

**THE NARRATIVE AND SOCIO-POLITICAL
DISCOURSE IN *A BURNING* BY MEGHA MAJUMDAR**

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of English 2024



May, 2024

Bodoland University, Kokrajhar

Submitted By: Alphun Daimary

Roll No: PGENG408A22001

Registration No: 013630/2022-2023

Supervisor: Dr. Pradip Kumar Patra

Department of English

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation "The Narrative and Socio-Political Discourse in *A Burning* by Megha Majumdar" is my original work conducted under the supervision of Dr. Pradip Kumar Patra. It has been composed by me and has not been previously submitted for any other degree or examination at any other institution. The research in this paper is the outcome of my own exploration and investigation, and I want to give credit where it's due for any help I received along the way.

Signature of the candidate

(Alphun Daimary)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am so grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Pradip Kumar Patra, for giving me the confidence to choose this topic and for always being there to support me. I would like to express my deep appreciation to Dr. Pratusha Bhowmik for assisting me, providing support when needed, and guiding me during the research and writing of this dissertation.

I also extend thanks to Megha Majumdar who wrote an engaging novel titled *A Burning* which was instrumental in this dissertation.

Alphun Daimary

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ABSTRACT

A Burning by Megha Majumdar is a raw representation of social inequality, caste system, rising and survivor: a Young Woman's Story in Modern India. The purpose of this paper is to present a Marxist analysis of how the narrative integrates the three main characters belonging to different social classes to convey the notion of oppression. In terms of socio-political concerns the study aims at analyzing the aspect of Marxist ideology within the narrative by focusing on such as ideas as alienation, false consciousness and dominance of the ideology. In terms of socio-economic status, it analyses how class struggle and emergent capitalistic mode of production affects the character's daily experiences and engagements within a society where scarcity of resources and social inequality are defining factors. The paper also analyses power relations and ideological oppression, which is present in the context of ideological domination and oppression what determines characters' beliefs and keeps social injustices going. Further, it explores how social media which is nowadays manifested mainly in the Facebook platform is a contemporary means that embodies and sustains socio-political conflict. Thus, through the examination of the major aspects and techniques of the metafictional structure in *A Burning*, the research reveals that Majumdar's work centers on the representation of oppression-driven narratives of the minorities and their fight for emancipation. It shows how the novel escalates these voices and challenges the suppression of the latter. Finally, this research enriches the knowledge on how *A Burning* presents socio-political themes and questions hegemonic discourses. This is because the novel's structure and content invites the reader to challenge the idea of normality and social systems' unfairness.

Keywords: Socio-political themes, Marxist analysis, Class struggle, Economic exploitation, Power dynamics, Narrative techniques

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 An Introduction to the Study Area

Megha Majumdar's *A Burning* (2020) is a powerful first novel that maps out the lives of the people of contemporary India. This way, it illustrates how their experiences, their suffering, and their lives relate to the current social injustices occurring in the community. The people depicted in the book struggle due to circumstance or the social position they occupy. These are all the various hardships to illustrate that in a society people are not valued equally depending on their religion or amount of wealth. This novel also describes the society as being unfair especially to people with misfortunes. It reveals the exploitation of one person by another, especially regarding the use of authority in possessing a person. The characters in the novel thus fail to come to terms with their identity and capabilities within society that has perpetually degrades them. It gives a good insight about the independence and freedom of an individual when the society puts so much pressure on an individuals to do thing it wants or denied them a certain priveledge. It also speaks about the role of social media and even news media in today's world in creating people's perception about something and control over them, once again complementing the analysis of the concept of power. In short, it's a tale of two India s, both the individual and the national, with the author's odyssey at the center. It discusses how people are mistreated in society by put in certain classes like religious class and in this class they use money as a ticketing system. It also depicts how some persons in authority indulge in vices and how people struggle in efforts to gain identity and autonomy in the face of odds.

The patterns of living of the Indian society, hierarchy and dominance /submission of the present day Indian society are explored in the novel. In the process of introducing three main characters

– a Bengali Muslim woman imprisoned for terrorism, PT sir, the physical training instructor who loves politics, and Lovely, the trans menstrual actor – Majumdar addresses issues of classism, bigotry, and living in subjugation. It is still a solid testament to the applicability of Marxist theory in analyzing and protesting current systems and arrangements that uphold more of the same that promote unfairness, bigotry, and inequality in resource sharing. It also essay social tale by a clear existence of class structures in which the main player, Majumdar, himself, also narrates. Majumdar created a society endowed with a clear division of TOP – BOTTOM observed in such a way that the elite own the fate of the powerless people, and survival takes precedence over justice. Following this dissertation under a Marxist analysis of literature it becomes the aim of this dissertation to pose the text and the society of the novel. Furthermore as part of the analysis, this dissertation shall also discuss how the novel challenges the ideas of false consciousness and ideological domination. This will be demonstrated through the play through two aspects, the psychological shear and the characters' conformity to and struggle against immoral frameworks. According to the shown relations of class, gender and religion, they try to help the readers grasp the point that oppression is not as straightforward as it seems, and how these relations shape the character's performativity and the plot's progression in the subsequent episodes.

1.2. Literature review

A Burning, Megha Majumdar's critically acclaimed debut novel published in 2020, is a novel that has quickly garnered the attention of literary scholars, as it discusses subjects such as social inequality, oppression, and the living conditions of the poor in modern India. This literature review will position the novel between similar literary texts, critical analyses, and Marxist theory premises towards enhancing its socio-political discussion.

Novels like Aravind Adiga's 'The White Tiger', Rohinton Mistry's 'A Fine Balance' and Arundhati Roy's 'The God of Small Things' gives the glimpse of the Indian society's harsh discriminating Socio-economic ladder that has placed the poor at the receiving end of the society. These authors also use fiction to reveal the reality hidden behind disparity of income in India being discussed by Majumdar.

Whether in the works of Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels' The Communist Manifesto, the revolutionary concepts like 'the abolition of private property' with intent on dismantling social hierarchy and dealing with structural inequality translates to action. Understanding the experiences of the characters in A Burning requires the analysis of Marxist theories such as alienation, class consciousness, and revolutionary praxis because these ideas enable a better comprehension of how characters function within a society that practices exploitation and oppression.

In the work "A Burning", one can observe the features of marxist perspective, the well-defined presentation of the class struggle, political views, as well as oppressive role of the upper class for the formation of socio political discourse in contemporary India. In the Article The Upper Class's Violence and Violations in Megha Majumdar's A Burning by Dr. Rashad Mohammed Moqbel Al Areqi, the writer establishes the conflict between social classes, reveals what ideas and interests drive these conflicts, and analyzes how these ideas manage the behavior of the different classes or dominate the kinds of interactions they have. In the given article "The Marxist Analysis of Manjula Padmanabhan's 'Lights Out'" authored by G Vasishta Bhargavi, the approach used by the author is Marxist to examine a drama, 'Lights Out' of Manjula

Padmanabhan for Indian English Theatre and some of the issues discussed are gender discrimination, injustice, and the fear of law and police besides judicial system.

