, resists this commodification by asserting her independence in the proviso scene. Her insistence on negotiating the terms of her marriage reflects a desire to break free from the traditional role of women as passive participants in the marriage market.

#### **Identity as Performance:**

Throughout *The Way of the World*, identity is portrayed as fluid and performative, with characters constantly adopting different roles and disguises to manipulate others or navigate social expectations. This theme reflects the performative nature of aristocratic society, where individuals must present themselves in specific ways to maintain their social standing. Congreve’s characters are always conscious of how they are perceived by others, and they often manipulate their public personas to achieve their goals. Lady Wishfort is one of the most prominent examples of this performative identity. She is obsessed with her appearance and social status, going to great lengths to present herself as a desirable and sophisticated woman despite her advanced age. Her desperate attempts to appear youthful and attractive to Sir Rowland (the disguised Waitwell) reveal the extent to which her identity is shaped by societal expectations. In Act 3, Scene 1, she exclaims, “I am as fond as an old fool,” (Congreve) acknowledging her vulnerability yet continuing to perform the role of a coquettish lady in pursuit of romance.

This performance of identity extends to the men in the play as well. Mirabell, for example, carefully constructs his public persona as a charming, witty gentleman, but beneath this façade, he is a shrewd manipulator, orchestrating complex schemes to achieve his goals. His ability to balance these two identities—genuine lover and master manipulator—reflects the duality of the aristocratic male in 18th-century society, who must navigate both romantic

and financial worlds. Similarly, Fainall presents himself as a loyal husband and friend, while secretly plotting to betray both his wife and Lady Wishfort for financial gain. His public identity is a performance designed to mask his true intentions, reflecting the theme of duplicity that runs throughout the play. In Act 5, Scene 2, when his scheme is revealed, he coldly states, “My business is my revenge,” dropping the mask of civility to reveal his true, ruthless nature.

### **Critique of Morality and Hypocrisy:**

One of the most significant critiques in *The Way of the World* is aimed at the hypocrisy of the upper class, particularly in their moral posturing and public displays of virtue. Congreve exposes the moral contradictions of a society where outward appearances often mask private vices. The characters in the play frequently engage in deceit, betrayal, and manipulation while maintaining a veneer of respectability and propriety.

Lady Wishfort, for instance, prides herself on her moral rectitude and social standing, yet she is easily duped by the false attentions of Sir Rowland, revealing her susceptibility to vanity and flattery. Her public insistence on maintaining her reputation is undermined by her private willingness to engage in an inappropriate relationship with a man she barely knows. In Act 5, Scene 2, she exclaims, “I’ll never be called to account for my actions,” (Congreve) showing her hypocrisy in upholding her public image while privately indulging in morally questionable behavior. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood also embody this moral hypocrisy. Both characters maintain a façade of respectability while secretly engaging in an extramarital affair and plotting against others. Mrs. Marwood, in particular, presents herself as a morally upstanding woman, yet she is driven by jealousy and revenge. In Act 3, Scene 1, she says, “I know the world too well to think better of it,” (Congreve) cynically acknowledging the moral corruption around her while fully participating in it.

The play’s critique of morality extends to the institution of marriage itself. While marriage is traditionally seen as a moral and social good, *The Way of the World* exposes it as a transactional arrangement often devoid of love or sincerity. The unhappy marriages of the Fainalls and the manipulative schemes surrounding Lady Wishfort’s estate reveal the moral decay underlying the institution of marriage in this society. In contrast, Mirabell and Millamant’s relationship, which is based on mutual respect and negotiation, offers a glimmer of hope for a more sincere and equitable form of marriage.

### **Adultery and marriage:**

In *The Way of the World*, William Congreve critiques the institution of marriage and exposes the moral hypocrisy surrounding adultery in 18th-century society. Marriage is

depicted as a contractual agreement, more focused on securing wealth and social standing than on love and affection. This is clearly illustrated in the “proviso scene” between Mirabell and Millamant, where they negotiate the terms of their marriage. Millamant declares, “I’ll never marry unless I am first made sure of my will and pleasure.” She insists on maintaining some level of personal freedom, showing that even in romantic relationships, financial and social concerns are paramount. Mirabell’s response, “Let us be as strange as if we had been married a great while, and as well-bred as if we were not married at all,” (Congreve) reflects the disillusionment with traditional marriage, emphasizing the need for respect and distance within their union. Their discussion highlights the tension between love and economic necessity in 18th-century marriages. The marriage contract is less about emotional intimacy and more about power dynamics, independence, and legal rights.

Adultery, another major theme, is woven into the plot through characters like Mrs. Fainall, who had an affair with Mirabell before her marriage to Fainall. Her marriage is a façade, lacking genuine affection, and she admits, “I contracted myself to them for another’s interest” (Congreve). This reveals how women in this society often entered marriages not for love but for social survival or economic gain. The revelation of her past adultery becomes a tool of manipulation when Fainall attempts to use it against her, exposing the vulnerability of women in loveless marriages, where their reputation and fortune are at stake. Lady Wishfort, an aging widow, also illustrates the social implications of marriage and the fear of loneliness in a society that prioritizes marital status. Her desperate desire to remarry, driven by vanity, makes her susceptible to schemes and manipulation. Her willingness to entertain a proposal from the false Sir Rowland reflects how women of her age and status were ridiculed for seeking companionship, yet still felt societal pressure to remarry.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, *The Way of the World* is far more than a comedy of manners—it is a profound and intricate reflection of the social, economic, and gendered realities of 18th-century England. Congreve’s biting satire and intricate characterizations offer a window into a world where personal relationships are commodified, social status is both coveted and precarious, and individuals must navigate a society driven by appearances, wealth, and power. Through his witty dialogue and complex plot, Congreve critiques the very fabric of this world, revealing the moral and social compromises required to succeed within it. The play’s enduring relevance lies in its universal themes of love, deception, power, and societal expectation, making it a timeless commentary not only on Restoration England but on human nature and society at large. In its portrayal of the complex interplay between

individual desires and societal constraints, *The Way of the World* remains a masterful exploration of the tensions that define both personal and public life, offering a compelling reflection of its time and a timeless critique of human behaviour.

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## **The Significance of the title *The Way of the World***

**Arti Kumari Singh  
Sujit Gogoi  
Kabita Dutta  
Hirumoni Sonowal  
BA 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester  
Department of English**

**Supervisor:  
Ms. Rajashree Boruah  
Assistant Professor  
Department of English  
Dulijan College**

### **Abstract:**

*The title of William Congreve's play *The Way of the World* holds significant relevance in portraying the intricate relationships, social norms, and power dynamics of Restoration society. This paper delves into how the title reflects the complex nature of human behavior, focusing on themes such as marriage, deception, and class mobility. By analyzing the title, this study aims to reveal how Congreve's work offers a mirror to the human condition, providing insight into the societal "ways" of the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The title becomes both a literal and figurative commentary on the conduct and attitudes that govern human relationships, especially within the framework of aristocratic life.*

**Key Words:** Restoration Period, marriage, deception, power dynamics, manipulation.

### **Introduction:**

William Congreve's *The Way of the World*, first performed in 1700, stands as one of the most important works of the Restoration period, a time in English literary history that witnessed the flourishing of drama after the return of Charles II to the throne in 1660. The play is a comedy of manners, exploring themes of love, marriage, betrayal, and the complex social dynamics of the aristocratic class. The title itself, *The Way of the World*, encapsulates much of the play's thematic depth and its reflection on the shifting morals and behaviors of high society in early 18th-century England. At its core, *The Way of the World* alludes to the conventions, schemes, and intricacies that govern human relationships, particularly those of the upper class. *The way of the world* is an idiomatic expression suggesting the inevitability of human nature, with all its flaws, ambitions, and superficialities. It hints at the unchanging

aspects of society, where self-interest, manipulation, and the pursuit of personal advantage often guide actions. In Congreve's play, these aspects are revealed through a web of romantic entanglements and social maneuverings, exposing how people navigate the world with a blend of sincerity and deceit.

The title also mirrors the play's exploration of the power dynamics between men and women, especially within the context of marriage and courtship. The play's central couple, Mirabell and Millamant, engage in a battle of wit and negotiation as they attempt to define the terms of their relationship, which reflects larger societal shifts in attitudes toward love and partnership. In this sense, *The Way of the World* can be seen as a commentary on the "way" the institution of marriage was being renegotiated in a world where personal fulfillment and social status were often at odds.

Moreover, the title underscores Congreve's subtle critique of societal norms. The play's characters operate within a world where appearances often mask intentions, and the line between virtue and vice becomes blurred. This ambiguity reflects the Restoration period itself, a time marked by both a return to monarchical power and a burgeoning interest in individualism, pleasure, and wit. The phrase "the way of the world" thus suggests that societal behaviors are not necessarily moral but are instead dictated by the whims and desires of individuals.

In *The Way of the World*, Congreve uses the title to set the tone for a play that is both an entertaining comedy and a sharp social commentary. The phrase suggests an acceptance of the imperfections and contradictions inherent in human nature and society, encouraging the audience to reflect on their own experiences within this framework. Through his characters, Congreve offers a mirror to the audience, allowing them to recognize the timeless and universal aspects of "*The Way of the World*".

### **Objectives of the paper:**

1. To explore the significance of the title *The Way of the World* in relation to the major themes of the play.
2. To investigate how the title serves as a commentary on societal norms and the human condition during the Restoration period.
3. To analyze key character relationships and how they embody the "*The way of the world*" in their pursuit of personal gain.

