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**Identities, Womanhood and Abenomics – A Comparative Analysis
of the Works of Junichiro Tanizaki and Ismat Chughtai**

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Abstract

Junichiro Tanizaki's *The Makioka Sisters* and Ismat Chughtai's *The Crooked Line* manage to capture the transformations being engendered in the societies of two major Asian powers at the brink of watershed historical events. Despite the divergent writing styles and contextual differences of the authors, their texts bring out the experiences of women and the multitudinous attitudes surrounding womanhood in 1930s India and Japan. The comparison of these texts can therefore yield information about the similarities and differences in the ideas and experiences regarding womanhood in both nations. Moreover, this comparison can offer insights into factors which continue to influence women's issues in both countries even in present times.

This paper utilizes the comparative method to cross-culturally examine the various constructions of womanhood, femininity, and motherhood present in 1930s India and Japan through the writings of Junichiro Tanizaki and Ismat Chughtai. The paper historically contextualizes the position of women in both nations during this period and provides an analysis of their changing roles within the familial sphere due to forces of modernity and reform. It also examines the interaction of femininity with the political and analyses its utilization and representations within *Makioka Sisters* and *The Crooked Line*. Various conceptions of motherhood are also analysed through its representations within both texts. The last section traces the continuity of these constructs in present times in both nations through their manifestation in certain policy decisions, and also looks at the future possibilities of comparative cross-cultural analyses within India-Japan studies.

Keywords: Comparative method, Abenomics, Motherhood, Femininity, Cross-cultural.

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1 Introduction

The thrust of this paper is to undertake a comparative analysis of two important literary works, one from Japan and the other one from India that highlighted the dimensions of womanhood in the 1930s. Junichiro Tanizaki's *The Makioka Sisters* and Ismat Chughtai's *The Crooked Line* are the two works taken up for comparative analysis. Badly affected by the ravages of the world economic depression that hit its trade and agricultural sectors, India's freedom struggle assumed new proportions with Gandhi launching his 'Salt March'. Japan, too suffered from the ravages of the world economic depression. The country experienced right-wing patriotism and undertook overseas military operations. Against the backdrop of these situational contrasts, this study aims to compare the notions of womanhood, femininity, and motherhood in Japan with that of India.

1.1 Methods

Comparative literature explores two or more literary works drawn from different countries in terms of their plots, narrative styles, and differing contexts through interdisciplinary analysis. In many ways, cross country comparative analyses of literature or arts forms suffer from the limitation of not being able to undertake comparisons in terms of 'whole systems' (Damodaran 2020). Criticisms of comparative literature and comparative cultural studies emphasize the lack of definition that plagues these disciplines and the ambiguity and lack of structure that make up their frameworks of theory or methodology. Moreover, the history of Eurocentrism, cultural chauvinism, and cultural essentialism within these disciplines' casts further aspersions over the utility of the comparative method. However, it must be understood that despite the various pitfalls that underlie the practice of the comparative method, the notion of cross-cultural comparisons in academic research continues to be one of great relevance. Eschewing cross-cultural comparisons altogether for the sake of avoiding the flaws of its practice would imply the production of a flood of specialized studies of uncertain significance (Longcore, 2019). The site of intercultural dialogue is always initially predicated on the comparison of the unfamiliar with the familiar, with the view of establishing broader patterns of understanding. As Richard A. Peterson states, "comparison is one of the most powerful tools used in intellectual inquiry, since an observation made repeatedly is given more credence than is a single observation" (cited in Tötösy de Zepetnek and Vasvári, 2013, p 3). Moreover, within comparative literature, the push has been towards the inclusion of the "Other"; marginal literatures with marginality being defined in diverse ways are being explored cross-culturally. Therefore, rather than privileging canonical works reproducing established lines of authority, comparative cultural and literary analysis allows for the articulation of the unsaid, the suppressed, and the concealed by dominant modes of knowing - not only of texts and signifying practices, but also of theories in traditional disciplines (Tötösy de Zepetnek and Vasvári, 2013, p 11). The built-in notions of exclusion and self-referentiality of single-culture study, and their result of rigidly defined disciplinary boundaries, are notions against which comparative cultural studies offers an alternative as well as a parallel field of study (Tötösy de Zepetnek, 1999, p 259 cited in Tötösy de Zepetnek and Vasvári, 2013, p 18).

The cross-cultural comparison of Tanizaki and Chughtai's works can provide novel and interesting insights into the similarities and differences of Asian women's experience of historical events, as both texts showcase the lives of women in a time of great political and sociocultural transformation and strife; most importantly, both authors have created narratives that focus on the experiences of individuals and their motivations in such times, breaking away from monolithic, overly-masculinized historicizations of the same. Both accounts are fictional, and thus deriving insights about womanhood, femininity, and motherhood from both would appear to be an enterprise fraught with risk. Yet, the sheer humanness of characters and their experiences, which leave out no aspect of human frailty, make both works feel undeniably real and believable to readers. Through fiction, both texts engage in the creation of an affective history, of both women and their nations, that seems to provide a rare glimpse into the hidden and often side-lined world of the feminine and the domestic. The broadness and hybridity of the methods and theories of comparative cultural and literary studies are exactly what is necessary for appropriately analysing the layered and manifold ideas regarding womanhood, motherhood, and femininity that emerge from within this space or centre around it.

The comparative method is also useful for analysing the emotional nature of both texts; the affective and emotional are always present and are intrinsically tied to explorations of nationhood and femininity. Furthermore, emotions central to both these texts vary, as different social contexts generate affective emphases which depend on the specific historical traces and traumas situated in different locations in time (Marling, 2013, p 5). This can be seen from the melancholia and sense of loss that is a constant strain within *The Makioka Sisters*, its cause being the loss of Japanese character and impending war. Within *The Crooked Line*, strains of deep confusion and disillusionment are present due to the inherent flaws of the freedom struggle. The links of emotion within western tradition with the irrational, the physical, the particular, the private, and the female, inevitably brand the emotional (as opposed to the rational) as an unreliable source of knowledge (Jaggar, 1996, p 166). Given that the Western myth of rational, dispassionate investigation was co-opted to a large extent within the Asian context as the standard of accurate knowledge production, the emotional, and by extension the feminine were not viewed as agencies of verifiable meaning-making. This myth served the ideological purpose of bolstering the epistemic authority of dominant social groups, particularly the masculine, all the while discrediting observations and claims of subordinate groups (the feminine) (Jaggar, 1996, p 178). So, in deliberately choosing to focus on the feminine and utilizing a feminine narrative voice, Tanizaki and Chughtai constructed a feminine lens for their readers through which an era of great change could be viewed, allowing the process of knowledge production to be heralded by the subordinate social group. Therefore, the active use of the personal, emotional, and feminine as the source as well as the site of the creation of an alternate narrative of history further warrants the comparison of both texts, particularly their deliberate use of the marginal as subversive.