1.3. Aims and objectives

Thus, this dissertation is about analysing Megha Majumdar's novel *A Burning* in order to identify how it discusses society and politics in modern India from a Marxist perspective. It analyses the techniques of narrative characterisation and writing style to convey the matters of class distinctions, oppression and power relations. As for the readership, the paper explores how understanding these themes and being forced to think about them and things like power and stratification are activated by the novel. The study will also examine how the text employs Marxist themes of isolation, self-enslavement, and ideology to capture the aspect of economic oppression, conflict of classes, and maintenance of the status quo respectively. and how these are reflected in the experiences of the main characters belonging to the socially inferior groups. It is crucial to get acquainted with the sociopolitical context of the novel to increase the chance of comprehending the plot. It skilfully outlines people's challenges in the environment, which is characterized by social and economical injustice. By concentrating on the lives of people from different social statuses and depicting the class struggle and exploitation as the narrative's core components, the story reflects the concern for the common people. From their relations and responses to economic adversity, the play's characters portray the rooted racism and systemic challenges. Facebook is one of the most used social networks in a burning especially among the youth. Social media is shown in the book as having two sides: it is a useful tool in spreading fake news and spying and an effective means for rallying people and voicing out. This dissertation will analyze how social media has affected the characters' lives and in turn, how it has mirrored as well as exacerbated major

social issues. Thus, investigation into another significant facet of the novel entails the portrayal of marginalized people. The novel enables underprivileged characters to express their opinions and at the same time illustrate their strength and the challenge that they have to deal with. This dissertation will also look at the different narrative contribution by the different characters in the text and the silencing of such voices.

1.4. Research methodology

This dissertation will incorporate a secondary research using textual analysis and critical literary analysis which shall be informed by Marxist literary theory. The primary method of interpretation will include other factors such as the analysis of story telling techniques that are employed in the novel, the construction of character(s) that portray real life situations in present day India and the themes and issues that underpin a Majumdar novel. Special attention will be paid to the evaluation of Marxist ideas, which the text reflects upon referencing such notions as alienation, false consciousness, commodification of work, and ideological domination. Using the theory obtained from Marxist critics and theorists, and using the survived by Maria, the novel will be analyzed on how it portrays class struggle, power, and how the Minority struggles.

This paper's objective is to undertake a close literary analysis of narratives plus a critical exploration of socio-political themes in *A Burning* by Megha Majumdar. The major concern mainly revolves around the implementation of Marxism, which would help to analyse how characters and their speeches enhance the representation and condemnation of socio-political systems in the novel. Thus, the chosen method focuses on the analysis of socio-political factors that influences the characters and their relationships determined by Marxist

methodology. According to the findings of the study, there are several instances in the novel when the depicted actions of the characters concern typical class division and conflict; nevertheless, the focus would be to understand how the novel presents the actual fight of the proletariat liable for existence in a society that could only reestablish class distinction. Also, the post-structuralist lens of analysing the language used, as well as the role that communication plays in maintaining or challenging the ideology of the dominant society will be used in the study.

CHAPTER 2: SOCIO-POLITICAL THEMES AND MARXIST ANALYSIS IN

A BURNING

2.1 Introduction to Socio-Political Context and Marxist Theory

Megha Majumdar's *A Burning* is a story that captures essence of socio-political agenda and the manner in which narratives are built in the context of modern India. The three protagonists' narrations of the events elaborate the roles that are played by different social power structures in the construction of their stories in the wake of a catastrophe. They are Jivan, a thirty-nine year old Muslim woman from a Kolkata slum, when she is filmed under false pretenses with her, and accused of involvement in the terrorist bombing that has shaken the country. Her story unveils stigma, racism and other factors that determine the view people have about certain groups that are usually seen as inferior in the society especially those of less affirming religion and class. Thus, through the representation of Jivan, Majumdar explores specific dynamics that pertain to understanding how discursive power is constructed and while people in power are usually the ones who shape these discursive structures, they benefit from using it to their advantage. The novel also centers itself on the concept of media specifically social media and how it influences public opinion – Jivan's case quickly becomes a cause célèbre, but not for the right reasons. PT Sir is another character who is shown as a former teacher who becomes an opportunist and wants to exploit Jivan for his political gains. The character of this man shows its people how the narratives can be controlled by power-hungry persons, regardless of the impact on the truth. The third character is Lovely, she is a hijra, a third-gender or a transsexual person who acts as a witness in Jivan's case. She embodies the discrimination of minority groups and the role that the society plays in constructing an individual's story because of their gender and sexual orientation. Power and ideology are intertwined in Majumdar's novel which, focalises and details how socio-political discourses are created and maintained through

the human experiences of power, hegemony and subjectivity. She describes how such narratives can both reify systems of oppression and maintain enduring power dynamics although at the same time, demonstrate how such discourses can be contested and undermined. The novel being extensively examining the construction, circulation, analysis, and consumption embedded in the socio-political realities of the real world, is a weapon and tool of the political and social establishment on one hand and subversive on the other hand.

The political social and economic doctrine from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels of the nineteenth century is major revolutionary theory for globalization. In general, Marxism can be defined as a complex socio-philosophical analysis of capitalist relations and oppression inherent in the process of capitalist production. Thus, in the framework of the Marxist approach, the infrastructural support of contemporary society is its economic building, which is made up of the means of production, people and tools, machinery, factories, etc. It has an accompanying social, political, and, in a general sense, ideological apparatuses derived from the kind of economic base that exists. According to Marx the owners of productive capital in this case the bourgeoisie exploit the working class referred to as the proletariat since they only own their abilities to work. Marxist theory has many tenets, one of which can be referred to as class struggle. According to Marx, society is fundamentally divided into two main classes: the capitalists or the owners of the production instruments that include factories, lands, capital while the other party is the workers or the sellers of their working power to the capitalists. According to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*, one can say that "the history of all social formations that existed until that time can be considered as the history of class conflict" (Marx and Engels 1848, 14). This economic duality is inscribed into the very body of the novel and leads to antagonism between the two classes: the bourgeoisie, who amass capital by profiting off of the proletariat's toil. According to Marx, this class conflict is the

motor of social transformation: indeed, the “proletarians, the modern working class” becomes the revolutionary class that wants to eliminate the capitalist bourgeois system to build the classless society (Marx and Engels 1848, 16). The idea of alienation is the fundamental to the understanding of the criticism Marx has for the capitalist economy it refers to the loss of attachment by the workers from what they produce, the process of production, their own humanity, and other workers. In his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx delineates four distinct aspects of alienation: The second type, the worker’s relationship with his own species-being, is explained by Marx in the following way: “the worker is alienated from his own product; from his own self-activity; from his own species-being; and from other men” (Marx 1844, 114). This alienation results in workers being stripped of their decision-making abilities, their ability to be innovative, and finding purpose in their work, all of which subjugates the proletariat class. False-consciousness explains why the proletariat remains utterly ignorant of their economic position and inferiority within the capitalist society. According to what Marx and Engels pointed out in *The German Ideology*, “The relations of production of each epoch have their corresponding Highland culture and ideology” (1846, 67). A primary objective of culture manufactured by the bourgeoisie through such avenues as education system and mass media is to leave the working class in a state of ignorance thus failing to realize their collective identity hence effectively denying them the insight needed to rebel against the ruling class. Therefore, overcoming this false consciousness is required to attain the revolutionary class consciousness and start struggling against the order of the capitalist mode of production.

In her quite captivating novel “*A Burning*”, Megha Majumdar provides her audience with some of the fundamental theories of Marxism such as the class struggle and alienation as well as

false consciousness. The plot focuses on the lives of individuals suffering from social inequality in contemporary India captured by the oppressive nature of the capitalist system. It emphasises the way in which capital dehumanises work into a process which SERVES individuals, taking away their agency, imagination and opportunities to become the best they can become. The novel also centers on how the characters may not even know they're operating in a framework that oppresses them. This shows that even in such hurting and hopeless situations there is always a ray of hope and that for the faceless powerless group as presented in the novel, there is a chance for everyone to come together and stand up against this unfairness, and learn the reality of the system they live in.