4. To explore how the title highlights the interplay of deception, manipulation, and negotiation in human relationships, particularly in the context of marriage and social mobility.

### **Methodology:**

In identifying the significance of the title, *The Way of the World* in Congreve's play, the methodology will involve a blend of historical context, textual analysis, and thematic exploration. The methodology will be a qualitative one, based on closed reading of the primary source i.e. the select play. The research will incorporate secondary sources like research articles, essays, journals etc. on Restoration literature to establish how titles in this period often encapsulated a play's commentary on societal norms. Next, the approach will shift to a detailed textual analysis, examining the characters' interactions and relationships, with a focus on how they reflect the title's meaning. The title, *The Way of the World*, will be explored as a metaphor for the intricate and often cynical social manoeuvrings of the characters, especially concerning marriage, love, and inheritance. Scenes featuring characters like Mirabell, Millamant, and Lady Wishfort will be analyzed to highlight how they embody the play's critique of society's values.

### **Analysis:**

In William Congreve's *The Way of the World*, the title holds deep significance as it reflects the complex and often morally ambiguous nature of Restoration society. The phrase "*The Way of the World*" suggests the prevailing norms, behaviors, and values that define the social world inhabited by the play's characters. Through the use of deception, manipulation, transactional marriages, and the pursuit of power, Congreve critiques the superficiality and moral flexibility of the upper-class society, all while exploring human nature in its complexity. Each of these themes is intertwined with the title, emphasizing that such behaviors are not aberrations but rather the accepted way of operating in this world. Below are five key themes that illustrate the significance of the title, each supported by quote and examples from the play:

#### **Deception as a Social Tool:**

Deception is a central motif in the play, and the title reflects how dishonesty and manipulation are fundamental to navigating the social and financial complexities of this world. Characters such as Fainall, Mrs. Marwood, and even Mirabell use deceit to achieve

their goals, illustrating that deception is not only commonplace but also necessary for survival in such a society. As expressed,

“I would hope, at last, you would remember your duty, and pay a due respect to my honor and my wife’s portion” (Act V, Scene III, page no. 82).

Fainall reveals his intentions to extort Lady Wishfort by reminding her of her "duty" to respect his honor and his wife's financial portion. Fainall's reference to his "honour" and "wife's portion" highlights his selfish manipulation of social conventions. His concern for honor is disingenuous, as his real motivation is to gain control over his wife's inheritance. This moment encapsulates Fainall's villainous character, showing how he uses moral and legal concepts for his personal gain. The play critiques the mercenary nature of relationships during the Restoration era, where marriage, wealth, and status often intersected in power struggles.

“I am not what I appear to be” (Act II, Scene I, page no.28).

The quote reflects the theme of deception that runs throughout the play. Spoken by Mirabell, it reveals that the outward appearance of characters often does not align with their true motives. In this society, characters manipulate perceptions for personal gain, whether in love, wealth, or social status. Mirabell, for instance, appears to be a simple suitor but is engaged in complex schemes to marry Millamant on equal terms, highlighting his strategic thinking behind the façade of a polite gentleman.

This line also extends beyond Mirabell, embodying the broader dynamics of the play. Characters like Fainall and Mrs. Marwood similarly hide their selfish schemes behind masks of virtue or propriety. Even Lady Wishfort, who obsesses over her appearance, attempts to conceal her desperation to maintain social relevance. Thus, this quote encapsulates the play's satire of high society, where truth is often obscured, and individuals navigate a world of pretense, trickery, and appearances that deceive.

“I have deceived even the man who pretends to be Sir Rowland” (Act III, Scene V, page no.45).

The quote reflects the intricate layers of deception that define the play's plot. Lady Wishfort, the speaker, believes she has outsmarted the man posing as Sir Rowland, who is actually Mirabell's servant Waitwell in disguise. Lady Wishfort is unaware that she herself is being deceived as part of Mirabell's plan to secure his marriage to Millamant. This line illustrates the ironic nature of the characters' attempts at manipulation, as Lady Wishfort is confident in her cleverness while being the victim of a much larger ruse.

The line also underscores the broader theme of pretense and the difficulty of discerning truth in a world filled with deception. Just as Lady Wishfort thinks she has the upper hand in fooling the impostor, she is herself being tricked, highlighting the play's exploration of how easily people are blinded by their own desires and schemes. The layers of deceit in this situation emphasize the complexity of the social games the characters play, where everyone is trying to outwit one another in pursuit of love, money, or power.

"I'll never forgive the affront upon my honour" (Act IV, Scene II, page no. 67).

The quote reflects the character Fainall's obsession with maintaining his reputation and perceived authority. In this scene, Fainall is enraged because he feels his "honour" has been violated. However, his sense of honour is not rooted in moral principles but rather in his selfish desire for power and control. This statement underscores how, for characters like Fainall, honour is often a facade used to justify manipulation and personal gain. His refusal to forgive shows his deep-seated pride and vindictiveness, which drive much of his deceitful behavior throughout the play. This line also highlights the Restoration period's societal emphasis on honour, reputation, and public image. In Fainall's world, honour is a commodity linked to status, wealth, and influence. His fixation on an "affront" to his honour reveals the fragility of his standing and how social relationships are governed by rigid expectations. The play satirizes how individuals like Fainall weaponize honour to serve their interests, turning what should be a noble value into a tool for manipulation and greed.

The title *The Way of the World* suggests that these acts of deceit are not exceptional but are part of the accepted and expected behavior in this society. Deception is a social tool that everyone uses to navigate the complex web of relationships and power dynamics that define their world.

### **Marriage as a Transaction:**

Marriage in *The Way of the World* is portrayed as a pragmatic and often transactional arrangement, driven more by financial and social concerns than by love. This theme is most clearly articulated in the proviso scene between Mirabell and Millamant, where they negotiate the terms of their future marriage. The way the characters approach marriage reflects the broader social expectation that personal relationships must serve practical, material purposes.

"I'll never marry unless I am first made sure of my will and pleasure" (Act IV, Scene I, page no. 63).

The extracted quote is spoken by Millamant and encapsulates her desire for independence and control in her marriage. Unlike many women of her time, who were often forced into marriages for financial security or social standing, Millamant asserts her right to maintain her personal autonomy and freedom. She refuses to enter into a marriage where she would lose control over her own desires and decisions, signaling a progressive view on marriage for a Restoration comedy. This line reflects Millamant's wit and intelligence, showing that she is aware of the power dynamics in marriage and is determined to negotiate terms that preserve her individual freedom. This statement also serves as a critique of the traditional institution of marriage during the time period, where women were expected to submit to their husbands' authority. By making it clear that she will only marry on her own terms, Millamant challenges the societal norms that treat women as passive participants in marriage. Her emphasis on "will and pleasure" reflects a desire for a partnership based on mutual respect, rather than one dominated by male control. In this way, Millamant's character represents a new kind of woman who seeks equality in her relationships, contrasting sharply with the more conventional views of marriage held by other characters in the play.

"My dear liberty shall lie in my own bosom... I will stand to my articles" (Act IV, Scene I, page no. 64).

The quote is spoken by Millamant and further reinforces her strong desire to retain her independence within marriage. Millamant values her personal freedom and is determined to protect it, even in the context of a traditionally restrictive institution like marriage. The phrase "my dear liberty" indicates that her autonomy is precious to her, and she views it as something to be guarded closely. By stating that her liberty "shall lie in my own bosom," she emphasizes that her independence is internal and personal, and she alone has control over it, not her prospective husband or societal expectations. The reference to standing by her "articles" suggests that Millamant is not entering into marriage blindly; rather, she has specific terms and conditions she expects to be met before she will agree to marry. These "articles" likely refer to the "proviso scene," where she and Mirabell negotiate the terms of their marriage, ensuring that her will, desires, and rights are respected. This insistence on formalizing her expectations symbolizes her commitment to equality and fairness in the relationship, challenging the traditional notion of wives being subordinate to their husbands. Millamant's declaration reflects her progressive stance on marriage and highlights her intelligence and agency as a woman who refuses to sacrifice her independence for the sake of convention. "You shall marry, and you shall be rich" (Act III, Scene II, Page

no. 51) The quote encapsulates the transactional nature of marriage during the Restoration period. Spoken by Fainall to Mirabell, this line underscores the social expectation that marriage is primarily a means of securing wealth and status. Rather than being a union based on love or mutual respect, marriage in this context is portrayed as a business deal, where financial gain and social advantage are the primary motivators. The focus on wealth reflects the materialistic values of the society depicted in the play, where characters often seek marriage as a way to increase their fortunes or maintain their social standing. This line also highlights the power dynamics at play, as Fainall tries to exert influence over Mirabell by emphasizing the promise of wealth through marriage. It suggests that achieving financial security and upward mobility often comes at the cost of personal freedom or emotional fulfillment. The transactional view of marriage contrasts with the more progressive desires of characters like Millamant, who insists on maintaining her autonomy and “liberty” in marriage. Through this line, Congreve critiques the shallow, materialistic motivations behind many societal marriages, exposing how economic considerations often overshadow genuine human connection. “My wife’s fortune is mine, and I shall use it as I see fit” (Act V, Scene II, page no. 78). The quote reveals Fainall’s entitled attitude toward his wife’s wealth, highlighting the gender dynamics and power imbalances inherent in marriage during the Restoration period. Fainall’s assertion that his wife’s fortune is his demonstrates a sense of ownership over her financial resources, reflecting the societal norm that treated women’s assets as extensions of their husbands’ authority. This mindset underscores the play’s critique of marriage as an institution that often reduces women to mere vessels for wealth, rather than recognizing them as independent individuals with their own rights and agency.