An important issue that may arise from the comparison of Tanizaki and Chughtai's writing is the notion of women written by men and women written by women. It may be posited that Tanizaki as a male writer may not have the personal insight and lived experience of womanhood, problematizing the comparability of his writing with that of a female writer. However, men's writing has the capacity to display artistic sensitivity and insight into social history with regard to women's role in a patriarchal world; and as Tanizaki successfully engages in the aforementioned enterprise, his writing, though different in scope and depth than Chughtai's experiential writing, remains a fairly authentic glimpse into Japanese womanhood (Totosy de Zepetnek, 1998, p 193). *The Makioka Sisters* specifically stands apart from other writings of Tanizaki. As Noguchi Takehiko observes, most of his writings are a projection of man's preoccupation with his existential self; only in *The Makioka Sisters* does the male limit himself to being merely the protector and provider of woman, the observer and witness of their ways (Takehiko and Craig, 1977, p 2). From beginning to end the narrative thrust of the novel is carried mainly by Sachiko. Tanizaki established an unrestricted and free-roaming point of view, fixing the focus of his lenses somewhere around the person of Sachiko, and proceeding to develop the narrative going in and out of Sachiko's consciousness at will. (Takehiko and Craig, 1977, p 5). In doing so, he explores the personal as well as the social context of his characters, such that several images of people and situations appear concurrently, forcing the reader to change viewpoint flexibly in order to appreciate them (Shunji, 1998, p 129); this multiplicity of narrative voice adds to the roundedness of his exploration of womanhood within the text. The characterization of the sisters is further proof of the nuanced construction of the feminine within the text. Multifaceted and richly constructed, albeit symbolic of their nation's essence and its dilemmas, the sisters never appear as stock characters. For instance, despite being constructed as the traditional Japanese beauty¹, Yukiko is also shown as being of robust health and a strong worker, and as having cosmopolitan interests (she learns French and enjoys non-Japanese music). Similarly, appearing to be a Modern Girl, Taeko's various love interests almost parody the trajectory of traditional matches that are arranged for Yukiko, revealing the dialogue between tradition and modernity. Therefore, Tanizaki's *Makioka Sisters* comparison with Chughtai's *the Crooked Line* remains valid, on account of Tanizaki's sensitive and detailed portrayal of female characters, as well as his holistic representation of Japanese womanhood.

As this paper will engage in the comparison of English translations of both texts, loss of a degree of linguistic complexities and insights may occur. The nuances of the Osaka dialect that reveal change of narrative voice, or expressions that are deeply rooted in Kansai culture may not be grasped in their entirety; and the flavour of the taunts and idioms of the *Begamati Zuban*² may lose their intensity. Yet, it must be noted that reading in translation with a knowledge of its relational ways allows for insight, exchange, awareness of an "other" and the need for conversation (Bermann, 2009, p 443). Working with translations allows for the introduction to various languages and the human situations they present. Most importantly, the translated versions of these works made them accessible, allowing for the posing of new and important questions, and creating the space for dialogue, collaboration, and re-imagining of the texts (Bermann, 2009, p 444). Therefore, despite the inability of translation to capture sociolinguistic background of the target texts in totality, it still provides for a useful base off which novel and critical academic inquiry and intercultural knowledge exchange may proceed.

¹ See Tanizaki (1977) *In Praise of Shadows*, p 28-30.

² Refers to women's Urdu, the language of the zenanas. Gail Minault (1984) describes it as being "earthy, graphic, and colourful".

1.2 Methods

To consider women of pre-independence India as part of a holistic category would be highly problematic; deep divisions on the lines of religion, caste, and class make their experiences highly divergent. As a consequence, the development of the ideals of womanhood in the subcontinent reflects these divisions – the conceptions of the ideal woman are therefore numerous and diverse, and at times even oppositional. In order to delimit the scope of this paper, this section shall focus primarily on the development of the ideals of womanhood amongst Muslim women in pre-Independence India. Again, the consideration of Indian Muslim women as a group in no way implies homogeneity of experience. However, it would allow for the examination of how communal identity came to constitute an integral part of womanhood. An ideal Muslim woman was meant to be a repository of pure, untainted Islamic values, and therefore conduct herself as a representative of her religion's honour. Therefore, most reforms related to the upliftment, purification, and consolidation of Islam within India would be targeted towards Muslim women, as ideal womanhood was moulded to be intrinsic to religion and vice-versa. This coalescence would later be politicized and utilized for the communal agenda.

The 19th century saw the sharpening of communal tensions, as the ashraf³ Muslim class began to struggle to maintain the power that they had acquired in older centres of Mughal rule in Northern India (Deutsch, 1998, p 20). The changes brought about by colonial rule as well as the response of the Hindu majority to these changes, created the need amongst the Muslim elites to organize themselves (particularly in UP). The bureaucracy was transformed to be based on competitive recruitment over the earlier system of patronage, therefore channels of power were no longer available only to the Muslim elite. Western models of education were slow to be capitalized upon due to religious beliefs and traditional Islamic education, and competition within local governments began to acquire a communal touch (Deutsch, 1998, p 21). The tradition of domestic learning amongst women was declining among the ashraf in the nineteenth century. Before, ashraf women received an education that enabled them to acquire necessary housekeeping skills to be a good wife, mother, and manageress of the household in her new home (Deutsch 1998, p 26). Moreover, as women wielded power within the zenana or the women's quarters, they were also in-charge of the formative education of their children⁴. However, as the ashraf class began losing its socioeconomic power base, emphasis began to be laid on sons entering government service or other professions. And as both these endeavours required educational qualifications, educating daughters could no longer be afforded (Deutsch 1998, p 27). Several strictures with regard to social behaviours also sprung up, such as the strict observation of purdah, and these mores now began to act as the symbol of "ashrafization". Muslims of the lower strata who aspired to social mobility emulated these behaviours, and as a result several girls from these families who were earlier privy to primary government education began to be confined to home under stricter purdah.

³ See Deutsch (1998) The term ashraf was used to describe Indian Muslims descended from immigrants into India (who trace their ancestry to the Prophet, his companions, or to the Mughal and Pathan ruling classes), taken from the plural of the Arabic sharif, or honourable.

⁴ See Deutsch (1998) This can be seen from the example of the mother of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, who was responsible for his early education.

The communal tensions that had manifested in this period catalysed the need for finding the “true form” or pure forms of religion; purification revolved around ensuring separation from the “other” religion, thus forming clear boundaries and crystallizing “us and them” religious identities. For Hindu revivalists, this process was achieved through the glorification of the past and return to traditionalism. On the other hand, regeneration of Islam was to be done through the upliftment of women. Male Muslim reformers viewed women as both symbolic of all that was wrong with their culture and religious life and as the vehicle through which it could be improved⁵ (Deutsch 1998, p 33). As the prime practitioners of false customs women were portrayed as being most in need of reform, but because of their important social and familial roles they were perceived as being important sources of cultural continuity in a changing colonial world (Deutsch 1998, p 36). Debates regarding the purdah and education emerged. Hindu reform leaders began to portray purdah as an Islamic phenomenon, corrupting Hindu values. Amongst Muslim reformers, the value of modesty attached to purdah customs was upheld, but extreme stringency regarding the custom was deemed unnecessary. Therefore, purdah came to represent an important and unique aspect of Indo-Muslim cultural identity, despite having earlier been practiced amongst both Hindu and Muslim women (Deutsch 1998)⁶. In terms of educational reforms, most reformers believed in a degree of education for women; it was viewed as a way to make women into better wives and mothers, as well as to make women better Muslims. Therefore, in the late 19th century several schools and colleges were built especially for Muslim women, allowing them greater access to education. Thus, reforms propelled the formation of a unique Muslim womanhood - the new Muslim woman was meant to be modest, dutiful, and wise; she was expected to be responsible towards her household, with her Muslim identity driving her identity as a woman.