2.2 Analysis of Class Struggle and Exploitation

Thus, appealing to the real vulnerable characters, Megha Majumdar's "A Burning" (2020) skillfully uncovers the themes of the economic oppression and division within the Indian community. An understanding of the themes of the novel is greatly enhanced when exploring the character of the protagonist Jivan, who portrays the brute reality for a majority of the urban poor struggling with no hope in sight. Jivan is an impoverished girl born to Muslim parents in the slum of Kolkata; she has never known much of hope or security in life, or the possibility that she might be forcibly evicted from the place she calls home. While at times Jivan receives excellent marks and dreams of transforming her life through education, the explosive result of a spur-of-the-moment negative post on Facebook leads to the complete deterioration of her life. Jivan gets into further troubles after a horrible terrorist attack because she replied to a Facebook thread, and her words are misconstrued as agreeing to the reason of the terrorists. This seemingly harmless online conversation sets a roll a series of happenings which eventually results in Jivan attempting to implicate herself in the attack. This would point out the systemic racism and neglect that the less privileged groups of people are subjected to. Majumdar portrays

how a rather petty comment on social media can cause such dire consequences for someone like Jivan, thereby underlining how unpredictable life can be for the poor living in urban centres. The book also illustrates the fact that human beings who live at the fringes of the society, do not have the support of relatives, friends, or the legal defense, a single mistake, or misunderstanding has devastating repercussions. As for the second aspect, social stratification and social injustice in the novel "The God of Small Things" (1997) are depicted rather as a system of oppression, where social class and caste as well as gender are primary factors that determine one's place in the society. Among the Kochamma family members, the story brings to attention cases of marginalization, violence, and systematic unfairness. Ammu, one of its chief characters, encounters severe discrimination and suppression because she is looked down upon an upper class girl who is divorced, since she is a woman and her life choices are unusual. She has done wrong things against her society's norms, so she no longer decides what happens in her life and the lives of her kids notwithstanding having been born in a wealthy home. Just like her, Jivan has to live in a world characterized by differences in social classes, gender bias, religious bigotry, all compounded with the fact that she is girl hailing from poor Muslim family hence things are even harder for her. Jivan, similar to Ammu, is marginalized due to many roles she meshes with; thus, her objectives and control are curtailed by unyielding social systems and bureaucratic challenges. Roy portrays Velutha as a man from an "Untouchable" class who is subjected to intense cruelty and mistreatment due to his low birth and illegal affair with Ammu in the novel. His experiences show all of us that such discrimination on caste lines and the severe consequences for contravention of societal code of conduct is actually a reality, especially for poor people. Jivan is a Muslim lady from low economic context who has gone through experiences similar to those of Velutha in facing unfair observation, persecution, as well as no justice yet she is also affected by religious and class status thus. In these novels' depiction of the harsh reality of underprivileged communities in India, the agency, dignity and

access to justice and opportunity of such characters as Ammu, Velutha and Jivan are denied due to the combined impact of class, gender, caste and religious prejudice.

Bapsi Sidhwa wrote the novel "Cracking India" in 1991. This book is available under another title "Ice-Candy Man. It provides the necessary background and analogies for the reader to comprehend Jivan's ordeal with religious bigotry and exclusion when portrayed as being Muslim. "Cracking India" (1991) falls within the time frame of the country's strife marred independence struggle: a period when British controlled territories were split into two countries—India to the south and Pakistan to the north. In Lahore, where the novel is predominantly set, the cruelty and violence increasing inter-communal observed by little-known people such as Lenny, a young Parsi girl who is the main character of the novel. The book presents a touching story about displacement, bloodshed, and religious strife that attended this historical occurrence specifically from the perspective of underrepresented minorities including Muslims from India and Hindus from Pakistan. With Lenny as the focal point, Sidhwa describes so powerfully in real-life terms, Muslim families who are persecuted, got attacked and are forced from their homes as a result of their religious beliefs. A Hindu nursemaid who is loved by Lenny and serves as one of the main characters is Ayah, who is abducted by a gang of bigots and fanatics and assaulted badly. In Majumdar's novel, Jivan's experiences living as a Muslim woman in contemporary times reveal the wide-spread marginalization and discrimination against her religion that persists among some societies just as "Ayah's Terrible Destiny" is a powerful criticism on the results of religious discrimination and how it can affect minority groups who might destabilize societies. The reason she was falsely accused and harassed is because someone misunderstood her Facebook comment after a terrorist attack. This situation points us to the under-represented groups who are given more than adequate security checks but whose protection is a subject of public debate: religious and

ethnoracial minority groups, including Muslims. The unstable position of religious minorities is shown in both novels: individuals such as Jivan as well as Muslim figures are subject to repression, violence, and injustice due to their faith alone in “Cracking India” (1991). In Sidhwa's novel, events are described which provide historical context and resonate with Jivan’s struggles against systematic bias and harassment in an environment where the majority are Hindus.

The second character is Lovely – a transgender woman, who dreamt to become a famous actor. The problem is that the community does not pay attention to a transgender person due to their identity. Her failure to secure stable job is clear evidence of the systemic prejudice and limited chances she encounters. Her primary source of income is from her low-paying, irregular work in traditional hijra roles, such blessing babies or attending weddings. She may, for example, receive little payments from blessing retailers or doing small performances at ceremonies, but these are inconsistent and inconsistent sources of revenue. Lovely is forced to navigate a life of uncertainty and predicament as a result of the economic turmoil. Jivan taught her how to speak English, as she will need this language when she works as a movie star. The identified characters suffer from being a transgender person and identified as a hijra. However, Lovely is ready to do all things to become a famous actor. Her determination to be an actress has been compared with climbing a mountain due to the audacity and creativity she brought to it, rather than waiting for stage magic. Her classes and performances are always a hit with the professors and students alike, and award her many scholarships. Her mother struggles every day in the gardens so she can fund her education at the theatre institute, where she is a popular student due to her artistic temper and zeal in following other people's examples. In spite of facing numerous challenges, Lovely is able to draw sense of purpose and optimism from acting. Lovely grapples with rampant discrimination and societal biases linked to her being a

transsexual. Scorn and alienation from strangers as well as her fellow villagers characterize her experiences in the story. This is evident when she attends auditions and people either outright reject her or laugh at her gender identity. At some point, a casting director rejected her just because she was a hijra; her encounters with such deep-rooted prejudices become evident. Due to her low economic status, Lovely gets embroiled in broader political and social dynamics sketched in the novel. Her friendship with the protagonist Jivan, who is facing charges for terrorism, drags Lovely into a complex array of political intrigue and moral dilemmas. Lovely considers various things, for example she has to think about her need for social acceptance and financial support before she can make up her mind whether to testify or not. Her testimony is very important in prosecuting Fatmagul. It shows ways through which individuals from less privileged groups would be coerced into being pawns or instruments for more elaborate political schemes. Lovely undergoes discrimination which has negative impacts on her, however there are also other instances when the community comes together in support therefore showing us how intricate Lovely's social life can be. Through no fault of their own but due to their own individual financial challenges; Hijras' give support making her feel like she belongs somewhere within her means. Feeling supported is crucial for Lovely because it ensures there is always someone with whom one can share their emotions keeping them protected against hard facts about themselves. In Vikram Chandra's novel "Sacred Games" (2006), we are introduced to a Mumbai hijra community that is as intricate as it is rich; one which is regularly confronted with society's judgment calls, poverty, and the search for artistic self-expression. Anjali(a transgender who is also a Bollywood aspirant) embodies Lovely's desires and obstacles experienced due to her sexual preference. Chandra's presentation of Anjali's life, however, is too complicated, but this brings out in Anjali's case, the difficulties and institutional discrimination against hijras who seek to uphold the conventional economic and social goals. It is similar with Lovely when casting or auditioning because Anjali's experience too is related.