Furthermore, Fainall’s claim to use his wife’s fortune “as I see fit” reveals his self-serving nature and lack of respect for his wife’s autonomy. It indicates that he views her wealth primarily as a tool for his own ambitions, rather than considering her desires or well-being. This attitude positions Fainall as a manipulative character, willing to exploit the system to his advantage, which contributes to the play’s exploration of themes related to greed, power, and the corrupting influence of wealth. Overall, this quote encapsulates the play’s critical examination of how societal structures and personal greed can distort relationships and undermine genuine partnership in marriage. The title *The Way of the World* captures this dynamic by implying that marriage, like other social institutions, is subject to the same rules of negotiation, self-interest, and pragmatism. Love is secondary to the financial and social benefits that marriage can bring, a reality that the play presents without judgment. Through these examples, Congreve critiques the way marriage has

become commodified in society, with personal relationships reduced to mere transactions. The title *The Way of the World* reflects this critique, as it points to the transactional, materialistic nature of relationships in the world of the play.

### **Social Power and Class Mobility:**

The pursuit of power and social mobility is central to the characters' motivations, and the title reflects the inevitability of these ambitions. In a world where social status is paramount, characters like Mirabell and Fainall manipulate relationships and situations to secure wealth and elevate their positions. "I'm a gentleman of a plentiful fortune; my chief interest is in Millamant" (Act I, Scene I, page no. 12).

The quote introduces Mirabell's character and establishes his motivations in the play. By identifying himself as a "gentleman of a plentiful fortune," Mirabell aligns himself with the social elite, indicating that he possesses the wealth and status expected in the marriage market of his time. This assertion not only positions him as a suitable suitor for Millamant but also sets the stage for the exploration of marriage as a transaction influenced by financial considerations. His wealth provides him with the social leverage necessary to engage in a courtship that defies conventional expectations. However, Mirabell's declaration that his "chief interest is in Millamant" suggests that his feelings for her transcend mere financial considerations. This statement indicates that he is genuinely invested in her as an individual, rather than viewing her solely as a means to secure his social standing. It implies a desire for a partnership based on mutual respect and affection, which contrasts with the more transactional views of marriage held by other characters, such as Fainall. This duality in Mirabell's character serves as a focal point for the play's exploration of love, wealth, and the complexities of relationships in a society where social norms often dictate personal choices. "My reputation is all I have left" (Act IV, Scene II, Page no. 69).

The quote underscores the importance of social standing and personal honor in the characters' lives, particularly for Fainall. At this point in the play, Fainall is grappling with the consequences of his manipulative schemes and the potential damage to his reputation. His claim reflects a deep-seated anxiety about how he is perceived by others, revealing that in a society where social status and reputation dictate one's identity and influence, losing honor can lead to a significant loss of power. This focus on reputation highlights the fragility of social constructs and how easily they can be undermined by deceit and betrayal.

Additionally, this statement emphasizes the theme of appearance versus reality that permeates the play. Fainall's preoccupation with his reputation reveals his self-serving

nature, as he prioritizes his image over genuine moral integrity. While he may outwardly profess concern for honor, his actions demonstrate a willingness to engage in dishonorable behavior for personal gain. This contradiction exposes the hypocrisy prevalent among the characters and critiques the societal values that prioritize reputation above true character. Overall, the quote encapsulates the tension between social expectations and personal morality, illustrating how the pursuit of reputation can lead to moral compromise in a world governed by appearances. “I am master of my wife’s fortune and my own destiny” (Act V, Scene III, Page no. 82).

The quote reflects Fainall’s assertion of control and authority over both his wife’s wealth and his life choices. This statement underscores the power dynamics in marriage during the Restoration period, where a husband’s claim to his wife’s fortune was commonly accepted. By emphasizing his mastery, Fainall reveals his manipulative and self-serving nature, indicating that he views his wife’s assets as an extension of his own power. This sense of ownership suggests a transactional view of marriage, where financial gain and control are prioritized over mutual respect and partnership.

Moreover, Fainall’s proclamation about being the master of his “own destiny” highlights the illusion of autonomy he believes he possesses. In reality, his fate is entangled with the consequences of his unscrupulous actions and schemes, which ultimately undermine his authority and integrity. This juxtaposition between his claim of mastery and the impending collapse of his plans illustrates the play’s critique of characters who prioritize ambition and wealth at the expense of genuine connection and morality. Through this line, Congreve underscores the precariousness of power built on deception and exploitation, revealing that true mastery over one’s destiny requires honesty and ethical considerations, qualities that Fainall lacks. The title *The Way of the World* reflects this relentless pursuit of power, suggesting that social mobility and the desire for financial security are inevitable in a world governed by status and wealth. Characters are constantly jockeying for position, and the play reveals the fragility of social hierarchies.

### **Satirical Critique of Society:**

Congreve employs the title to frame a satirical critique of the superficiality and moral decay of the upper class. The characters’ obsession with appearances and status reflects the absurdities of their world. “You shall marry, and you shall be rich” (Act III, Scene II, page no. 51). The quote reflects the transactional nature of marriage in the Restoration period. Spoken by Fainall, this line underscores the prevailing societal expectation that marriage

serves primarily as a means to secure wealth and status. Fainall's assertion implies that marriage is not a romantic endeavor but rather a strategic alliance, where financial gain takes precedence over genuine emotional connections. This perspective is emblematic of the broader social dynamics at play, where characters often view relationships as opportunities for material advancement rather than personal fulfillment.

Moreover, this statement highlights the power dynamics inherent in such arrangements. Fainall's directive suggests that he believes he can control the fate of others, reinforcing his manipulative character. The idea that one must marry to become wealthy reflects a societal structure that limits personal choice and autonomy, particularly for women. In this context, the line serves as a critique of a system that prioritizes financial gain over love and partnership, exposing the moral compromises characters make in their pursuit of social and economic advantage. Overall, this quote encapsulates the play's exploration of the complexities of marriage, wealth, and personal agency in a society driven by materialism. Through the character of Mrs. Marwood, who is consumed by envy and social climbing, Congreve illustrates the hypocrisy of the elite. Her actions expose the lengths to which individuals will go to preserve their status, emphasizing the corrupt nature of their society.

### **Moral Ambiguity and Human Complexity:**

The title also signifies the moral ambiguity that permeates the play. Characters are neither wholly virtuous nor entirely corrupt, reflecting the complexities of human behavior in a morally flexible world. "I have deceived even the man who pretends to be Sir Rowland" (Act III, Scene V, page no.45). The quote highlights the layers of deception that characterize the play. Spoken by Lady Wishfort, this line reveals her belief that she has outsmarted the man disguised as Sir Rowland, who is actually Mirabell's servant, Waitwell. This moment underscores the theme of mistaken identities and the complex web of plots that the characters weave. Lady Wishfort's confidence in her own cunning serves as an irony, as she is unaware that she herself is being manipulated as part of Mirabell's elaborate scheme to secure Millamant's hand in marriage.

Furthermore, this statement illustrates the broader societal dynamics at play, where characters engage in a constant game of deception to achieve their desires. Lady Wishfort's assertion reflects her desperation to reclaim her social status and romantic prospects, leading her to believe she can control the situation. However, her failure to see through the facade highlights the limitations of her agency in a world rife with trickery. This quote ultimately

serves as a critique of a society where appearances are often misleading, and individuals are easily trapped in the intricate games of others, revealing the fragility of personal integrity amid the social complexities of the time. “My honour is my life” (Act IV, Scene II, page no. 67). The quote underscores the critical importance of reputation and personal integrity within the social context of the play. Spoken by Fainall, this line reflects his intense preoccupation with maintaining a facade of honor in a society that values appearances above all else. For Fainall, honour is not merely a moral principle but a vital part of his identity and social standing. His statement suggests that without honour, he feels he has nothing left; it is the cornerstone of his status and influence. This reveals the extent to which societal expectations can shape an individual's self-worth and motivations, often leading to unethical behavior to preserve that honor.

Moreover, Fainall's declaration also highlights the hypocrisy inherent in the characters' actions throughout the play. While he professes a commitment to honor, his manipulative schemes and willingness to betray others reveal a disconnect between his words and his true character. This contradiction underscores the theme of appearance versus reality, as many characters strive to uphold their reputations while engaging in deceitful behavior. Fainall's fixation on honor ultimately reveals how fragile and contingent it is; he equates his reputation with his very existence, suggesting that in a society driven by perception, the pursuit of honour can lead to moral compromise and self-destruction. This line encapsulates the play's exploration of the complexities of honor, identity, and the often-deceptive nature of social relationships.

The title *The Way of the World* encapsulates the central themes of deception, transactional relationships, social ambition, societal critique, and moral complexity in Congreve's play. Through these elements, Congreve critiques the superficiality and moral ambiguity of Restoration society, suggesting that the behaviors depicted are not outliers but rather reflections of the accepted norms of the time. The title serves as a lens through which the audience can understand the intricate dynamics at play, reinforcing the idea that this is indeed the way of the world.