By the 1930s, a generation of Muslim women had emerged who were educated, socially aware, and interested in both political activity and the nascent Indian women's movement (Deutsch 1998, p 45). These 'daughters of reform'⁷ were a minority belonging to landowning or government service ashraf families and were actively involved in the public sphere (Deutsch 1998, p 46). From 1921, Gandhi was particularly interested in mobilising women on behalf of the Congress-led political struggle, and the programme for women made it possible for them either to become involved in public activities such as street marches, boycotts or by courting arrest, or through activities which could take place from within the home, such as spinning khadi (Deutsch 1998, p 97). For Muslim women, it was the Khilafat movement, which came up alongside Gandhi's Non-Cooperation, which allowed for such participation in the public sphere. The Muslim women who gave up purdah to participate in the movement were not reviled as it was seen as a symbol of their commitment to Islamic purity and unity, thus further strengthening the ties between gender and religious identity (Deutsch 1998, p 84). The trend of abandoning purdah of the 1920s-30s was fuelled not only by the desire for political participation, but also due to liberal trends in ashraf households, support of liberal male family members, as well as the freedom that women experienced due to education outside their homes⁸. This was also the period when Hindu and Muslim women forged a degree of solidarity outside of communal bounds, using gender as a universalizing factor to unite. The early years of the All-India Women's Conference (AIWC), from 1927-32, saw an enthusiasm for activism and cooperation between women from all communities on a range of issues, some of which affected all women and some of which were community-specific (Deutsch 1998, p 84). Gender identity and Muslim identity existed side-by-side for Muslim women, both having equal importance.

⁵ See Deutsch (1998) The corrupting influence of women was to be eliminated by including them within sharif polity.

⁶ See Deutsch (1998, p 40-43) for the communalization of purdah practices.

⁷ See Deutsch (1998, p 45-46) for the characteristics of the daughters of reform.

⁸ Ismat Chughtai also abandoned purdah once she moved away from home for her education.

It was in the 1930s and the following years that the divisive communalization which was being witnessed on the political front affected joint efforts of Indian women, as well as introduced a conflict of identity amongst Muslim women. The stereotypical image of the backward Muslim woman was again being deployed in the political sphere, presenting them as needing the protection of their Hindu brothers and sisters (Deutsch 1998, p 143). The Muslim League and the ulema began differentiating Muslim women from Hindu women on the basis of factors such as purdah observance and argued that Muslim women's future political participation should be inextricably linked to the principles of separate electorates and communal representation. Muslim women were pulled in several different directions and tensions emerged between their involvement in the women's movement and their interest in safeguarding the Muslim community's position in political, social, and cultural spheres (Deutsch 1998, p 165). Thus, after 1932 the question of Muslim women was subsumed within the larger realm of communal politics; gender identity for Muslim women was now consumed by religious identity, and the former could only be manifested within communal terms.

1.3 Crystallization of New Definitions of Womanhood from the Meiji to Shōwa Eras in keeping with the Modernizing Mission and Imperialist Ambitions of Japan

The consolidation of women as a single social group within society occurred in the Meiji Era. The organization of society in feudal Japan was based on the Shi-No-Ko-Sho⁹ division of classes, and therefore the ideals and experiences of womanhood across these classes were extremely disparate. Moreover, the enforcement of strictures with regard to womanhood varied immensely as local society remained beyond the reach of ordinary governmental controls. It was only with the sweeping Meiji reforms from 1868 that the role of women came under State attention. Rather than overlooking women, the new State now chose to actively mould new definitions of family and womanhood, which would aid the new national goals of industrialization and power consolidation (Bernstein, 1991).

The family-state structure of the Meiji state first took shape in the 1880s; under this, the individual stem family no longer remained a private institution (Miyake 1991, p 270). It was co-opted by the State, and the emperor was cast as the father of his subjects. In line with this ideology, for the first time, women were called upon to positively contribute to the nation. State propaganda exhorted women to contribute to the nation through their hard work, their frugality, their efficient management, their care of the old, young, and ill, and their responsible upbringing of children (Nolte and Hastings 1991, p 152). Their exclusion from political activity was also predicated on these weighty responsibilities¹⁰. The State exhorted the indispensability of women to the household unit, which was now the basic unit of governance and society. Women were portrayed as civil servants in service to the state, without whose labour the survival of Japanese society would be threatened. Thus, it was their social value rather than mental, physical, or moral incapacity, that precluded women from political participation. The demands of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) thrust higher-class women into more public roles, and lower-class women into economic roles (Bernstein, 1991). The Home Ministry played a major role in eulogizing women who either contributed to the war effort or held the fort whilst their husbands fought in the war¹¹. Through this, some additional characteristics of Meiji Womanhood were endorsed; women now needed to be strong enough to endure marriage, to support their husbands and parents through illness and poverty, and to run households when their husbands were absent at war. (Nolte and Hastings 1991, p 271) The orthodox "good wife" was one

⁹ shi-nō-kō-shō refers to the strict class structure which distinguished between the statuses of warriors, farmers, artisans, and merchants in the Tokugawa Japan. Accessed February 24, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Japan/The-Tokugawa-status-system>.

¹⁰ See Nolte and Hastings (1991, p 154-157), "State Prohibition of Women's Political Activity," in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600 -1945*.

¹¹ According to Bernstein (1991), *Shimin* magazine was used to highlight the lives of ideal women.

who pursued whatever employment and education would serve her family and the society (Ibid, p 171). The ideal woman was one who attended girls' higher school, spent an appropriate amount of time on organized philanthropic and patriotic activities, and used the postal savings system (Ibid, p 171). These virtues were in line with the period of economic growth and can therefore be understood as a “cult of productivity”. At the same time, these ideals applied to all women, and thus gradually replaced the premodern differentiation of women by class (Bernstein, 1991).

By the 1920s, however, family-state ideology was declining. Capitalist economic development after the mid-Meiji period had undermined the i.e., (traditional Japanese family unit) as a kinship organization and as a labour organization for agricultural production (Miyake 1991, p 270). The development of individualism led to the notion of the family as part of the private sphere, and not a public institution dedicated to state ends. In the relatively liberal time of Taisho democracy, the ideal of “good wives and wise mothers” (ryosai kenbo)¹² came under the scrutiny under women themselves. The State lost the monopoly of gender construction in Japan, and this era saw several debates on women’s roles in which women actively contributed (Bernstein, 1991). Debates over the “New Woman” (atarashii onna) saw the emergence of various strands of feminism, all with differing interpretations of women’s roles. Laurel Rasplica Rodd (1991) identifies four such strands, and also their respective proponents.

Yosano Akiko (1878-1942) advocated a feminism grounded in equal legal, educational, and social rights and responsibilities for women. Hiratsuka Raicho (1886-1971) propounded a doctrine of motherhood that called for state protection of and special privileges for mothers. Yamakawa Kikue (1890-1980) embraced a socialist view of history that traced women's subordination to the system of private property and so set the destruction of that system as her goal. Finally, Yamada Waka (1879-1957) held a more traditional view of women as "good wives and wise mothers” (p 176).