It is true that most of the time; despite being an actor out of passion and a talented individual, Anjali is ridiculed regarding gender related issues just as it happens to Lovely in auditions and casting calls. In its thematic concerns with the economic insecurity and exploitation that waft through Lovely's experiences, the novel also throws light on the precarious types of jobs, like prostitution and traditional roles such as officiating at weddings, on which many hijras depend too much. The novel also looks into the relationships among the hijra community: their sense of belongingness. This provides insight into Lovely's personality as she finds solace and social acceptance from the hijra community, despite wider societal bias and financial challenges. In her character development of Anjali, Chandra delves into the persistent and indubitable natures of hijras like Lovely, who refuse to allow the repressive systems that target them entrench their existence. Their's is an affirmation of defiance and inner strength shown by their unwavering determination on their personal targets despite being faced by insurmountable odds. Arundhati Roy's 'The Ministry of Utmost Happiness' (2017) brings out this hijra character, known as Anjum, caught between the rhythm of belongingness and contempt for self while maneuvering through the streets of New Delhi. Lovely's character arc and general impressions on the hijra community as per Anjum, affords us notable insights into the challenges and strength of character that she shows in the novel. One of the advancing issues we encounter in the book is how Hijras are treated unequally because they are looked down upon about culture in India. Lovely is like Roy in describing how hijras are discriminated against due to their difference from the other society members through not providing jobs for them. Anjum and Lovely are forced to live outside society because they are transgender, and therefore can be considered at the margins of social inclusion or acceptance, where they encounter social exclusion as well as stigmatization, systematic discrimination and economic hardship. Anjum who was born male and named Aftab moves in with another community of hijras when she cannot take any more mistreatment in her original home. There she finds a place for herself by participating in events

within that group but remains marginalized in terms of money. Lovely, a hijra living in Kolkata, also juggles precarious labor; earning a livelihood mostly through irregular and low-paying conventional hijra occupations. Both narratives reflect a common theme of economic exploitation. In spite of societal bias hindering her efforts to achieve financial security, Anjum is determined to keep pressing on even to the extent of opening a guest house. Just like Lovely, her dream of becoming an actor is also fraught with challenges: rejection and taunting due to her gender identity highlight the poor economic future that awaits hijras. The amount of resistance and resilience exhibited by these individuals is quite significant. When Anjum converts a graveyard into a sanctuary for marginalized persons, she assembles a neighbourhood to restore a sliver of optimism even as she defies traditional views on how society should treat such people around her. She dare not speak on it publicly because it could land her behind bars. Lovely is acting on what she enjoys and not allowing herself to be brought down by poverty or other challenges like anyone who wants to make it in Hollywood but does not come from money or powerful connections.

In her portrayal of PT Sir, a retired physical education teacher turned political opportunist, Majumdar condemns the corruption and power structures that underpin economic exploitation. Being a member of Bimala Pal's right-wing political party, he assumes that PT Sir has promised himself some advancements in his social and political standings due to these affiliations. He employs his position so as to push ahead his political interests. PT Sir is an example of someone who belongs to the petty bourgeoisie but he has high ambitions of becoming rich by rubbing shoulders with the elites in the society while on the other hand he does not care about the poor hence he is willing to promote his own interests when they conflict with the poor's; It is thus evident that institutions aiming at assisting the underprivileged within the society have structural failures. This keeps the underprivileged underprivileged. His behaviour shows how

difficulty the bourgeoisie has in balancing their ethical stance against personal interests their desire to have something shared fairly amongst all people or themselves. The figure of PT Sir shows how individuals from poorer backgrounds adopt powerful ideologies, leading to the sustenance of oppression, in the novel. The theory that there are manifestations of false consciousness and intellectual hegemony in PT Sir's character from "A Burning" can be justified by reference to distinguished marxist philosophers. The portrayal of PT Sir is a reflection of Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural dominance pronounced Caesarism as this relates to the novel's testing of class conflict and economic exploitation. The significant scholar in Marxism, Antonio Gramsci's idea of cultural hegemony is shown in the depiction of PT Sir's character, and this is relevant to the novel's study of class war and economic subjugation. In his work "Selections from the Prison Notebooks" (Gramsci, 1971) Gramsci introduces the concept of cultural hegemony, describing how the dominant class perpetuates its rule by adopting and disseminating doctrines that validate and support its power expansionist behavior besides employing violence or threat. Gramsci theorized that dominant classes secure the compliance of subordinate classes through a process of hegemony whereby the latter are induced to "consent" to their own domination by the former, in part, by means of the production and transmission of prevailing ideas, norms, values and beliefs that are conducive to the interest of the ruling class, using the various apparatuses such as politics, media, education among others. The body of PT Sir serves as an instance of how this hegemonic process works. In his current representation of him as a teacher, he is situated as part of the educational system noted by Gramsci as an important site for dominant ideology dissemination. However, PT Sir later joined politics and took advantage of Jivan's predicament for his own benefits putting into light the subtle ways in which he has consciously integrated and advanced ruling class friendly ideas. Besides betraying his former identity as a teacher, PT Sir contributes to marginalization of the impoverished through misrepresentation of facts and portraying Jivan as a dangerous radical.

One may argue that PT Sir's activities demonstrate a kind of false consciousness pointed out by Gramsci: They tend to express that oppressed classes tend to accept without question the ideas that keep them poor. PT Sir, in sacrificing Jivan's interests to achieve his own political objectives allies himself with the forces of hegemony that promote economic stratification and class warfare. Illustrated by Majumdar, she portrayed the personality of PT which spotlights how the dominant ideology pervades different hubs of power in the society in ways that are very discreet and hard to notice let alone harmful to those who promote them but poor masses too. It shows that the complex processes that maintains economic exploitation and class conflict is not only overt oppression but the internalization and spread of popular narratives that support existing power structures.

The idea of "false consciousness," which originated from Marx and Engels's work "The German Ideology" (Marx & Engels, 1932), is also reflected in PT Sir's character. The term "false consciousness" describes the situation in which the oppressed groups absorb and internalize the ideals, convictions, and ideologies of their oppressors, supporting the very structures that allow for their oppression. According to Marx and Engels, this ignorance is due to the tangible environmental conditions and relationships that shape practical realities of proletarian's everyday life and make them accept and justify dominant ideologies promoted by ruling elite, regardless of their willingness to serve their own ends for instance in this case PT Sir represents lack of self-awareness which it refers as untrue perception. PT Sir risks Jivan's interests when he manipulates a false accusation aimed at her, using it as a tool for political gain. He betrays Jivan who symbolizes the lower class thereby effectively alienating her from mainstream ideologies and narratives which he articulates. According to PT Sir, Jivan is both a radical to be feared and a threatening character who embodies the narratives that propagate poverty. PT Sir's act of portraying Jivan as a dangerous radical and using the prevailing fears

and biases in the society is a path towards reinforcing oppression. PT Sir's previous position was a teacher who was supposed to be advocating for and supporting minority students so his action constitutes a deeper form of betrayal against them. He has succumbed to the false consciousness about which Marx and Engels cautioned, as we can see from his actions, whereby the oppressed classes embrace as well as uphold the notions and ideologies of such groups who oppress them thereby enabling perpetuation of oppressive oligarchies. Majumdar presents an insight into the pernicious nature of false consciousness such that it can operate even inside groups or individuals who feel they are advocates for the poor, through the character of PT Sir. His readiness to put Jivan's well-being in danger to promote his career in politics shows how widespread existing attitudes are thus individuals who should be opposed normally do the opposite as concerns absorbing and sharing those attitudes.