### **Deeper Implications of the Title in Restoration Context:**

In the broader context of the Restoration period, the title *The Way of the World* can be seen as an acknowledgment of the shifting values and norms of the time. Following the turbulence of the English Civil War and the Puritan regime, the Restoration brought with it a new emphasis on pleasure, materialism, and social climbing, particularly among the

aristocracy. Congreve's play reflects these changes, with its characters navigating a world defined by appearances, wealth, and status. The title serves as a commentary on the Restoration's embrace of these values, suggesting that this is simply "the way of the world" in an era that prioritizes personal gain and social ambition over moral or ethical concerns.

In this sense, the title functions as both a critique and a reflection of its time. It acknowledges the inevitability of certain social behaviors while also exposing their underlying absurdity. Congreve's play thus offers a sophisticated exploration of the tensions between individual desires and societal expectations, with the title encapsulating the complex dynamics at play. Through its engagement with themes of deception, marriage, social power, and Human nature, *The Way of the World* reveals the intricate "ways" in which people must navigate a world shaped by external pressures and internal ambitions.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the title *The Way of the World* is deeply significant in framing Congreve's exploration of human behavior and social dynamics. It reflects the pragmatic, often cynical view of human relationships that characterizes Restoration comedy, while also offering a satirical critique of the society it portrays. The title encapsulates the themes of deception, marriage, and social power, showing that these are not just individual actions but reflections of broader societal norms. Ultimately, the title serves as a reminder that the world, with all its complexities and contradictions, operates according to certain rules and expectations—rules that Congreve's characters must navigate, often at the expense of personal integrity or emotional connection.

The title *The Way of the World* in William Congreve's play also reflects the complex interactions among the characters, who navigate a world dominated by wit, deceit, and the transactional nature of relationships, especially marriage. The title suggests that the manipulation and superficiality are not exceptions but the standard "way" society operates. Characters like Mirabell and Millamant, despite their genuine affection for each other, must still adhere to these societal norms to secure their happiness.

The play also critiques the moral ambiguity of this world, where personal desires are often subordinated to material gain and social advancement. At the same time, the relationship between Mirabell and Millamant offers a glimmer of hope, suggesting that, even within a world governed by these restrictive conventions, it is possible to maintain integrity and mutual respect. Thus, the title *The Way of the World* serves as both a reflection and a critique of the society it portrays, emphasizing the tension between societal

expectations and individual authenticity. It captures the play's blend of realism and satire, making it a timeless commentary on human nature and social structures.

The title *The Way of the World* is significant because it encapsulates the themes of societal manipulation, materialism, and the complexity of human relationships in a world governed by social expectations. Congreve uses the title to critique the superficiality and self-interest that dominate interactions in the upper class, while also suggesting that, despite these constraints, individuals like Mirabell and Millamant can find a way to navigate the world with wit and integrity. Ultimately, the title serves as a reflection on the realities of society, where personal ambitions and societal norms often clash, but where genuine connection can still emerge amidst the constraints of "*The way of the world*".

Ultimately, the title serves as both a reflection and a critique of the societal norms of Congreve's time, offering insight into the moral complexities of human relationships. By examining the significance of the title, this paper has highlighted how Congreve's *The Way of the World* continues to resonate as a sharp commentary on the ways in which individuals navigate the demands of society in their pursuit of personal fulfillment.

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## **Meera Syal's *Anita and Me* as a Diasporic Novel**

**Jahnabi Baruah  
Nisha Sharma  
Chitralekha Sharma  
Khurenjit Saikia  
BA 5<sup>th</sup> Semester  
Department of English**

**Supervisor:  
Mr. Nayan Jyoti Hazarika  
Assistant Professor  
Department of English  
Duliajan College**

### **Abstract:**

*A second generation immigrant in Britain and a versatile personality, Meera Syal portrays the Indian diaspora in Britain who try to preserve their Indian traditions and cultural values alive in Britain and adapt to the culture of the adopted country. This paper attempts to explore cultural conflicts and hyphenated existence of the Indian diaspora dealt in her debut novel *Anita and Me*. The novel is set in 1960s and the story moves round the nine year old protagonist Meena and her British friend Anita Rutter. Meena is the daughter of the Kumars the only Punjabi family living in Tollington, a mining area near Birmingham. Through the consciousness of Meena the cultural conflicts between the Indian and the British culture are presented. Meena tries hard to escape her community and become the member of the general British community. As she grows up she experiences racial hatred at the hands of her British friends whom she loved from the core of her heart. She has also seen her parents being humiliated there. Ultimately she realizes their secondary status in Britain, and also realizes that she cannot desert her community, and decides to be a traditional Punjabi girl.*

**Keywords:- Diaspora, Cultural identity, hybridity, belonging, immigrant, nostalgia.**

### **Introduction:**

The concept of Diaspora faithfully captures the essence of the term migration as well as various types of displacement and different kinds of socio-cultural and psychological experiences associated with them. In the host land, the members of a diaspora community often find themselves in minority positions and are torn between the two cultures. Diaspora works skilfully portray all those facets of diaspora experiences. In fact, diaspora literature

often places its characters in a “third place” or between the two cultures and female immigrant writers find them even in a narrower place for a woman in a diaspora community is frequently regarded as a minority within a minority. Diasporic literature often addresses themes of identity, belonging, displacement, and cultural conflict, reflecting the experiences of immigrant communities and their descendants. However, as a second generation diaspora writers, Meera Syal focus more on multiculturalism and confused identities in *Anita and Me*.

### **Aims and Objectives:**

The aim of this paper is to analyze *Anita and Me* as a Diasporic novel, focusing on how Syal represents the following:

- The struggles of identity formation in a cross-cultural context.
- The sense of belonging and alienation felt by second-generation immigrants.
- The role of friendship and community in shaping Meena’s cultural understanding.
- The impact of racial prejudice and social tensions on the diasporic experience.

### **Methodology:**

The methodology employed in this paper involves a close reading of the novel, combined with an analysis of secondary sources on diasporic literature and post-colonial studies. By engaging with critical theory, particularly Homi K. Bhabha’s concepts of hybridity and the third space, the paper contextualizes Meena’s experience within the larger framework of post-colonial identity formation.

### **Analysis:**

Meera Syal’s *Anita and Me* is a seminal work in British Asian literature, offering a nuanced portrayal of the diasporic experience. Diasporic literature refers to the body of work produced by writers who are part of a diaspora, meaning a community of people who have been displaced or migrated from their homeland, either voluntarily or due to forced circumstances like war, colonization, or economic hardship. This literature explores themes such as identity, belonging, displacement, nostalgia, cultural assimilation, and the complex relationship between the homeland and the adopted land.

Diaspora, which refers to a group of people who share a cultural or regional origin but live away from their homeland. The term diaspora has its roots in the Greek word “diaspeirein” meaning “to scatter”. Historically, it was first used to describe the dispersion of the Jewish people following their exile from Babylon in the 6th century BCE. However,

over time, the concept has expanded to include other large-scale migrations and dispersions, such as African, Indian, Chinese, and Caribbean diasporas, among others. One of the earliest examples of a diasporic community, the Jewish people were displaced over millennia due to conquests and persecutions. Their literature, rich in biblical texts, folklore, and later modern writings, reflects themes of exile, longing for a homeland, and survival. The Indian diaspora, which spread across the British Empire during colonial times, consists of migrants who traveled as indentured laborers, merchants, or professionals. Their literature often reflects themes of cultural hybridity, displacement, caste, and the negotiation of Indian identity in foreign lands.

### **Diaspora and Identity:**

The concept of diaspora involves the dispersion of people from their homeland and the subsequent formation of communities in new locations. The novel of our discussion, *Anita and Me*, Meena's family represents the Indian diaspora in Britain has as its setting a fictional Midlands' mining area in Tollington in the 70's. The novel which has some similarities with the author's life depicts the cravings and aspirations of a Punjabi girl to gain a British identity. In those second generationers, the indigenous culture and the culture of the foreign land, both are engaged in playing complex roles in forming their identities. In the epigraph Meena understands:

"I've always been a sucker for a good double entendre; the gap between what is said and what is thought, what is stated and what is implied, is a place in which I have always found myself. I'm really not a liar; I just learned very early on that those of us deprived of history sometimes need to turn to mythology to feel complete, to belong".

In diasporic literature is the negotiation of identity, *Anita and Me* expertly navigates this terrain. Meena is caught between two cultures, struggling to reconcile her Indian heritage with her British upbringing. In chapter III, this internal conflict is exemplified when Meena's mother says, "You're not Indian, you're not English, what are you?". This quote highlights the liminal space Meena occupies, caught between two cultures, unsure of which one she belongs to. The novel delves into the complexities of maintaining cultural heritage while assimilating into a new society. Meena's struggle with her dual identity is a central theme, reflecting the broader diasporic experience of negotiating between two cultures.

### **Cultural conflict and Hybridity:**

Meera Syal in *Anita and Me* vividly portrays the cultural conflicts that arise from Meena's dual heritage. In the novel, the two characters are complementary in nature. They are the representatives of the two opposite traits. While Meena's parents expect her to be a traditional Hindu girl, meek and submissive in nature often clash with the more liberal British culture that Meena is exposed to at school and through her friendship with Anita. Throughout the novel, Meena questions where she belongs, illustrating the dislocation that many diasporic individuals face. Meena often feels excluded from both cultures. When she is with Anita and the other village children, she is treated as an outsider because of her ethnicity. Yet, she also feels disconnected from her Indian roots, which are represented by her parents and the broader Indian community. This feeling of being "in-between" cultures highlights the complexities of diasporic identity, where belonging becomes fluid and conditional. This cultural tension is evident in Meena's internal conflict and her attempts to reconcile her Indian heritage with her British upbringing.