The phenomenon of the New Woman in the early 20th century was followed by that of the “Modern Girl” (modan gyaru or moga) in the late 20th century. The Modern Girl was a highly commodified cultural construct crafted by journalists who debated her identity during the tumultuous decade of cultural and social change following the great earthquake of 1923. (Silverberg 1991, p 240) The image of the Modern Girl was that of a glittering, decadent, urban, middle-class female consumer, who shunned traditions, revelled in hedonism, and considered herself equal to men¹³. The discourse on the Modern Girl was more about imagining a new Japanese woman than about documenting social change (Silverberg 1991, p 250). There was no specific Modern Girl in real life; rather, this term alluded to a new flavour sensed from the lives of all women in this era. The single or married Japanese woman wageworker who was forced into the work force by economic need following the end of the economic boom of the World War I years could be viewed as inspiration behind the Modern Girl phenomenon (Silverberg 1991, p 258). This modern young woman transgressed by crossing boundaries erected by class, gender, and culture, and though not organized, this was the first voice of women’s resistance (Bernstein, 1991). The New Woman had raised the woman’s question, and the Modern Girl was taking action. Numerous militant feminist organizations emerged during the 1920s after the establishment of the liberal New Woman's Association (Shin Fujin Kyokai) in 1919 (Silverberg 1991, p 259). In 1922, the ban on women's right to attend political meetings was lifted, and by 1928 around 12,010 women had joined the labour movement (Ibid, p 259). The Modern Girl was constantly painted as promiscuous and apolitical in order to undercut the very real militancy of Japanese women in the 1920s (Silverberg 1991, p 260). This militancy was articulated through the adoption of new fashions,

¹² According to Bernstein (1991), the term ryosai kenbo was coined by Nakamura Masanao to describe a model for women's roles adapted from the nineteenth-century West, i.e., women should provide the moral foundation of the home, educating the children and acting as "better half" to their husbands.

¹³ The Modern Girl phenomenon has been captured in several literary works, including those of Junichiro Tanizaki and Hayashi Fumiko.

through labour in new arenas, and through political activity that consciously challenged social, economic, and political structures and relationships (Ibid, p 260). The Modern Girl came to be perceived as a threat to State power, just as the Good Wife and Wise Mother had stood for its endurance. This image appeared as a critique of those who attempted to hold on to tradition in a time of sweeping sociocultural change and unrest.

Many had hoped for the Modern Girl to be the torch bearer of the new Shōwa era, but this did not prove to be true. Rather, boundaries reifying gender and culture were imposed as women. Throughout the 1930s, starting with Japan's military aggression in Manchuria in 1931, the widespread draft of men for the expanding war effort and the migration of labour from the villages had led to families being separated, leaving behind mainly women, the elderly, and children (Miyake 1991, p 271). Thus, the onus of preserving the family now shifted from men to women. The Meiji family-state ideology exhorted women to contribute to a family held together by the man, but Shōwa version of family-state ideology focused on the imagery of fecundity and warmth of blood relations associated with mothers¹⁴ (Bernstein, 1991). The idea of motherhood as feminine duty to the nation took root in this era; the state's pronatalist policy acknowledged the instrumentality of motherhood as a means to preserve and revitalize a family system on the wane. (Nolte and Hastings 1991, p 171) Women were rewarded for bearing several children, and policies for the protection of mothers were also passed for the first time. The State recognition of motherhood and the value of women ensured the collaboration of feminists with wartime policies. State attention made them take the initiative to organize women on the home front, recruiting them for the Greater Japan Women's Association, mobilizing them for factory work, and urging them to save money or to buy war bonds¹⁵ (Miyake 1991, p 272). In so doing, they thought that they could demonstrate women's abilities. The state acted on men and women differently to elicit loyalty. Although educated as the emperor's subjects in school, women did not have the same opportunity to relate to the state directly as men did through their military experiences. The state's recognition of fecund women in wartime Japan provided women with an opportunity to reconstitute themselves as subjects of Imperial Japan (Miyake 1991, p 280). The aggrandizement of mothers vis-à-vis the deplorable work conditions faced by female wartime labourers reveals how value was assigned only to those women who served the state as a reproductive vessel, providing soldiers for Japan's imperialist ambitions¹⁶. Thus, the Shōwa era saw the redefinition of women's roles to fit the demands of the male-centred, authoritarian State. Womanhood became synonymous with motherhood and national duty, and feminine identity was subsumed within the realm of militarist-nationalist jingoism.

¹⁴ See Bernstein (1991). A Meiji era mother was a mother within the family, whilst a Showa era mother was the mother of the nation.

¹⁵ See Bernstein (1991). As feminists in Japan had never produced systematic criticism of the imperial State as the source of female oppression, there was no obstacle to their collaboration with state-war mechanisms

¹⁶ See Yoshiko Miyake (1991, p 281-292), "Women's Mobilization for Wartime Production," in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600 -1945*.

2 Women Within the Family

2.1 “Ie” and “Khandan”

The institution of the family figures extensively in both *The Crooked Line* and *The Makioka Sisters*. The Japanese *ie* and the Indian Muslim *khandan* differ from each other immensely, but the traditional sanctity of both were similarly threatened by forces of modernity and sociocultural change in the period encapsulated in these texts. The waning Makioka name and prestige, heralded by the nervous and unworthy Tatsuo, and Shamshad's burgeoning family within an ill-kept family house point towards the instability plaguing both systems. Therefore, in order to analyse these changes and their effect on the role of women within the family, there is the need to understand the salient features of both family systems.

The term *ie* can be understood as ‘stem family’. It refers to a family lineage with eternal existence, stretching from the distant past into the future. Ancestors and offspring are linked together by an idea of family genealogy, or *keifu*, which does not mean relationships based on mere blood inheritance and succession, but rather a bond of relationship inherent in the maintenance and continuance of the family as an institution (Ariga 1954, p 362). Typically, the eldest son inherits responsibility for the *ie*, taking over as its head. All of his siblings will either marry out of the *ie* (in the case of women) or move out (in the case of younger brothers). (Nakane 1970) Marriages are usually arranged (*omiai kekkon*), with the aim of maintaining the status of the *ie* and for promoting its collective good. What makes the Japanese *ie* distinctive, however, is the widespread use of adoption whenever the survival of the *ie* is at stake. If there are no sons, or if none of the sons is suitable to be an heir, the husband of a daughter may be adopted to become the new head of the *ie*. (Nakane 1970) The adoption of Tatsuo as the Makioka family patriarch is an example of this practice. Moreover, Tatsuo's insecurity was also a product of this practice; the husband who marries into his wife's family occupies the same weak position as a woman who marries into her husband's family.¹⁷ (Bryant 1990, p 309) As historically it was sons of poor families who married into their wives' families, adopted husbands were accorded lower social status. (Bryant 1990) Another important feature of the *ie* which is relevant to the Makioka family is that of *honke* and *bunke* (main house and branch house). When a family grows larger, some members are allowed to establish new families of their own as branches, *bunke*, of the older, original family, *honke*. (Ariga 1954, p 364) The *honke* gives to the branch family a part of the family property and in various ways helps to establish the new branch family. (Ariga 1954) The Ashiya house headed by Teinosuke was thus a *bunke* of the main Makioka house at Osaka; the dynamics between both these houses in the text exemplifies *honke-bunke* relationships, wherein the branch house is always lesser in importance than the main house, and actions within the branch house always have an effect on the main house and collective family name. Therefore, decisions over major events affecting the family could not be taken independently by the branch house; the main house always needed to be consulted, or at least kept in the loop.¹⁸

¹⁷ According to Haruko Wakita (1993), of the types of marriages that exist in Japan, three common forms are *yometori* marriage, where the woman is brought into the household, *tsumadoi* marriage, where the woman and man live separately, with the husband visiting his wife at her residence, and *mukotori* marriage, where the husband came to live in the residence of his wife's. For further information on this concept, see “Women and the Creation of the ‘Ie’ in Japan: An Overview from the Medieval Period to the Present,” *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* 4 (1993): pp. 83-105, <https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/42772054>.