In her now classic article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (Spivak, 1988), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak posited how subordinate communities for instance the poor segment of society not only remain excluded for the discursive but also are positioned within a state of social powerlessness through which they are denied the ability to represent their own voices. PT Sir and Jivan are the dwelling inhabitants of the apartment building and their subordinate contacts unequivocally characterize subaltern conflicts which Spivak aims to analyze. But, PT Sir who never looks at the welfare and prospects of the black-skinned Jivan, sacrifices him to save herself as a political animal, finding him, her supporting teacher in politics and plot against him by framing up fake charges and gets him jailed. Thus, he safely deletes Jivan and her story from being let out and places her history under his wish list while using Jivan a mere symbol or a device. Save for this Form, Majumdar's novel depicts the oppression of the oppressed by one who has privilege and power: the humiliation and betrayal endured by Jivan at the hands of PT Sir is a poignant reminder that oppression may manifest in various manners. It indicates that it is still possible

for structures and establishment to seem to include marginalized communities or provide them with access to mainstream society and mundane existence, all the while continuing with making their existence miserable and erasing them from existence.

2.3 Exploring Power Dynamics and Ideological Influences

The dynamic of power is central to interpreting Megha Majumdar's narrative and multiple characters trying and failing to escape estates and unequal social structures in search of justice, money, and life. The reader comprehends that the show *W* is as far as possible from being shallow and Chopra offers a rather multi-layered view on power, and as it is seen, the lives of people living in modern India are shaped by social, political, and, certainly, economical factors. Similarly, the novel also narrates the gritty harsh life of a developing third world country like India and particularly the squalid life in whatever little shanties called slums, assimilation of people of different castes, their relations, how and when these get volatile and protest. By depicting the story through the experiences of Jivan, Lovely, and PT Sir the author is able to capture the various perspectives of the struggling society to show how the voice of the majority in India is suffering. They do not receive backup from the social class system so as to enable them boost on their future. And at the end all of them choose these roads which according to them will help them accomplish in life what they consider is a better life despite the harm they are going to do to their souls. The elements outlined below reveal the analytic focus of this study: Societal class, economical formations, rhetoric or culture, biased, and dominance. It examines how the elite class employs these methods to exert control over the lower class. Tyson (2015) argues that for Marxism, economic power is the driving force behind all social and political activities:

Marxism prioritizes economic power over all social and political activities, including education, philosophy, religion, government, arts, science, technology, and media. Thus, Economics serves as the foundation for shaping social, political, and ideological realities (Tyson 54).

The theoretical framework applied in this study illustrates the distinct socioeconomic goals of the upper class and demonstrates how it pursues its interests at the expense of other social groups and sects. Individuals, social classes, or economic powers may all exhibit this kind of behavior in their deeds. The person in control of the economy is the one who determines the destiny of the people. The powers of the upper class are served by their apparatuses, which allow them to command the superstructures that the economy and the economy itself have developed. As a result, they have control over educational institutions and policies. Because of their hopes of a future in which their own sociopolitical interests will be served, the upper class controls the superstructural economy, which in turn dominates the base economy of the poor. Additionally, it has authority over the various facets of the mass media, including the official channels, social media, TV, radio, and press. Furthermore, other power sources like philosophy, religion, and technology are subjugated to the dictates of the ruling class. These tactics are all employed to further the interests and goals of the upper class.

The upper class enforces ideologies that serve their interests. Bressler (2011) analyzes the objective of upper-class ideology as follows:

The upper class will eventually express their values, views, and even artistic creations. Whether intentionally or not, they will then impose these concepts or what Marx refers to as their ideology on the working class. In a society that, the wealthy

get wealthier and the poor get poorer and more oppressed (Bressler 116).

The working class, which is the lower class, is subjugated by the upper class, which also imposes its beliefs on them. In this study, I look at how the affluent use the underclass to further their agendas and enhance their public image by controlling the media and running educational institutions that offer the affluent the advantages and services they seek. The beliefs that guide the classes are the basis of their disputes. As each class tries to dominate and achieve its goals, the conflicts between them intensify into ongoing hostilities. As a result, the upper class which occasionally takes the form of the state power will compel the lower class to embrace and adopt its ideals. Marxism refers to this as a hegemony. Bressler (2011) noted that the bourgeoisie "dictates their hegemony, or the system of values and meanings by which they live, work, and play" (Bressler 120). Because they lack the ability to reject such ideals, members of the lower class, the working class, who are historically the oppressed group practice the ones that are imposed upon them. They have to operate under them because, in the end, they become their values. The study will examine how the classes' struggle arises to serve particular classes or further the interests of certain characters who are employed by their policies, using Marxist notions as a framework.

Majumdar tries to investigate some of the community's issues and how, on occasion, the extreme actions of the government and the environment get in the way of the aspirations of the underprivileged. Acquiring one's identity or aspiration might not be a simple endeavor. The main character, Jivan, being a Muslim woman from a slum who, wrongly convicted of supporting a terrorist assault, falls victim to governmental and social inequalities. The preconceived ideas and prejudices posing an obstacle to her search for justice are revealed in her interaction with the legal system. Media's sensationalism plus the lawyer assigned to her

case who is not very competent illustrate how social biases and political pressures may be used to undermine the legal system if you are poor, e.g., Jivan. Through his rise to power, Jivan's former physical education teacher, PT Sir, presents another dimension of power relations. The way ambition and power corrupt can be illustrated through his transformation from a mere teacher to a party member in right-wing politics. This shows how ambition and power corrupt. PT Sir had to use political institutions to pursue ambition.

As Lovely seeks to be famous, she is met with administrative and social barriers; administrative and social barriers are obstacles for Lovely's quest for fame as a hijra, or transgender woman; in the entertainment sector, she encounters bias and exclusion even though she is talented, just like many other hijras had experienced. It underscores persistence required to combat overarching societal norms because the only other alternative is to submit yourself into them and conform to everything they say. Her persona also illuminates the support networks and internal social structures found in marginalized communities, highlighting the ways in which solidarity may fend against rejection from mainstream society. Although the characters in the novel could be eager to fulfill their ambitions, they might not be able to follow their course in peace. Jivan, a slum evader, eventually fails to receive justice and is used as a scapegoat by the neighborhood. She expects her friends to at least provide an honest testimony and support her case when it is made public, but they offer no help at all. But her buddies have different priorities.