Meena experiences cultural conflicts as the ethnic culture, customs, traditions, and food habits are sometimes unacceptable to her. For instance, she doesn't like the style of dress or clothing of Asian people. On the other hand, she is attracted towards the British white women with big hats doing creative works with a pair of pruners. Meena desires that their garden should be decorated with "ornamental well" etc. like the gardens of the British neighbors, but her mother considers simple garden frippery as English. We notice that Meena's actions are guided by her intense desire to assimilate into British culture, but her inability to part ways with her culture is also explicit.

The concept of hybridity, as proposed by postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha, is crucial in understanding Meena's identity. Hybridity refers to the creation of new cultural forms from the mixing of different cultural traditions. Meena embodies this hybridity, as she navigates her way through the cultural expectations of her Indian family and the social norms of British society.

### **Friendship and Influence:**

The friendship between Meena and Anita Rutter is central to the novel. Anita, a rebellious and free-spirited girl, represents the allure of British culture for Meena. Through Anita, Meena experiences a sense of freedom and rebellion that contrasts sharply with her own sheltered upbringing. Meena hopes that her bonding with Anita would relieve her from her inferior Asian stigma and raise her status above the level of common Asian girls. However, her parents, like any other first-generation immigrants, make continuous efforts to

bring her back to their “desi” Punjabi culture and consequently disapprove their bond of friendship. In chapter VI Meena’s opinion “Anita was a bad influence, that was official ...Anita and I were now officially mates”.

She expects Anita to spend more time with her than she does with the other girls. She adores and is compassionate towards Anita’s little sister Tracy for her innocence and affection she has for Anita. But, Meena’s intuition alerts her when Anita indulges in vicious practices and, at last, she decides to give up her friendship with Anita. It proves that in spite of her yearning to be a complete British girl, she could not go beyond the ambit of her mother culture. The alarm that rings in her mind is because of her parents’ inculcating a sense of ethnicity in her.

However, this friendship also exposes Meena to the harsh realities of racism and prejudice, as Anita’s family harbors xenophobic attitudes.

### **Racism and Prejudice:**

In the novel, *Anita and Me* do not shy away from depicting the racism and xenophobia that Meena and her family face as members of the British-Asian diaspora. Racial hatred is vividly presented by the novelist during the Spring Fete held there. Though Sam Lowbridge is Meena’s friend, yet he cherishes hatred against the non-whites and he is supported by a large number of the British. His rude attitude is revealed when he opposes the decision of sending the collected charity money for African victims. In chapter VII , Sam shouts at Uncle Alan, “Yow don’t do nothing but talk, ‘Uncle’. And give everything away to some darkies we’ve never met... This is our patch. Not some wogs’ hand out”.. It is extremely shocking for Mr. Kumar and Meena. Meena reacts, “I felt as if I had been punched in the stomach. My legs felt watery and a hot panic softened my insides to mush”. However, Mr. Kumar advises her, “If anyone ever says anything rude to you, first you say something back, and then you come and tell me. Is that clear?” He is proud of being the son of Mother India and any insult towards an Indian by the British in the name of color, race or culture is the insult of the whole Indian nation. So he advises his daughter, “Don’t give them a chance to say we’re worse than they already think we are. You prove you are better Always”.

Racial abuses are hurled at them. Meena’s parents have experienced derogatory treatment at the hand of the British. Her mother undergoes insults while driving on road on account of being an Indian. The casual racism of characters like Anita and her friends reflects the deep-seated prejudices of 1960s Britain. The addressing the racism faced by the Indian diaspora in Britain. Meena’s encounters with racism, both overt and subtle, highlight

the challenges of living in a society that often views her as an outsider. The novel portrays the impact of these experiences on Meena's sense of self and her understanding of her place in the world.

### **Family and Community:**

The novel also emphasizes the importance of family and community in the diasporic experience. The Tollington area is well populated by other Asian immigrants forming an Asian community with a sense of unity and affinity as they are from the third world. They are considered as others by the British people. Meena's family is close and supportive, with her father actively disciplining her and teaching her values. Meena's father takes her to the shop to confess when she steals money, and makes sure she admits when she lies.

The existence of ethnic groups in the novel can be easily perceived. The protagonist Meena's family is regularly visited by family friends who are Indians. Meena claims that during their thirteen years of residing in Tollington, "every weekend was taken up with visiting Indian families or being invaded by them". She is also made to call them "Auntie And Uncles" though they are not related to her by blood. Whenever they enter their home, she welcomes them by saying "Namaste Auntie, Namaste Uncle". The English neighbors stare 'tight lipped' at the walk-in and walk-out of the Indian women with jewelry, embroidered saris and the way they hold up their saris from the dirt floor. Her uncles and her father sing their favorite Urdu ghazals and Punjabi folk songs 'Ni babhi mere guthe na keree' and the other men join them by singing the refrain, women use utensils, pans, "even using the bangles on their wrists, to keep a beat going". The large congregation of Indian families has the same historical background. The collective memory and myth are abundantly evident in this novel.

Instead of identifying with the Asian community, Meena's family provides a sense of stability and cultural continuity, while the broader Indian community in Tollington offers support and solidarity. Cultural heritage is a significant aspect of diasporic literature, and Anita and Me engage with this theme through Meena's relationships with her family and community. Meena's grandmother, Nanima, is a symbol of traditional Indian culture, and Meena's interactions with her reveal the tensions between tradition and modernity. In chapter XI, Nanima says, "You must always remember who you are and where you come from". This quote highlights the importance of cultural heritage in shaping identity. These relationships are crucial in helping Meena navigate the complexities of her identity and the challenges of growing up in a multicultural society.

### **Conclusion:**

In the novel *Anita and Me* offers a nuanced portrayal of the diasporic experience, highlighting the complexities of identity, belonging, and cultural negotiation. Through Meena's journey, Meera Syal has portrayed comprehensively the cultural conflicts and hyphenated existence of the Indian diaspora in Britain. Meena's relationship with Anita, her British friend, is an attempt to achieve belongingness with the general community. But she fails as she remains in the margin and is treated as another. In fact, she feels that the immigrants cannot completely assimilate the foreign culture because they are treated as others by the British and often undergo humiliation in the adopted land. They cherish their ethnic and cultural values in their heart. Thus they live psychologically, culturally and geographically in two worlds, and always experience the pull between the two cultures. Through the novel Meera Syal has covered all the diasporic experiences encountered by the migrants in a very realistic manner. It also shows the lineage of the migrants with their host nation in a very impactful manner.

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**PROJECT  
BASED  
LEARNING  
PROGRAMME**

**Field Trip to Merbeel**  
**Faculty and Students**  
**Department of English**  
**Duliajan College**



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We are also grateful to our fellow group members and individuals who have directly or indirectly contributed to the success of the project.

### **Aims and Objectives:**

- To explore suburbanization of the surrounding areas of the wetland *Merbeel* and its impact on the wetland.
- To interact with local communities and stakeholders, gaining insights into their perspective on suburbanization of *Merbeel*.
- To formulate recommendations that can enhance the conservation of the *Merbeel* wetland to safeguard its ecosystem.
- Using the folklore as a tool to critique and elucidate the complex dynamics of gender, power and its representation within the narrative.

### **Methodology:**

The project is based on the method of survey through questionnaire and personal interview. The primary data was collected on the basis of the above methods. The secondary data is collected from internet sources.



**Image: Students interviewing a local inhabitant of Merbeel**

**In the picture : (from left) Sijan Limbu, Priyanka khanikar, the local inhabitant , Jyoti Singh Pathak (HOD), Parismita Dutta**

### **Introduction:**

The *Sasoni Merbeel* is a wetland, situated in the Naharkatia Revenue Circle of Dibrugarh district, Assam which is a natural treasure that embodies a rich tapestry of biodiversity, cultural heritage, and environmental significance. Spanning approximately 1550 square kilometers, it is one of the largest wetlands in Northeast India and plays a vital role in maintaining the ecological balance of the region. The wetland attracts a variety of migratory birds, especially during the winter months when birds from colder region travel to this wetland for its favorable climate and abundant resources. It is a home to over 200 species of birds, including: -

- Bar-headed goose
- Ruddy Shael duck (Brahminy duck)
- Northern Pintail
- Common Teal
- Eurasian Wiegong
- Lesser Whistling duck
- Great Egret
- Grey Haro

Moreover, the wetland contains diverse aquatic life such as fish, amphibians and reptiles. Its dense vegetation, including water hyacinths and lotuses, serves as a habitat for wildlife and sustains the livelihoods of local communities. *Merbeel*'s subtropical climate, with its warm summers, cool winters and abundant monsoon rainfall fosters seasonal flooding that replenishes its waters and enriches the surrounding agricultural lands.



**Image: Geographical location of Merbeel**

The *Merbeel* wetland is a heaven for diverse flora and fauna. Here are a few insights into the ecosystem in *Merbeel*. Although the wetland is a bird watching destination yet occasional sightings of mammals like wild boar, deer, and possibly leopards and even reptiles like cobra, turtles can be seen. Among plants, there are diverse kinds of lush greenery, including a variety of trees, shrubs and grasses including aquatic plants. Notable among them are Bamboo, Dipterocarpus tree. Many migratory birds visiting *Merbeel* in

different seasons are ducks, geese, waders, pectoral sandpiper and other waterfowls. And some the other birds that inhabit the wetland are Parrot, Hornbill, Woodpecker etc.