¹⁸ Even though the Teinosuke-led Ashiya House was financially better off than the main house, *honke-bunke* relations could be clearly witnessed in the importance accorded to the main house's opinion during Yukiko's marriage matches

The khandan or extended family traces descent from a common ancestor, and for ashraf Muslims this ancestor was usually a part of Muslim ruling elite under the Mughals or Pathans. (Deutsch 1998) Members of this lineage construct attempted to preserve its status as a unique and distinctive family. Sylvia Vatuk posits that the khandan consists of a multiplicity of members, all of differing importance. She categorizes them in concentric circles of importance to the khandan. The most important circle, or the "core" of the khandan are referred to as khas khandan ke log or "genuine" khandan people. (Vatuk 1990, p 118) These are full blooded descendants of the founding ancestor and his wife. Most of them are also married within the khandan themselves and have arranged their children's marriages within it as well. (Vatuk 1990) It is this core which is primarily responsible for preserving family integrity and loyalty. The second category is composed of the "peripheral" members¹⁹ of the khandan. (Vatuk 1990, p 118) Such people typically have one parent or grandparents who are "outsiders". Generally, such individuals are also married to outsiders, as are their offspring. Within Chughtai's text, this division is exemplified through Shaman who is a member of the core, and Abbas who is a peripheral member. The khandan is conscious of their identity as good Muslims, who follow the Prophet's teachings and the dictates of the shariat to the best of their ability. (Vatuk 1990, p 119) Moral qualities, personality traits and abilities are believed to be carried in the "one blood" (ek khun) which the khandan shares. (Vatuk 1990, p 121) As a family's claim to purity of descent rested heavily upon the pattern of marital alliance, marrying within the khandan was of great importance; but in practice, marrying out of the family was acceptable as long as the outsider belonged to a sharif family (Vatuk 1990).

One of the main differences between the ie and khandan lies in the way gendered divisions are practiced. In the Japanese context, gendered distinctions are made in terms of public and private, where the public acts as the realm of the masculine, and the private is considered the feminine domain. And as the private domain is synonymous with the ie, the ie constituted a feminine space as a whole. However, within the context of the khandan, apart from a similar gendered public-private divide, there also existed a division of the private space on gendered lines. In the traditional homes of wealthy Muslim families, several rooms are set aside for the "public" (mardana or male quarters), while the inside of the home remains "private" (zenana or female quarters). (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2001) For those Muslim families with limited means, space within the home was reconfigured as either public or private by the practice of purdah. (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2001) Gender segregation, controls over interactions between the genders, and the public-private division depended on the idea of mahram and na-mahram, thus making these distinctions highly dynamic.²⁰ (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2001, p 304) Na-mahram males were preferably not to be interacted with, and if physical proximity could not be avoided, purdah or some form of veiling was to be observed. While strict rules of formal interaction between the genders existed in the Japanese context, interaction between women and non-family males was not forbidden; albeit monitored by chaperones, these interactions were permissible.

¹⁹ See Vatuk (1990). Called "*ghair khandan ke log*", these members often play a subversive role, critiquing the extreme familial loyalty of the inner core members as signs of insularity and failure to keep up with the modern world

²⁰ See Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2001, p 304). *Mahram* refers to a specific category of people of the other sex with whom marriage is explicitly forbidden (e.g., for a woman: father, brother, and for a man: mother, sister, etc.). This is a very small number of people. *Na-mahram* are those of the opposite sex whose kinship does not represent any impediment for marriage. This category includes the rest of the members of the opposite sex.

2.2 Tradition and Transformation

Both texts under consideration provide an in-depth view into the life of women within the family. Despite continuities, both texts depict the traditional family structure as being under duress. The role of women within the family was an important factor adding to this stress; different generations within the family were exposed to differing degrees of modernity, reforms, and education, resulting in a conflict between the traditional core and the dynamic new generations. In *The Makioka Sisters*, tradition and modernity is reflected through the sisters themselves – Yukiko is representative of Japanese tradition and Taeko of modernity, and Sachiko appears to be a harmonious blend of both quarters.²¹ (Tanizaki 2010) While there is no active conflict between the sisters, there is definitely a sense of unease and disapproval that both older sisters feel around Taeko, symbolic of the conflict between tradition and change.²² This conflict is very overt in *The Crooked Line*, where women caught within traditionalism are resentful; they deal with their resentment by acting as the guardians of the traditional core they belong to, chastising the new generation who stray too far from it. Bari Apa's constant disapproval of Shaman's behaviour was thus a way for her to legitimize and elevate her own and her children's position within the family as the ones appropriately upholding traditions²³ (Chughtai 2019).

The changing role of women within the household can be seen within both texts. The traditional roles of women, which mainly included housekeeping, child-rearing, and other tasks within the private domain, were now being transformed by forces of social change; women now also performed roles which required them to move into the public domain. For instance, while Bari Apa, Manju, and Shaman's mother performed those traditional roles, women like Shaman and Alma went to college and also got jobs. (Chughtai 2019) Tsuruko, Sachiko, and Yukiko were women of modern Japan who partook in modern, public amusements and diversions; yet they never were an active part of the public sphere, economically or otherwise. (Tanizaki 2010) They always returned to the private domain, and can thus be seen as the upholders of traditional feminine values of the early Shōwa period. Taeko can be viewed as the newer generation, as she had an income from doll-making, thus actually participating in the public realm. (Tanizaki 2010) It can be seen that women like Taeko and Shaman, who took on unorthodox roles, began to be slowly distanced from the family. At the same time, it can also be reasoned that they chose to move away from traditional family as they already felt distanced and out of place within it.

While these women exercised power through their ability to hold their own in the public realm, women within the traditional world had their own ways of wielding power. For instance, Yukiko was perceived to be reserved and hesitant, but she outright rejected the proposal Tatsuo had enthusiastically negotiated for her. (Tanizaki 2010) She had done so at the last moment, without providing any legitimate reason, thus making Tatsuo lose face. While this could be attributed to her inability to communicate her wishes properly, but it can also be understood as a deliberate attempt to humiliate Tatsuo (and this was how Tatsuo perceived it). (Tanizaki 2010) Therefore, Yukiko used her own means to ensure that her wishes were understood, whilst maintaining her traditional, serene demeanour. Similarly, Bari Apa consistently deployed her status as a young widow with well-timed tears to secure her children's and her own interests, usually at the expense of Shaman. (Chughtai 2019) Moreover, her decision to not remarry, coupled with her simple outfits

²¹ Tanizaki (2010, p 45) writes, "Yukiko was the most Japanese in appearance and dress, Taeko the most Western, and Sachiko stood midway between."

²² Tanizaki (2010, p 292) writes, "Of the four sisters, Taeko had always been the most open and direct—to put her case favorably, the most modern—but lately that directness had been strangely transformed into a certain rudeness and vulgarity... In April, at the Gourd Restaurant in Kyoto, Taeko went in ahead of them all, took a place higher than Yukiko, and started eating before anyone. Afterwards Sachiko whispered to Yukiko that she never again wanted to dine out with Koi-san."