2.4. The Role of Social Media

People's lives are significantly impacted by social media. It changes their perceptions of and attitudes toward important topics as well as concerns pertaining to the community at large. It exposes the crimes of the affluent and the divide between the classes that are higher and lower

as well as between the powerful and the helpless. It is a simple communication tool and a way to identify the interests of the general population. It is the quickest and most straightforward way to publish and get news. It can be employed for deception or distinction, to voice one's opinions or counter those of others, or to support or oppose public policy concerns. When it's friendly neighborhood gathering, it can sometimes become a mass murder site or a site of underwater demolition for many people, mostly for underprivileged people. Facebook among other social networks plays a leading role in the motivation of the characters in this novel. This book tries to demonstrate how fateful lives of three most important people in the novel including Jivan, Lovely and PT Sir are influenced by social networks. This is about modern day India. In social media platforms, fake news is spread quickly hence causing conflicts and offending people behind the scenes. When inflammatory or misleading information spreads, it can cause misunderstanding, anxiety, and rage, escalating confrontations that might have otherwise been restrained. Social media allows for real-time contact and coordination, which can be used to plan protests, rallies, and even violent actions. Despite such efforts can be good in empowering social movements that work for justice and transformation, they might occasionally lead to confrontations and conflicts with violence involved. According to Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral false news spreads much faster on Twitter than real news; thus, this fuels the flames of misunderstandings and arouses people's passions (1146). In Megha Majumdar's novel, social media plays an important part in raising tensions and spreading falsehoods, greatly contributing to the protagonist, Jivan's, struggle. Jivan makes a scathing Facebook post after witnessing a terrorist attack and the government's poor response: "If the police didn't help ordinary people like you and me, if the police watched them die, doesn't that mean that the government is also a terrorist?" (Majumdar 5). Originally meant to be a criticism, this message goes viral and shows how social media can magnify individual voices to a large audience often beyond the original poster's control. After Jivan's remarks are misconstrued and

taken out of context, the authorities arrest her and charge her with involvement in the terrorist act, which has serious consequences. If we watch the events closely we will see how fast information travels when shared on social media platforms but also how it is misinterpreted in most cases leading to high level of misconceptions about certain issues. Jivan's tweet as it spreads is causing panic and anger portraying how sensitive information may raise public emotions and create an atmosphere of unfriendliness easily. The novel also shows how other characters leverage social media to win favors among the public. PT Sir, for example, uses public denouncement of Jivan to associate himself with nationalistic sentiments. Through misrepresentation and provocation, such weapons as disinformation or controversial content have enabled people to manipulate people's thinking to achieve certain political ends. The widespread use of social media is a reflection of bigger social maladies like the breakdown of trust as well as how precarious the vulnerable in the society can be. Fast dissemination made possible by internet technologies has resulted in a crisis in confidence and disenfranchised people including Jivan whose opinions may not count when pitted against powerful opponents are highly likely to be dismissed or misunderstood.

How mob mentality and public opinion are fostered by social media is thoroughly researched by Majumdar. As Jivan's situation becomes more widely known online, social media exacerbates prejudice and public fury. Misinformation spreading and the ease with which people may express and share fury online result in a media trial where Jivan is already being criticized by the public before her trial even starts. This is the real effect of social media where things are not as simple as right and wrong, and many times the notion of justice is lost behind the trends and posts that may have disastrous outcomes. Social media also helps to focus on the other characters' goals and their personal transformations. Her last physical education teacher PT sir also uses social media platform to progress in the career ladder. He uses the site

in order to get and get support for himself, and thus portray the element of how people can utilize social networks for their own benefit. This is due to the fact that Jivan's case has become popular, which enables him to get more involved in politics and, thus, use this to further his career while also raising awareness of the negative effects of using social networks as a tool to achieve certain goals. Lovely is a transsexual woman who is active on social media in hopes of becoming an actress in the future. For Lovely, Facebook is a suitable environment because it enables her to be who she wants to be and get what she wants in life. She posts videos and tries to get the attention of men and women and followers in the platform in order to get more followers and likes which she lacks in her real life. This is evident on how social media can be a platform through which the oppressed can fight for their rights and create groups for themselves.

CHAPTER 3: NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES AND IDEOLOGICAL REPRESENTATION IN A *BURNING*

3.1. Narrative Strategies for Conveying Socio-Political Themes

In her representation of sociopolitical issues, Majumdar uses techniques of narration like point of view, language and imagery. Through the use of a multi-perspective narrative structure, the novel tells the story from the perspectives of three main characters: Lovely is a transwoman aiming to be a movie star; Jivan, a young woman who ended up being a terrorist; PT Sir, a gym teacher who turns into a politician. The characters in the novel have different perceptions that show that Indian society is an unequal and interdependent society. The first-person narrative of Jivan enables the reader to see the bias in the justice system, the stress experienced by the accused, and gives the reader an insight into the prejudices of the society and the oppression of the minorities. Lovely's portions are written in third person and they are full of lovely's own language and she uses Hindi and English language and it shows that she is lively and also marginalized. She has dreams that are quite opposite to this rather bleak existence; thus, the themes of social climbing and the American Dream are depicted superbly. In the third person, PT Sir delve into the power aspect where people use and misuse power in any given society. It also has the drawback of political influence to turn a previously idealistic and passionate teacher to a self-centered and self-interested politician.

Majumdar applies language to further the political aspect of the novel based in India. There is the adoption of English language in its denatured form marked with slangs and dialects to help depict a real life feel of the socio-political satire. The general population in India is diverse in terms of language, social status, caste, and religion, and such aspect is depicted in the

characters' use of language. The language used by Majumdar is rather simple and unadorned, which makes it easy for the reader to become involved in the portrayal of the main characters' lives as well as to face the rather negative aspects of the society and politics reflected in the book. Symbolism enhances the analysis of the themes in the novel hence enhancing the meaning of the novel. The main episode in the novel is the train fire, for which Jivan is charged with arson with the help of his ex-employer, which is a direct reference to the anarchy and the violence that are at the base of social and political changes in India and for showing how regular people become pawns in the political struggle. The eye of the social network has become the symbol of threat and opportunities. This is true since Jivan employs her Facebook posts in supporting her claim, therefore highlighting how social media can be used as a tool of oppression and surveillance while at the same giving voice to the oppressed. Lovely's dream to be an actor is an extension of the general desire for a better life for the marginalized populace as well as the challenges that women, people of color, and gays face in their attempts at achieving success.

It is depicted that bigotry and intolerance lead to tension in society and this is portrayed by the fire themes. This is where the train fire incident occurred and is a good representation of the social disorder and violence that can be witness in any society. It symbolizes chaos and disorder which comes about due to revolution in the social and political systems. The aftermath lies in the vulnerability of justice and the possibility of an innocent man getting entangled in political affairs, as is the case with Jivan, who becomes a political chess piece. In the novel, social media is depicted as ambiguous, which is why it is disputable what the subject of discussion is. This is where Jivan makes her accusation, referencing her Facebook posts, which is an example of how social media can also be a way of oppression, a way of controlling and monitoring people as well as a way of speaking out. Also, the desire that Lovely has to become an actress can be

considered as the general desire of the oppressed people who want to live a better life. Thus, her wish to enter the film industry, which represents the society in general, can be viewed as an allegory of the structures that limit people of color. Lovely, the hijra character in the film, is quite inspirational as she portrays the suffering of the LGBTQ+ people and their struggle to be accepted and be able to live their lives. The use of nonlinear narrative structure makes the characters' arcs to be presented at different timelines which creates tension in the plot and the theme of power relations in the life of the characters.