### **The Folklore on Merbeel:**

Through our interview with the local inhabitants, we have got to know that the name “*Merbeel*” is steeped in cultural and linguistic significance. In Assamese, “*Beel*” translates to “wetland” or “lake,” while “*Mer*” signifies ‘big’ or ‘large’, perfectly capturing the serene and mystical essence of the wetland. As per our interview with the local people including, Rasmirekha Borah, Deepali Gogoi, Ukha Handique, Jan Gogoi, Hemanta Handique, Bharat Bhuyan, Anil Saikia and the General manager of the Eco Tourism Park Monimanik Gogoi, local folklore ties the name to the deity *Jal Konwar*, a mythical figure deeply revered by the villagers who see him as the protector of the wetland. The link between the folklore and religion can be evaluated from different perspectives. *Sasoni Merbeel* plays a pivotal role in the socio-cultural lives of the villagers. Traditionally, it is believed that it is the home to *Jal konwar*, a very powerful deity. This mythological character is so strong in the belief system of the villagers that till today different kinds of rituals are practiced to offer respect to this deity. The main source that provides validity and vigor to this belief system is a folklore, which is linked with the *Neo-Vaishnavite religion*<sup>1</sup>. During our field trip we interviewed the locals who narrated the folklore like this:

Once there was a big flood, which submerged a large part of the *Soliha Bareghar Satra*<sup>2</sup> and its nearby villages. All the normal activities in the flood-hit villages came to a grinding halt. People were suffering and became restless as they were stuck in their water-logged houses. One day Shri Ram Dev *Gosain* (holy man), the *Satradhikar* (head of the Satra) who used to live with his family was reciting the verses from the holy book, *Kirtan*. But his little daughter *Diti Aidew* wanted to draw the attention of her father and so Diti was trying to climb onto her father’s lap, repeatedly disrupting him. An annoyed *Gosain*<sup>3</sup>, upset by Diti’s nuisance *shouted* at his daughter and in a fit of rage said: -“If you keep on disturbing me I will give you to the *Jalkonwar*”, pointing toward the flooded courtyard.

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<sup>1</sup>Neo-Vaishnavite religion: religion founded by Srimanta Sankardeva in Assam in 15<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>2</sup>Satra: The word Satra means a religious center.

<sup>3</sup>Gosain: a religious priest in Vaishnavism.

In due course of time, Diti grew up to be a beautiful young woman at the *Satra*. One day *Gosayani*<sup>4</sup> dreamt that the *Jalkonwar* asked her daughter in marriage. The *Jalkowar* also reminded her of her husband's long forgotten angry outburst against their little daughter and his thought of giving their daughter to him (the *Jolkonwar*). Terrified by the dream, the next day *Gosayani* told her husband and all other villagers and *Satra* people but they didn't believe her at all. But after a couple of days the *Jalkonwa* reappeared in the dreams of *Shri Ram Dev Gosain* and insisted on marrying Diti. Now, *Shri Ram Dev* became worried about his daughter's marriage to the *Jalkonwar*. The *Satra* people had never seen the *Jalkonwar* with their own eyes nor had Diti's father, so everyone was worried how would they send their daughter to marry a man they had never seen. So, they decided to not to abide by the *Jalkonwar's* request. After a few hours people noticed that the water level began to rise all over the area. This scared everyone.

Somehow the villagers managed to save themselves and got settled in a new place known as *Sasoni Moujar Merbeel Gosain Bheti*. The villagers slowly regained their compose and started to live their normal lives. *Shri Ram Dev Gosain* formed a new *Satra*. But again, one night *Gosain* and *Gosayani* dreamt of *Jalkonwar* where he again reminded them of their vow and requested to marry Diti. But once again they ignored the dream and didn't fulfill the request at which, the enraged *Jalkonwar* flooded the entire village and destroyed their home and belongings. As such, the *Satradhikar* was left with no other option but to make necessary arrangements for the mid-night marriage. When the time came, the *Gosain* and *Gosayani* took their daughter, draped in a beautiful bridal dress, up to the middle of the courtyard and offered her to the water. While offering they requested the *Jalkonwar* to appear and show the villagers his presence as the groom. Adhering to the request, the *Jalkonwar* made a condition that only pure hearted people who have pure intension will be able to see him with their own eyes. Agreeing to the condition the villagers offered Diti to the water. The *Jalkonwar* appeared amongst the cloud wearing the Assamese traditional wedding dress of a groom in a golden boat. Soon after the wedding, water withdrew from all the areas. People believed that after the marriage, the *Gosain's* daughter came to the *Satra* twice. But the *Jalkonwar* had asked her not to mention anything about the underwater world and about him and also not to eat anything offered to her in her village, but Diti didn't keep her promise and shared her experience. The *Jalkonwar* was annoyed with Diti for not listening to him and therefore when she returned underwater, he never allowed her to meet

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<sup>4</sup>Gosayani: Wife of a religious priest in Vaishnavism.

her parents again. But since Diti was offered to him by the villagers, the *Jalkonwar* in return, promised to protect the Merbeel village forever. With this belief, the villagers till this day pray to *Jalkonwar* with rituals and offerings.



**Image: The statue of Jalkonwar and Diti**



**Image: The inscription of the folklore at Merbeel Eco-Resort**

This connection imbues *Merbeel* with spiritual significance and earns it the epithet “Wetland of Mystery.” Rituals and traditions dedicated to the *Jal Konwar* are practiced till

the present times, reflecting the profound bond between the wetland and its surrounding communities.

However, the face of *Merbeel* is changing rapidly due to suburbanization. As nearby regions witness a surge in population and infrastructural development, the wetland is under growing pressure. Urban expansion, the construction of residential areas, and increasing pollution are encroaching on its boundaries and disrupting its delicate ecological balance. Households and commercial establishments in the vicinity of *Merbeel* discharge chemical pollutants, such as detergents, oils, and food waste, directly into the water body due to the absence of an efficient drainage system. This contamination leads to:

- Water pollution, affecting aquatic flora and fauna.
- Degradation of water quality, making it unfit for consumption and domestic use.
- The spread of waterborne diseases among local communities.

Water contamination from agricultural runoff and domestic waste has started to affect the aquatic ecosystem, while the fragmentation of habitats threatens its rich biodiversity. Suburbanization<sup>5</sup> has also brought social and cultural shifts. Traditional practices, which once revolved around the wetland, are being replaced by modern livelihoods and lifestyles, gradually eroding the spiritual and cultural heritage of *Merbeel*. Yet, this transformation presents opportunities for sustainable development. With better connectivity and rising environmental consciousness, initiatives like eco-tourism, community-led conservation, and wetland restoration can ensure that suburbanization does not come at the cost of *Merbeel*'s ecological and cultural identity.

*Merbeel*, with its rich ecosystem, tranquil beauty, and deep cultural significance, stands at the crossroads of progress and preservation. As suburbanization reshapes its surroundings, the challenge lies in maintaining a striking balance between the protection of its natural and cultural legacy while accommodating the region's development needs. The story of *Merbeel* is not just about a wetland but also about the delicate interplay between tradition, nature and modernity.

### **Suburbanization Of *Merbeel*:**

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<sup>5</sup>Suburbanization: The establishment of residential communities on the outskirts of a city.

Suburbanization refers to the transformation of the rural landscapes or natural ecosystems into suburban areas, blending urban infrastructure with a semi-rural environment. This process is primarily driven by urban expansion, industrialization, improved connectivity and shifting socio-economic priorities. Suburban areas typically emerge on the fringes of cities, serving as transitional zones that cater to the residential, industrial and commercial needs of growing population. These areas are often characterized by the development of roads, transportation systems and public services that connect them to urban centers, making daily commutes and economic interactions more convenient.

While suburbanization fosters economic growth and supports urban expansion, it frequently comes at the expense of the natural environment and traditional livelihood. The process involves large-scale land clearance, deforestation and the conversion of agricultural or wetland areas into residential or industrial spaces. This not only leads to habitat destruction and loss of biodiversity but also disrupts local ecosystems and hydrological cycles. Wetlands, for instance, often face degradation as they are drained or polluted to make way for development which significantly impacts aquatic life and water quality. Increased human activity in suburban areas contributes to pollution from waste, noise and vehicular emissions further altering the balance of the ecosystem.

Moreover, suburbanization causes socio-cultural shifts within communities as traditional lifestyles, such as farming or fishing, are replaced with urban-centric economic activities. These changes may also lead to the displacement of local population as rising property values and infrastructure projects push communities away from their ancestral lands. Suburban development often creates dependency on automobiles and other urban amenities leading to increased carbon emissions, traffic congestion, and a heightened ecological footprint. Additionally, this spread of urbanization can fragment habitats, making it challenging for species to thrive or migrate and poses long-term risks to ecosystem stability.

In essence, suburbanization represents a complex interplay between human development and environmental impact. While it facilitates economic opportunities and better living standards for many, it also raises pressing concerns about sustainability. Addressing the ecological challenges posed by suburbanization, it requires thoughtful planning and the implementation of sustainable practices to ensure that development does

not compromise the health of ecosystems or the well-being of communities that depend on them.