²³ Chughtai (2019, p 35) reveals Bari Apa comparing Shaman to Noori in the following fashion - "That's it, just give her a little leeway and she's no longer fit to talk to. There's Noori too, but she doesn't behave in this insane manner."

and proud mien added to the air of dignity around her, and this image was an added tools in her manipulations to elevate her status within the family. (Chughtai 2019) However, it must be understood that this power wielded by women within the household did not change women's power relationship in terms of gender relations. They exercised effective power mainly against their own sex, thereby further ensuring the legitimacy of male power structures, or an acceptance of doxic forms of identification (Thakur 1998, p 329).

There were also women from the younger generations, who would traverse modernity without posing a challenge to traditional authority. This was because their foray into modernity was posited on the idea that it would help them perform better within the traditional sphere. Bari Apa's daughter Noori, received the same education as Shaman, but she was held in high regard because she got married right after, and was thus dutiful and modest in the traditional sense.²⁴ (Chughtai 2019) Sachiko, as mentioned earlier, also received similar regard because of her ability to balance the modern without threatening the traditional. This can be seen from her ability to look good in both in Western and Japanese garb²⁵, as well as her reputation of being a modern Japanese housewife. (Tanizaki 2010) Women like them adopted changes that came with modernity without upsetting the status quo and strengthened the traditional core. Thus, they performed traditional roles designated for women, while incorporating modern sensibilities into them. Sachiko's awareness of modern medicines and Noori's knowledge of English are thus examples of how both women would use their newfound, modern knowledge to be better wives and mothers. These women were meant to be the face of modernity and reform, as they used their education and knowledge to enrich their household, as well as be more effective in child-rearing. Thus, it can be understood that women's roles in this period in both countries were in a state of flux, with some women being firmly affixed in the traditional sphere, some choosing radically different roles in the modern world, and some transforming existing traditional roles, reinforcing them with modern education and reforms.

2.3 Women Outside the Family – A Comparison of Shaman and Taeko

Despite the completely different cultural contexts, the similarities between the characterizations of Chughtai's Shaman and Tanizaki's Taeko, reveal the presence of the archetype of the "rebellious modern woman" in both cultures. This prompts the comparison of both characters, particularly due to the nature of rebellion they exhibit, as well as their dubious positions within their respective families. It is remarkable to notice the similarities of their character arcs, despite the divergent writing styles as well as priorities of both authors. In Shaman and Taeko's characters we find reflected the irreconcilable tussle that plagued the "new women" emerging in society, caught between trying to find meaning in tradition or modernity, and not finding a solution in either. The hollowness of such existence is underscored through their constant impatience and yearning for affection.

²⁴ Refer to Chughtai (2019, p 172). Noori received a match within a wealthy family and was to wait for seven years for her intended to complete his education. In that period, she lowered expenses and wore rags with "demure pride" to afford her dowry and received great praise for her mature behaviour.

²⁵ Refer to Tanizaki (2010, p 45). "Sachiko again stood between, as if to combine their best features... (she) wore Western clothes in the summer and Japanese clothes the rest of the year."

As younger offspring, both never received enough attention or validation within their respective familial structures while growing up. Shaman was an unwelcome addition to her burgeoning clan and Taeko's mother caught a deadly illness upon her birth. Both were considered unkempt, untidy, ill-mannered, and even ill-fated as compared to their siblings, and both were affection starved. Shaman was passed on to be raised by her wet-nurse Unna at birth and then to Manju, and was eventually separated from both of these people, with whom she had formed her first deep bonds of affection.²⁶ (Chughtai 2019) Taeko was her father's disappointment, who proclaimed her to be his darkest and plainest daughter; moreover, she barely had any experience of the Makioka splendour that her sisters had experienced, as her father passed away before she came of age. (Tanizaki 2010, p 294) Therefore, both women did not have any real rootedness within their respective families. As validation was not found within this traditional structure, both women gradually became increasingly alienated from it as they grew up. They used tools offered by modernity to build themselves up and find fulfilment outside of this sphere. For instance, Taeko constantly attempted to gain more accomplishments, used her doll-making to earn money, and even wished to study fashion and dress-making in France. (Tanizaki 2010) Shaman utilized her exposure to intellectual ideas within her university to create a new persona for herself, made speeches at political events, and even rose in rank within politically-inclined student associations. (Chughtai 2019) Both women embodied the new kind of femininity that had emerged within their respective cultures, with Taeko appearing as the independent and free-spirited *modan garu*, and Shaman taking on characteristics of the student-led Marxian strand of the freedom struggle, being vocal and politically conscious, and looking beyond narrow religious, casteist, gender and linguistic identities. Thus, the lifestyles that both women had chosen for themselves led them to move further away from their families, which can be seen in Shaman's dwindling visits to her home and Taeko spending most of her time in her workshop rather than at the Ashiya house.

The rebellion that both women posed against the spheres of family and traditionality was fuelled by their relationship with their family, but it was also limited by the same. They both rebelled against family and tradition as they never provided them with the support they craved, but when they encountered the feelings of isolation and abandonment that came with this rebellion, they both craved the familiarity of the traditional sphere. Thus, it can be said that their rebellion was constrained by the imprint of tradition that they carried within themselves. This can be seen when Taeko craves for her sisters' support during her illness and miscarriage despite having been disowned²⁷, and Shaman wishes for henna and bangles upon her impulsive marriage with an Irishman²⁸. Taeko and Shaman's rebellion differed in their manifestation; Taeko's rebellion failed, and she was reintegrated within the traditional sphere, Shaman's rebellion succeeded, but she regretted its consequences. Taeko's rebellion can be seen from her running away with Okubata, her desire to earn money, her relationship with Itakura, and her pregnancy. (Tanizaki 2010) She rebelled against her family with the hope of securing deep affection, but her failure to do so made her rebellion fruitless. She lost Itakura, as well as her child, and her return to the traditional fold post her miscarriage, where she agreed to marry Miyoshi and moved in with him to start a home in Kobe, can be seen as the ultimate failure of her rebellion²⁹. (Tanizaki 2010) Shaman's rebellion can be seen from her working as a government schoolteacher, being part of revolutionary organizations, and her eventual marriage outside of her religion and nationality. (Chughtai 2019) Her rebellion stemmed from the desire to build up a unique, strong identity, that would compensate for the lack of familial attachment in her life. While like Taeko she craved affection in her initial years, constant rejection of her feelings of love and attachment over time left her

²⁶ When Unna was sent away, Shaman felt as if she had been orphaned, and when Manjhu married and moved away, it was as if someone in the family had died.