Majumdar uses these techniques to debate on the various social and political issues in her work. This paper shows how the novel reveals social injustice and political persecution against Muslims and other minorities through the fabricated accusations and imprisonment of Jivan. In telling the story of Lovely, the reader is presented with the plight of a particular minority but it also shows the fight and the want of the people in this category. Mr. Sir, the plot shows the negative side of power and wealth: the main characters and certain institutions become immoral and unethical. Drawing the story from India, Majumdar creates a plot that is contextual to his cultural background but at the same time strategizes so that the average reader is able to follow through the plot. Such strategies provide her with a critical outlook to the issues of justice, identity and power, which are current nowadays, and enable her to investigate socio-political themes in a rather indirect and subtle manner. Therefore, Majumdar does not only present a powerful criticism on the social norms that regulate and, sometimes, suppress the lives of the characters in her book but also a well-written story.

3.2. Representation of Marginalized Voices

Jivan, Lovely and PT Sir bring out different aspects of marginalization and thus multiply the complexity of the storyline. In particular, Jivan's and Lovely's accounts shed light on the tough

conditions faced by such ghettos. Majumdar takes an issue with social injustices generously displayed by their personal accounts that are ingrained in the society. By allowing these lesser-heard voices to speak out, this novel lets readers connect to their tales and realize that their struggles are universal. Jivan had a very difficult and sad early life. She and her family were forcibly removed from the community near the Kurla mines. According to the novel, Jivan had a difficult life and was unable to get the immediate assistance she needed from the upper-class public sector.

Her long history of neglect has given rise to a lifetime of resentment toward the administration. A detailed examination of her account reveals resentment toward the government, ranging from the mistreatment of her father in a public hospital that left him in excruciating pain from a back injury to her time living in public housing where an occasional water supply made daily living challenging (Majumdar 135).

She finds herself in an area that lacks basic services, while her father is not receiving sufficient care in government hospitals. She tries to find a new house in Kolkata's slums, which is not where she expected to live. As a result, Jivan looks for a job to help her family. Eventually, she works for Pantaloon. She strives to achieve middle-class status in order to enhance her family's living situation. Jivan lives in terrible poverty in a community that does not prioritize the disadvantaged. Majumdar gives Jivan a male name to demonstrate her strength and endurance, yet the connotation of 'death' foreshadows the wretched existence she lives. Jivan strives to free her family from the cycle of poverty and the horrible life of the slums. Because of their lower class and minority identification, anyone, including Jivan, may be unable to transcend the limits to the upper or middle classes. The community in which she lives does not believe in individual freedom and cannot give her with a space to express it, even through social media, which is the

hallmark of expressive freedom in the modern period. It is a platform where the lower classes can voice their problems and aspirations to one another. However, even social media and mass media have become vehicles for the upper class to spread their views, whether political or religious. In truth, Jivan suffers for two reasons: first, she is a Muslim girl living in a community dominated by upper-class ideals, while those of the lower class are ignored. The second reason is that, as a member of the lower class, the inhabitants of the slums, she is part of a group that is struggling in life and wants to separate itself from politics in order to live in harmony. Jivan is accused of a terrorist act for no other reason than her Facebook comments, which the upper class perceives as fueling the flames of insurrection against the state structure.

The second character is Lovely, a transgender lady who aspires to be a famous performer. She suffers in a community that ignores transgender people due to their identity. She makes a living by claiming and using spiritual ability to bless newborn babies and newlyweds. Jivan has taught her English, which may benefit her future career as a movie star. Her identify as a transsexual woman and a hijra casts her as a social outcast. She is willing to do whatever it takes to achieve her dream of being a great actor. PT Sir was supportive and kindly to Jivan, but felt that his leaving was ungrateful given the way he had behaved toward her for the help he had given her. He admired her school spirit and diligence as well as being sure that she could excel in sports. Jivan, Lovely, and PT Sir all want better lives, but not in the way they expect. All represent the lower class, whose lofty ambitions for the future may clash with the upper class's objectives. They continue to strive for an ethical life, even if prospective affluence forces them to compromise their morals and friendships.

3.3. Resistance and Agency

In this novel, marginalized characters use resistance and agency to highlight the complexity of their struggle against oppressive systems. Their rebellion both covert and overt, shows they are willing to be agents against the socio-political forces acting upon them. These actions produce a vast variety of effects. Every now and then, they unmask the cruel face of structural oppression.; on the other hand, they shine some light in the darkness. Additionally, Jivan rebels through using social media platforms to get back at her detractors and advocate for fairness in the society. She was arrested after commenting on Facebook about how regular people problems don't matter to the police, asking, "If the police cannot help us ordinary people, who will?"(Majumdar 5) Resisting authority and making people in power take responsibility are two genres of resistance. Yet the conflation of her statements into evidence against her in an unfair system undermines her quest for agency and truth-to-power speech. This shows how social media can be harnessed for liberation as well as surveillance, dominating two sides of the same coin. This was further emphasized by one of Jivan's captions which she put on to help a woman support her resistance. She included a caption: "This innocent woman lost everything and government-paid policemen watched and did nothing" (Majumdar 5). In the scene an innocent woman suffers serious loss or tragedy while the police refuse to act even when funded by government if they are supposed to serve and protect the public, lessening any pain she can have. This may suggest notions of injustice, neglect and state institutions being unable to shield individuals who cannot defend themselves. The scene serves to cast light on the systemic issues in law enforcement and governance probably by showing the victimisation of a guiltless person due to lack of interest or corruption in these organizations. The failure of the law-paid police to react explains systemic oppression or unconcern which people might fight against. The author, implicitly, is criticizing the state for not working correctly and pushing the characters of the novel to challenge these injustices. Moreover, When the text says that "an innocent

woman” loses everything with no action on the part of the authorities, the writer simply means how powerless individuals are at those moments. Nonetheless, by the characters making an effort to regain their power and demand justice or change, they are trying to find alternatives despite the absence of any real power. This indicates some form of revolution against the system that has failed them both as individuals and as members of the society.

Lovely, the transgender character, maintains determination in following her performing career without being influenced by society stereotypes. She asserts herself with her performance instead of identifying herself with a given sex. She refuses to conform to what is expected of her by the society that alienates those who identify themselves as transgender or instance, she refuses to be typecast into stereotypical roles that only reflect her hijra identity, insisting, “For someone like me, nothing is easy, not even a train ride of an hour. My breasts are made of rags, and my chest is a man's chest. What now? Find me another woman who is as truly a woman as I am in the entire city” (Majumdar 7). This statement perfectly expresses Lovely's inherent optimism and self-assurance. She is proud of herself despite being called abnormal and born in the wrong body. Lovely is very comfortable with self-exploration instead of conforming to the conventional notions about sex or gender, and therefore does not care about how other people see her sexuality or gender orientation in her society's traditional norms. Lovely claims that because of her transsexual identification, her experience is everything but straightforward. The allusion to her breasts being made of rags and her chest being a man's chest draws attention to the social and physical obstacles she must overcome on a daily basis. In the face of these challenges, Lovely seems proud and resolute. She challenges social norms and prejudices by asking, “So what?”, and the idea of it making her feel inferior just isn't acceptable. She says she is as much a woman as anyone else because of her identity and past if not more than most people. Her assertion highlights her conviction that a person's inner power and genuineness,

rather than just their physical characteristics, determine their femininity. Lovely further asserts that "You can burn one train, but you can't make us stop wanting to go to work, class, or, if we have family, our desire to go there. Each local train is a movie. I'm watching faces, bodies, sounds, and arguments on the train. People like myself are learning in this way" (Majumdar 8). Lovely provides the much-needed voice of a spiritual warrior someone who maintains faith in the worth and beauty of life in the face of countless and terrible adversities in her reference to the terrorist attack on the train. There is always something fresh and exciting for Lovely to see and discover. This statement means that people continue to have the same requirements and wants though some sort of terror or interference like when a train is set on fire. No matter what difficulties face them, these individuals are Unswerving in their aspirations as well as in the performance of their routine obligations.