As our topic of study was “A study of the suburbanization of *Sasoni Merbeel*” it has been observed in the survey that *Merbeel*, which was a rural area has become a suburb over a period of time. The study attempts to consider *Merbeel* as a suburb for the following reasons-

*Sasoni Merbeel*’s transformation into a suburban area has been driven by the establishment of oil rigs in and around the region. The wetland’s strategic location near industrial hubs such as Duliajan has made it an attractive site for the expansion of the oil industry. Over the years, oil companies have identified *Sasoni Merbeel* as a resource-rich area, utilizing its land for industrial purposes. The placement of oil rigs has brought industrial activities to the region, attracting workers, investments and infrastructural developments. While this has contributed to economic growth, it has also significantly altered the wetland’s natural landscape, air and water pollution levels due to unchecked industrial and household waste. The destruction of wetland vegetation contributes to climate change by reducing carbon reduction and increasing temperatures reducing its ecological value and threatening its biodiversity.

To support the growth of the oil industry, a network of roads has been constructed, connecting *Sasoni Merbeel* to nearby towns and industrial centers like Duliajan. These roads facilitate the transportation of oil, machinery and workers, making the area more accessible and integrated with the urban economy. Since, there are no restrictions imposed by the authorities on land purchase within the boundary of *Merbeel*. One can purchase land within a certain distance from the *beel*. Individuals with legitimate financial means can purchase land in *Merbeel* without facing any specific restrictions. Over the past few years, the area has seen a gradual rise in new settlements, primarily driven by individuals seeking residential and agricultural land. Instances of encroachment on forest and government land have been reported. These are typically small-scale encroachments by locals or migrants using the land for agriculture or temporary housing. The region has also witnessed limited but noticeable infrastructure growth such as expansion of rural roads, improving connectivity to Naharkatia town, construction of small markets and retail shops to cater to the local population, etc. While new developments are improving quality of life, the locals emphasize the need for sustainable planning to avoid environmental degradation and ensure

fair land distribution. While improving connectivity, such developments have led to deforestation and habitat loss, further endangering biodiversity. The improved connectivity has not only boosted industrial activity but also encouraged residential and commercial development in and around the wetland. However, these infrastructural changes have introduced new challenges, including habitat fragmentation, increased pollution, and the encroachment of urban activities into natural spaces.

Another critical factor driving the suburbanization of *Sasoni Merbeel* is the socio-economic migration of people from the region. Nearby cities such as Dibrugarh and Duliajan offer better employment opportunities, healthcare, and education, drawing residents from *Sasoni Merbeel* and surrounding areas. The youth, who traditionally played a role in sustaining the wetland's ecological and cultural heritage, are increasingly shifting their focus towards urban lifestyles and city-based opportunities. As a result, fewer young people are choosing to stay in the region or pursue traditional livelihood such as fishing, farming or eco-tourism-based occupations which are crucial for the sustainable management of *Merbeel*. This migration has caused a shift in the region's demographics and economic focus with fewer people engaged in traditional farming practices. Once renowned for its fertile paddy fields, *Sasoni Merbeel* has seen a decline in agricultural activities with many fields left uncultivated. This abandonment of farming has disrupted the wetland's ecological balance, as the absence of agricultural maintenance has allowed invasive species and urban sprawl to encroach upon the land.

The development of urban-centric businesses has further contributed to the suburbanization of *Sasoni Merbeel*. With the decline in farming, many residents have turned to commerce, retail and other urban-oriented economic activities. This shift reflects the growing influence of urbanization on the region's socio-economic fabric. Adding to this transformation is the establishment of an Eco Tourism Park in *Sasoni Merbeel*. Designed to attract visitors from nearby cities, the park has become a popular destination for recreation and relaxation. While this has brought economic benefits through tourism, yet it has also introduced new challenges such as pollution from plastic waste, bottles and other discarded materials. Without a proper waste management system in place, this waste accumulates and leads to pollution. Dumping plastic and other non-biodegradable waste into wetlands not only degrades the water quality but also endangers aquatic species and disrupts the food chain.

Noise pollution is yet another critical issue arising due to the increased number of vehicles, tourist activities and loud gatherings. This disrupts the tranquility of areas that are home to migratory birds and other wildlife, driving them away from their natural habitats. *Merbeel*, has seen a decline in migratory bird populations over the past decade due to noise and human interference. Such disruptions harm the ecological balance and diminish the area's appeal as a serene eco tourism destination.

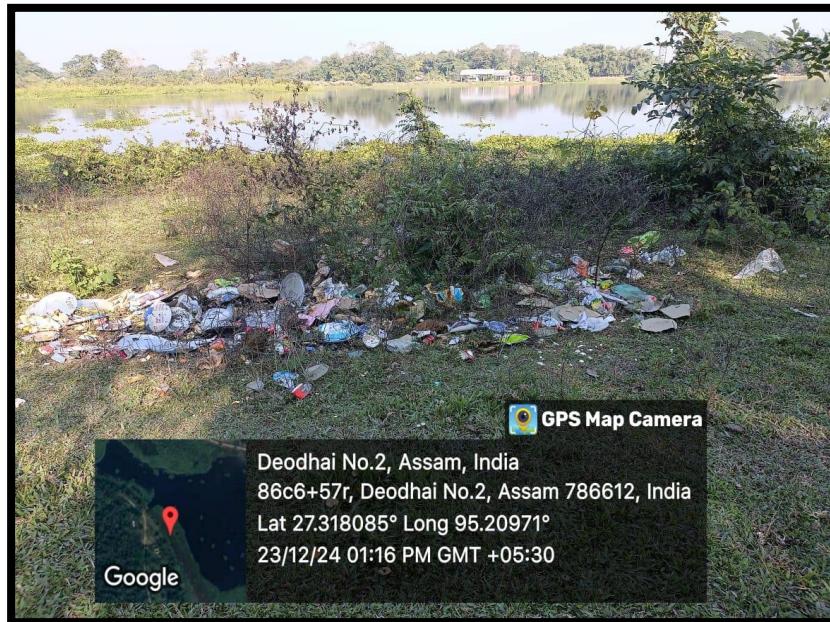
The water level in *Merbeel* has decreased time to time over the years. Residents attribute this to deforestation, unregulated ground water extraction and changing rainfall patterns. Seasonal water shortages are becoming more common and some smaller ponds and wells have either dried up or seen reduced in water levels. The decline in water levels has also affected the local ecosystem. Shrinking water bodies have disrupted aquatic life. Additionally, improper waste disposal practices including the dumping of organic and human waste pose a significant threat. In areas surrounding *Merbeel*, the lack of proper sanitation facilities has led to human waste contaminating in the water bodies, further deteriorating the ecosystem. This pollution affects aquatic life and diminishes the aesthetic and ecological value of the wetland, making it less attractive to eco tourists over time.

While ecotourism is often associated with minimal environmental impact, the rising popularity of these destinations has led to over-tourism in some cases. This phenomenon strains the carrying capacity of fragile ecosystems causing habitat degradation, deforestation, and increased carbon emissions from transportation. Furthermore, the socio-cultural fabric of local communities may also be affected as the influx of tourists can lead to the commercialization of traditions, loss of authenticity, and sometimes cultural insensitivity. The dumping of waste directly into the wetland has further degraded its ecological integrity, threatening the very natural beauty that attracts tourists to the area.

In essence, the natural ecosystem that sustained the wetland has been replaced by urban and industrial infrastructure, disrupting the delicate balance of flora and fauna. The noise and waste generated by human activity have made the area less hospitable for wildlife, undermining its ecological significance.

## **Suggestion for addressing Environmental concerns due to suburbanization of *Merbeel*:**

### **1. Plastic usage and waste management:-**



**Image: Plastic and other waste generated by tourist seen on the land surrounding the water body.**

During our field trip we visited the Merbeel Eco-Resort where we observed that plastic pollution is a significant concern in *Merbeel*, particularly due to the use of plastic materials brought by tourist. It is suggested that the use of eco-friendly alternatives, such as biodegradable plates and cups should be introduced to reduce the dependency on plastic. Furthermore, setting up a structured waste management system with proper segregation and recycling facilities can significantly reduce plastic pollution. Moreover, regular cleanup drives involving both locals and visitors can also contribute to maintaining a clean and sustainable environment.

### **2. Implementation of Rainwater Harvesting**

*Merbeel* is heavily dependent on nearby river water and there is no system in place for harvesting rainwater. To address this it is suggested that rainwater harvesting systems be installed in the residential and commercial establishments around *Merbeel*. These systems would not only reduce pressure on the river but also ensure water availability during dry

periods. Awareness programs should also be conducted to educate the local community on the importance and benefits of rainwater conservation for the sustainability of *Merbeel*.

### 3. Human Waste Management



**Image: Use of plastic to serve tourist were seen in the wetland of Merbeel Eco-Resort.**



**Image: Kitchen waste being directly discarded into the wetland at Merbeel Eco-Resort.**

The improper disposal of human waste from surrounding villages is a major concern for *Merbeel*, as it leads to the contamination of water in the wetland. It is suggested that eco-friendly sanitation facilities with installing of proper toilets in the villages to manage human waste effectively. Establishing small-scale sewage treatment plants (STPs) is another recommended measure to treat waste before it reaches the wetland. These steps will help protect the water quality of *Merbeel*, ensuring a healthy environment for both aquatic life and human use.