²⁷ Tanizaki (2010) writes how during her illness, Taeko had asked O-Haru to not alert her family, "but Sachiko suspected that she hoped O-haru would ignore her orders. Surprisingly weak at times, Taeko knew how good it was to have a family. She would be lonely with neither Sachiko nor Yukiko beside her." (p 459)

²⁸ Chughtai (2019) reveals Shaman's uneasiness - "She (*Shaman*) was a day-old bride but there was no bridal fragrance about her, no henna on her hands, there wasn't even a single bangle on her wrist. Her frightened mind shuddered. Is this a wedding or widowhood?" (p 357)

²⁹ See Tanizaki (2010, p 487). Taeko's financial independence was a farce as well, as her lavish lifestyle was supported in great measure by Okubata.

jaded and emotionally unavailable. She managed to complete her rebellion, because her marriage with Ronnie Taylor signified a total separation from her family and a complete break from tradition. (Chughtai 2019) But this impulsive decision lacked direction, and it was compounded by the political climate as well as Shaman's own inability to reconcile with her husband's nationality and cultural identity, leaving her feeling suffocated and regretful.³⁰

Thus, both these characters provide an alternative to traditional models of femininity and womanhood, and as a consequence can be characterized as women outside the family. The authors reveal the difficulties of shunning tradition through Taeko and Shaman - tradition ultimately did constitute the stable and known world. The reality of isolation, loneliness, lack of support, and constant self-doubt that came with the rejection of tradition, as presented by Tanizaki and Chughtai, refuted the romanticization of "modern women", in which they appear to be indomitable and perfectly acclimatized to the world of new ideas, expectations, and beliefs in which they were situated. Thus, Taeko and Shaman represented the conundrum faced by women who stood at the precipice of tradition and modernity – the latter constrained them, while the former was intimidating in its novelty and harshness, and a synthesis between the two seemed like a compromise. Thus, the constant onslaught of oppositional forces upon the psyche of the modern woman can be seen as being a common trope between both cultures.

³⁰ Refer to Chughtai (2019). "Bitterness arose and then subsided, but every twist and jab left a mark. Actually, they were both tired of the strain; love had become a cheap emotion, they became wary of each other's presence... they constantly longed to be away from each other, and these minor skirmishes continued to intensify the hatred that had become rooted in their unconscious." (p 363)

3 The Feminine and the Political

Tanizaki created *The Makioka Sisters* at the height of the second World War, and Chughtai published *The Crooked Line* after having lived through the aftermath of the Partition. Thus, the turbulence of the political scenarios in both countries have had an imprint on the two novels, albeit in distinct ways. Both authors make political statements through their depiction of the feminine world; Tanizaki does it through absences, silences, symbols, and nostalgia, while Chughtai utilizes explicit outbursts, rage, and confusion to denote the complex entanglement of the personal and political. In both novels, the feminine is used as a tool for several political ends – to shift focus towards the ostensibly “unimportant” aspects of male-centred narratives of history, to make comments about the futility of war as well as the hypocrisy of the freedom struggle, and also to counter the meanings that were being inscribed on the female body in an increasingly jingoistic political atmosphere.

3.1 Femininity as a Political Tool

The absence of militarism, xenophobia, and hyper-nationalism that dominated Japan’s socio-political sphere in the 1930s is quite apparent in *The Makioka Sisters*. In fact, it was noticed by censors during the novel’s serialization in the Chuo Koron, who found it unfit for consumption during wartime –

The *Makioka Sisters* “goes on and on detailing the very thing we are most supposed to be on our guard against during this period of wartime emergency: the soft, effeminate, and grossly individualistic lives of women. (Chambers 1998, p 134)

Thus, in choosing to focus on mundane aspects of the lives of middle-class women, Tanizaki made a conscious choice to repudiate Japan’s militarism and aggression. In bringing the feminine and personal to the forefront and erasing hypermasculine wartime propaganda from his novel, he attempts to bring focus back to what constituted true Japanese identity and spirit - art, poetry, aesthetics, and nature. The novel showcases all of these factors as being the essence of Japanese existence; their gradual fading away, depicted through the change of seasons, ephemerality of cherry blossoms, Yukiko’s marriage, and Taeko’s departure tinge the novel with a sense of sorrow for the loss of Japanese character³¹. (Chambers 1998) The feminine sphere is thus imbued with several meanings, including nostalgia, and is utilized as a targeted tool to display anti-militarist, anti-state political opinions. The distaste for Tokyo and an attachment for the Kansai region reflects similar ideas; Tokyo is identified with everything wrong with modern Japan, including militarism, and the Kansai region is identified with cosmopolitanism, good taste, and artistic values, all that Tanizaki believed to be desirable in modern Japan. (Chambers 1998) *The Makioka*’s Kansai is effortlessly multicultural, as the family has German neighbours and Russian friends, and Yukiko prefers Western music better than Japanese. (Chambers 1998, p 135) Tokyo is viewed as “a distant, utterly foreign country”, its intensely cold weather is despised, and the city is considered an aberration. Yukiko’s constant desire to return to the Ashiya house, Sachiko’s view of Tokyo as a “frontier city”, as well as Tsuruko’s sadness upon leaving Kansai, all point to the understanding of the Kansai region as the true *Makioka* home. (Chambers 1998) Kansai is depicted as a feminine space - familiar, warm, comfortable, accepting, and resilient – and Sachiko’s garden is a microcosmic representation of this peaceful, ideal sphere. The garden consisted of foreign and indigenous plants, was always a retreat for the family in troubling times, and even withstood the flood of 1938 without any damage. (Chambers 1998, p 135) This can be understood as a political comment about the robustness of Japan’s core against the damaging impacts of war, xenophobia,

³¹ This line from Tanizaki (2010) showcases that emotion - “The ancients waited for cherry blossoms, grieved when they were gone, and lamented their passing in countless poems. How very ordinary the poems had seemed to Sachiko when she read them as a girl, but now she knew, as well as one could know, that grieving over fallen cherry blossoms was more than a fad or a convention.” (p 104)

and the jingoism espoused by the militarist state. The focus on the feminine thus acted as a subversive reminder of the non-military roots of Japanese culture, whose preservation and perpetuation had largely depended on women historically. Moreover, it allowed for a different, more personalized take on the history of Japan between 1936-41, which had otherwise been eclipsed by grand narratives of Japan's wartime activities, goals, and aspirations. At a time when the military state was endorsing propaganda exhorting women to produce more soldiers and be loyal citizens by fulfilling their biological destinies as mothers, Tanizaki's presentations of various models of femininity also served as a rejection of such reductionist notions of womanhood. The feminine is not used as an escape from reality; there is an awareness within the novel of a changing world, which is underscored by the ephemerality of cherry blossoms. (Chambers 1998) The feminine is used as a reminder of what constituted true Japan, and the wistful, futile desire to preserve the same, as can be seen from the poem written by Teinosuke:

Let me hide at least a petal
 In the sleeve of my flower-viewing robe
 That we may remember the spring. (Tanizaki 2010, p 109)