The solution to the novel *PT Sir* is a complex analysis of agency in the context of oppression. The failures of trying to influence a corrupt system are seen through his moral compromises and his comprehension of power. It is essential to note that despite the negative actions that the character undertakes towards others, his character also depicts the kind of decisions that individuals have to make when they want to exercise their agency in such structures. Thus, *PT Sir*'s story illustrates cooperation as a double-edged weapon as well as ethical concerns associated with the conflict of power. *PT Sir* is depicted as a sad and neglected teacher at the start of the novel. Therefore, he degenerated morally as he had a boring existence and wanted to be acknowledged and loved. His early dissatisfaction leaves him vulnerable to the allure of power offered by the political party. As *PT Sir*'s involvement in the political party grows, he begins to sacrifice his moral principles. His justification of these acts as essential to either the greater good or his own survival demonstrates his moral uncertainty. He was an active participant in most of the party activities and, in particular, in the propaganda and manipulation

of public opinion; he has also been cooperating with the party's unlawful activities more frequently. PT Sir's acts are more complex when he rises to power within the party through Bimala Pal. He is involved in and supports decisions that affect others, even marginalized protagonists like Jivan. His tendency to ignore injustice and actively participate in exploiting others for political advantage show his moral decline. Despite his outward activities, PT Sir has moments of internal conflict and doubt. He occasionally considers the moral implications of his actions, demonstrating that he is not completely devoid of conscience. These moments of contemplation lend richness to his character, presenting him as a multifaceted individual rather than a one-dimensional antagonist. The right-wing political party believes entirely in its ideology and forces individuals to adopt its beliefs. In their eyes, Muslims are members of a minority religion who defy Hindu religion's traditions and harm their holy mother cow. The moral ambiguity of PT Sir in the novel is an essential part that deepens the story. Megha Majumdar examines the moral concessions and justifications people make in dishonest systems through their personalities. She portrays him as a teacher who later becomes a selfish and greedy politician, which is the evil side of power. Although PT Sir's actions exacerbate the already unfavorable conditions for characters like Jivan and Lovely, his inner conflict and psychological barriers help depict the complexity of how an ordinary man can become an oppressor. PT Sir's character is depicted throughout the novel as an unsavory character to expose corruption in the political systems and the moral quandaries those in the political systems encounter.

3.4. Ideological Critique and Social Commentary

Through its narrative form and content, the novel offers sharp social criticism and critiques dominant beliefs. The novel addresses themes of structural injustice, social inequality, and

political corruption, giving readers a forum to consider and challenge these widespread problems. The novel criticizes how oppressive Political systems are to those who feel powerless and poor. The protagonist of the novel is Jivan who is a young Muslim woman accused of being a terrorist. This is the case of how the political organizations utilize discrimination and fear to their benefit. The speed and the manner in which she gets linked to the media and politicians show the dangers of nationalism and the abuse of the weaker groups. Majumdar gives a glimpse into the gruesome side of Indian society and the issue of class and poverty. Jivan, Lovely, and PT Sir's experiences are a reflection of the structural oppression that define their existence. Social stratification is a constant process as demonstrated by Jivan's desire to escape the lower class, Lovely's struggle for acceptance as a third gender, and PT sir's compromises in morality to gain a better social status.

The structure of the novel which jumps from Jivan, Lovely, and PT Sir's perspectives allows the reader to look at India and its people from a number of different perspectives. This method shows how people's lives are related and how the larger social structures impact their existence. It provokes the reader to grasp the multilayered condition of each character and the institutional background of their troubles. The power relations and norms of the world are challenged by the characters' development and choices. The transformation of PT Sir from an honest and benevolent teacher into a willing partner of the political system of corruption represents one of the possible ways people can be influenced by the power and join the system of oppression. Lovely's story, however, portrays her persistence and rebellion against the social outcasts.

The unjust trial and Jivan's unfair imprisonment highlight problems with the legal system. Readers are forced to consider the justice and morality of governmental and legal systems,

particularly in light of how they handle underprivileged populations, after reading what she wrote. In the novel, the author looks at how the media influence the perception of society and the dialogue that transpires. The media is a master of manipulating the truth and creating fear in the public as demonstrated through the extreme reporting of Jivan's case which makes readers doubt the information they are provided with. Lovely's character is the complete opposite of the norm and transcends stereotyping of roles and gender. This paper is also a celebration of her dream to be an actress and her acceptance of her identity as a hijra thus the defiance to the rigid gender roles and the acceptance to the multiple ways of being.

It is for this reason that the novel employs content and narrative strategies to pass social commentary and provoke thinking. The novel provokes the readers to think about the role of people in the society, to recognize oppression and to question the norms and values of the society through the life of the protagonists. Thus, Majumdar's book can be used as a tool for critical thinking and social change in its turn.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

Majumdar's *A Burning* (2020) brings to light the ruling class' aggression against the proletariat as seen through its control of the township by state. Members of the upper social groups use political parties, school systems, and the press to impose their convictions and discriminate against minority societies like Muslims. These groups resort to public service adverts to make people vote for them during elections. The novel represents India today, and life in the slums using characters such as Lovely, PT Sir, and Jivan. Each person has his/her own vision of what they want to achieve tomorrow. Jivan somehow believed that she could freely express herself on any issues such as bomb blasts on trains via social media like Facebook. Eventually, she fell victim and was falsely accused of terrorism charges. She was first arrested for being a terrorist after which she was judged guilty based on her Facebook comments which were deemed unpatriotic towards her motherland. During detention, no one could hear her say a word about it. Before organizing an interview with Purnendu Sarkar, a journalist, she tried very hard to share her story about the hardship experienced by unprivileged people ignored both by society itself and slum residents until she got this opportunity. But Purnendu concocted another story that further angered people. Jivan could have been acquitted of his terrorist act, but Lovely and PT Sir decided against it as it could limit their social mobility and shatter their dreams of becoming a film star (in Lovely's case) or a politician (in PT Sir's case). It should be noted here that the male characters from the upper class in the novel by Majumdar are quite self-centered and boastful to some extent. They are the dominant class that enforces the idea systems on the society hence the society has to adhere to the ideas to pass on the d's of wealth to the elites. They used their authority and power over the media, education, and other branches of government in order to fulfill their political agendas. However, the affluent people within the society come out to work to influence the public to vote for their party especially during

election period. This put certain notions of each class into the spotlight, which in turn showcased the clash of interests between the two. The upper classes viewed other minorities as aggressive, disloyal, and unworthy of the nation's interests because they spoke for the people. A thorough study of the novel could highlight the stereotypes of terrorists and explore the accusations of terrorism against poor Muslims. A postcolonial perspective could delve deeper into the text's discussion of minorities and oppressed peoples. A psychoanalytic reading of the novel could shed light on how he deals with the trauma of being a minority, especially the stories about the murder and rape of minorities in state-controlled communities.

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