#### **4. Noise Pollution Control**

*Merbeel*, often referred to as an "*Island of silence*" has been facing increasing noise pollution due to the construction of a road leading to the wetland. The road which was initially built to improve accessibility marks the first step toward suburbanization in the area. Unfortunately, it has disrupted the delicate ecosystem of *Merbeel*. The road has led to a significant increase in the number of buses, cars, and tourists visiting the wetland, contributing to higher noise levels. Over the past decade, there has been a noticeable decline in migratory bird population caused due to this disturbance. To address these issues, it is suggested that vehicles, particularly buses, be stopped at designated parking areas away from *Merbeel*. Visitors should be encouraged to use bicycles or walk to the site, minimizing noise and preserving the calm atmosphere. Placing signs and enforcing noise control regulations will help maintain the peace that *Merbeel* is known for.

#### **5. Preservation of Biodiversity and Ecosystem**

The rich biodiversity of *Merbeel*, including its migratory birds and aquatic species, is under threat from overfishing, pollution, and human interference. It is suggested that limited disruptive activities, such as loud music or excessive fishing, can contribute to the protection of these species. Promoting eco-tourism through well-defined walking or cycling traits can allow visitors to enjoy nature responsibility while minimizing human impact on the environment.

#### **6. Community Involvement and Education**

The *gaon-panchayats* and *namghars* have a crucial role to play in the preservation of *Merbeel*. It is suggested that educational programs and workshops focusing on *Merbeel*'s ecological importance be conducted to raise awareness about eco-friendly practices, waste reduction and conservation can empower residents to contribute to environmental preservation. Community-led initiatives, such as tree planting drives, cleanup programs, and biodiversity monitoring, should be encouraged to foster a sense of responsibility among residents. Recognizing and rewarding contributions to conservation efforts can further motivate the community to actively participate in preserving *Merbeel*.

## **7. Encouraging youth involvement in the sustainable preservation of Merbeel:**

One of the pressing concerns regarding *Merbeel* is the limited participation of the younger generation in its conservation efforts. Encouraging youth led initiative, such as tree plantation drives, clean-up campaigns, and biodiversity documentation, can provide them with hands-on experience in preserving the environment. Additionally, leveraging technology can make conservation efforts more appealing to the younger generation. For instance, developing mobile application or social media campaigns highlighting the importance of *Merbeel* can raise awareness and promote active participation.

## **8. Restrictions on purchase of land:**

It is a suggestion that provisions should be made by the government with regard to strict restriction on purchase of land and land rights in Sasoni *Merbeel* as it is implemented in reserved forests and wildlife sanctuaries etc. in other parts of the state.

### **Literary Perspective of The Folklore:**

The folklore on *Merbeel* can be interpreted to understand the status of women in medieval Assam. The sacrificing of Diti to the *Jalkonwar* for the wellbeing of the villagers signify the value assigned to a woman. The image of the *Jalkonwar* is a representation of male power through land ownership. A woman could be sacrificed without knowing her own opinion and desires. The notion of ‘sacrifice’ suggests the insignificance of woman as an individual. This complex dynamics of power and gender can be explored further. This opens a scope for further research on power politics & gender roles as reflected in folktales.

The folklore also throws light on the inculcation of neo-Vaishnavite religion during the fifteenth century in Assam. Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva propounded the Bhakti movement in the region. As a part of the neo-Vaishnavite culture *satras* have been founded in various places which functioned as powerful religious institutions directing the life of the common people. The folklore related to the *satra* established by Shri Ram Deva Gossain in Sasoni *Merbeel* belongs to that period. It represents the socio-cultural environment of that period when the neo-Vaishnavite bhakti movement was at its peak and was spreading all over the nation. As students of literature we would like to suggest that the folklore associated with Sasoni *Merbeel* can be interpreted in terms of its culture and gender

dynamics and may be used to understand the status of women in patriarchal society in medieval Assam.

### **Conclusion:**

Sasoni *Merbeel* stands as a remarkable testament to the harmonious interplay between nature, culture and history. With its vast expanse of wetlands, vibrant biodiversity and deep cultural roots, it offers invaluable ecological and socio-cultural benefits. The wetland is not just an ecological asset but also holds significant cultural and spiritual importance as it is associated with the deity of the *Jalkonwar*, the local folktale. However, despite its rich heritage, Sasoni *Merbeel* faces unprecedented threats from suburbanization, industrialization and environmental degradation. If not addressed, these challenges could lead to irreversible damage to both the ecological and cultural fabric of the region. One of the most pressing concerns is the rapid transformation of *Merbeel* from a serene rural wetland into a suburban area marked by industrial growth and infrastructural expansion. The increased human footprint in the region has disrupted the wetland's ecological balance, making it difficult for migratory birds and aquatic species to thrive.

Moreover, suburbanization has driven socio-economic migration particularly among the younger generation. Traditional occupations such as farming and eco-tourism which once provided sustainable livelihood are gradually being abandoned in favor of urban employment opportunities. This shift has resulted in the neglect of farmlands which were once crucial in maintaining the wetland's ecological balance. As the fields remain uncultivated, invasive plant species have proliferated, further altering the wetland's natural vegetation and reducing its ability to support diverse wildlife. The declining interest in traditional livelihood also weakens the local community's engagement in conservation efforts, making it even more challenging to protect the wetland from further degradation.

Despite these challenges, there is significant potential for sustainable development and conservation initiatives that can protect Sasoni *Merbeel* while ensuring economic opportunities for the local population. Ultimately, the story of Sasoni *Merbeel* is not just about a wetland; it is about the delicate balance between progress and preservation. While industrialization and suburban expansion have brought economic development to the region, they have also raised concerns about the sustainability of its unique ecosystem and cultural heritage. By adopting sustainable practices, enforcing environmental regulations and fostering community engagement, *Merbeel* can serve as a model for balancing growth with

environmental responsibility. The profound cultural and ecological significance of Sasoni *Merbeel* makes it imperative to protect and preserve it for the well-being of both its natural inhabitants and the surrounding communities. The wetland's mystical charm, historical importance and environmental value must not be sacrificed for its unchecked development. With collective efforts, policy-driven conservation measures and a commitment to sustainability, Sasoni *Merbeel* can continue to thrive as a symbol of harmony between tradition, nature and modernity. Its preservation is not just a responsibility but a necessity for maintaining ecological balance, cultural heritage and the well-being of future generations. In this report, we have provided several suggestions on the basis of individual survey of the wetland. We feel that if the suggestions are incorporated strictly and seriously, it would definitely help the preservation of the wetland in the contemporary period of environmental crisis.

# **TOPPER'S**

# **TAKE**

## Toppers' Take

**Gagandeep Kaur**  
**Batch Topper 2024**  
**CGPA: 7.52**

The journey from studying English literature as my post-secondary pursuit to earning my degree has been a profoundly enriching experience. As I navigated the transformative odyssey of studying English literature, I was fortunate to be anchored by visionary mentors, compassionate peers, and a vibrant academic community. Their collective influence not only refined my intellectual pursuits but also nurtured my personal growth, empowering me to evolve into a more resilient, curious, compassionate and well rounded individual.



My exploration of English literature has been a boundary-pushing journey, traversing the realms of classical mythology, literary theory, and human experience. From the iconic stories of ancient Greece, where Achilles' rage continue to captivate, to the poignant struggles of Shakuntala and the Duchess of Malfi, each new discovery has broadened my perspective and deepened my appreciation for the transformative power of literature.

As I delved deeper, I encountered the Gothic horrors of Frankenstein's creature, the haunting narratives of Sethe, Dopdi and Philomela, and the innovative narrative techniques of modernist writers like Woolf, who pioneered the 'stream of consciousness' style. Through Eliot's Theory of Impersonality and the lens of Post-structuralism, I gained new insights into the complex relationships between literature, culture, and human experience.

Throughout this journey, I've been struck by the unwavering beauty of English literature, which reserves space for every discipline mankind has ever explored. From the timeless themes of love, loss, and redemption to the cutting-edge theories of literary criticism, English literature has been a constant source of fascination, inspiration, and growth.

Our academic journey was significantly enhanced by the department's commitment to extracurricular enrichment. Through a variety of engaging activities – from cinematic adaptations of literary classics to thought-provoking seminars, environmental initiatives, and celebratory events like International Women's Day – we developed valuable skills, forged meaningful connections, and cultivated a deeper appreciation for the world around us.

*DiscourseZ* represents a shining example of the department's dedication to empowering students as writers and thinkers. This annual journal celebrates the diversity of student voices, providing a dynamic platform for them to engage with complex ideas, showcase their creativity, and develop a sense of pride and accomplishment in their work. By publishing their articles, *DiscourseZ* not only acknowledges students' intellectual curiosity and creativity but also encourages them to continue exploring, writing, and pushing the boundaries of their imagination.

As I reflect on my own journey, I've learned a thing or two that I wish I'd known earlier. I hope that by sharing these thoughts, I might be able to inspire or encourage my fellow juniors in some small way. Always stay curious, open-minded, and passionate about learning. Develop a growth mindset, engage with as many people as you can and seize opportunities to showcase your skills, for this beautiful college life won't come again. Participate in as many events and competitions as you can, not for winning, but for collecting the golden memories of your college life. Don't hesitate to seek guidance from mentors and peers. Most importantly, stay happy and celebrate your achievements, and the tiniest of moments that come along the way.

As I conclude, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the respected faculty members of the English Department for offering me a platform to share my thoughts in *DiscourseZ*. Here's to the enduring legacy of *DiscourseZ*, the English Department, and Dulijan College – may they forever remain beacons of knowledge and creativity.

**VOICES  
FROM THE  
ALUMNI**