3.2 The Personal and the Political – Femininity within Nationalism

Unlike Tanizaki, Chughtai overtly emphasizes the political; the nationalist movement features prominently within *The Crooked Line*. However, the political is always explored through the personal experience of characters, allowing for new perspectives into the traditional narratives of the freedom struggle. As the novel deals with Shaman's interactions with the freedom struggle, particularly through her involvement with the Progressives, it allows for a glimpse into how the feminine interacted with and was perceived within the nationalist discourse. Rather than being an active participant driving change within the nationalist movement, the woman simply became a symbol of the revolution and of the nation through an invocation of her role as a mother. (Khera 2016, p 63) The nation itself was feminized and described as the "motherland", constructing the woman's spiritual nature as a domesticized entity. Just as the men fought to defend the female nation, women were expected to strengthen the integrity of its spiritual core through their maternal role. (Khera 2016) As a consequence, when Shaman entered discussions within the Progressives Union about political conditions within the colony, she was not taken seriously due to the prejudices that arose from the feminine being a purely symbolic force. (Khera 2016, p 63) The Progressives, an ostensibly socialist group that denounced the superficial empowerment of women without the integration of the lower classes of society, also seemed to have internalized the nationalist discourse about the symbolic role of women. (Khera 2016, p 64) Thus, Chughtai showcases the hypocrisy of liberals, who ostensibly promoted the equality of the sexes, yet limited their agency within their own organizations, forcing them to use tactics of sexual appeal and flirtation to have their points taken seriously. (Khera 2016, p 65) The personal, almost trivial motivation for Shaman to be part of the political, as well as the ironic domesticized role Alma and Shaman begin to play within the political union of the Progressives showcases how the lofty ideals of such political movements took shape in reality.³² (Khera 2016) The treatment of the feminine within the nationalist discourse is used as a tool to expose the limitations of the Progressives as well, in that they dealt only with philosophical arguments of nationalism within the bubble of the University, and effected no real change in actuality. (Khera 2016, p 68) Shaman as the feminine force within the novel, embodies the nation; "the hidden embers of rebellion and self-reliance" that she harboured were symbolic of the astonishing revolutionary potential that the nation possessed. (Khera 2016, p 72) However, just as her revolutionary potential never translates into adequate action, similarly the nation's efforts for independence are deemed

³² Khera (2016) writes that Shaman begins her transformation as an independent revolutionary after facing a rejection from Ejaz; thus, her entry into the folds of the independence movement was fuelled not by noble aspirations, but by her desire to cope with the loneliness and rejection she felt.

inadequate by the author. Despite wanting to see change, Shaman does not speak up against corruption within her school, neither does she feel satisfied while distributing grain amongst the underprivileged; she situates all these issues on external factors, and takes no initiative to correct them, believing them to be beyond her control. (Chughtai 2019) This demonstrates how Shaman was propelled by false, idealistic visions, so too was the nation, and consequently both found themselves falling short of the vision they longed to achieve. (Khera 2016, p 74) Shaman's marriage with Ronnie was symbolic of the colonial enterprise in India; the cultural clash and differing political viewpoints engendered great strife, and both become more embedded in their respective cultures, with Shaman utilizing the nationalists' discourse and Ronnie using the colonizers' discourse to revile each other. (Khera 2016, p 80) Their final separation is akin to India emerging from the rubble as an independent nation, but Shaman's pregnancy is a reminder of the scars of colonization as well as that of the Partition, making pain an indelible part of Independence. Thus, Chughtai uses the feminine and personal to display the layers of the nationalist movement, as well as expose the hypocrisy that was rife within it. At the same time, in equating the journey of India with that of Shaman's, Chughtai also took away the unidimensional spiritual symbolism that was inscribed on the feminine, humanizing and empowering it by showcasing its fallibility and inner turmoil. The feminine thus no longer represented the reservoir of maternal spirituality – it appeared like the nation – scarred, lost, and emotionally exhausted, yet still standing.

4 The Manifold Faces of Motherhood

As has been mentioned earlier, the 1930s saw newfound emphasis being laid on the reproductive power of women, apotheosizing mothers as paragons of national integrity, loyalty, and spirituality. Thus, the image of the mother was dehumanized and placed on a pedestal; some of its manifestations can be witnessed in the images of the Virgin Mary, the Angel in the House, the Bharat Mata, and the Shōwa mother of the nation. The warmth, fecundity, affection, and care associated with motherhood was appropriated as a state tool to strengthen the family-state system as the bedrock of Imperial Japan. Indian nationalists used the image of the giving mother to signify the superior spiritual core of India in opposition to the West. In both cases, motherhood was touted as a superior form of womanhood, pushing women into the domestic sphere and significantly restricting the diverse forms of womanly existence. Moreover, motherhood was also restricted in the ways it could manifest; its picturization was clinically perfect, with it being the mother's joy and duty, as well as her natural role. However, both *The Makioka Sisters* and *The Crooked Line* depict forms of motherhood which are far from perfect, humanizing the mother and realistically portraying her various manifestations as well as shortcomings and failures. Motherhood is thus not described as unitary; it is constituted as a deeply personal experience, the effect and experience of it varying enormously from individual to individual.

4.1 Imperfect Motherhood

Tanizaki created the template of the “beautiful mother”, which was a major change from the divide between the otherworldly courtesan, the object of love, and the mundane wife and mother, the keeper of the house, which was seen in earlier Japanese literature. (Saeki 1998) He combined notions of beauty and sexuality with the maternal, giving rise to a figure that could simultaneously be the object of desire, as well as the source of motherly comfort. (Saeki 1998) However, in the *Makioka Sisters*, the maternal is not presented as such a sanitized and pristine poetic creation. Motherhood in this novel is in fact far more realistic; mothers feel anxious about failing their duties, good maternal instincts are witnessed in those who aren't actually mothers, and the actual physical pain of giving birth and the trauma of miscarriage are not omitted. Thus, through the various models of motherhood that are presented within the novel, it can be seen that none of them live up to the “perfect” mother that society demands. The *Makioka* sisters' mother is the idealized mother in the novel – in Sachiko's memory, her mother's perfection makes her appear as a fantastical creature of fiction. She comes across as a “fragile, self-effacing Kyoto beauty”, who docilely managed her philandering husband's house without complaint, and passed away quietly at the age of thirty-six due to lung disease. (Tanizaki 2010, p 398) Sachiko's memory of her mother looms largely around her looks, and the “strange charm” she possessed even in sickness. (Tanizaki 2010) Her face was beautiful even in death, and combined with the imagery of nature that Sachiko had always associated with her, the death of her mother felt almost impersonal, likened to “something beautiful...leaving the earth”. (Tanizaki 2010, p 398) Thus, it can be observed that this spectre was Sachiko's own creation, rather than an actual paragon of motherly virtue, and points to the fact that such idealized visions of motherhood were usually imagined³³. The failure of all sisters to match up to the ideal that was their mother, points to the fact that the reality of motherhood was far removed from the painting-like perfection of the *Makioka* mother. The eldest *Makioka* sister Tsuruko appeared to be the quintessential mother that the Japanese state promoted, with six children, most of whom were boys. (Tanizaki 2010) She was a mother to her sisters, and then her children, and was an immensely hard-working housewife, working towards improving the *Makioka* wealth. However, motherhood for her, particularly the aspect of working for her those under her care, was almost a coping

³³ See Tanizaki (2010). She is referred to as “a woman of the last century”- this illustrates how she was a figure of the past, “a delicately wrought miniature” of old, who was remembered through the idealistic prism of her daughters' memories (p 398)

mechanism. In times of crisis, she threw herself into household management and childcare; this motherly selflessness and service was usually an external farce to disguise her perturbed mind, and this is evident from her erratic behaviour before her leave from Osaka³⁴. (Tanizaki 2010) Her dejection at her inability to keep Yukiko content in Tokyo reveals the frustration of her efforts as a mother. Thus, in her we find a woman who is a mother before she is a woman, who is beholden to traditional motherhood for her identity and purpose, and yet finds it difficult to achieve reciprocity towards her efforts. Sachiko's motherhood is yet another model, in which she is a woman with a daughter of her own but is probably not the best mother for her. Sachiko's tendencies as the spoilt Makioka child, with the weakest constitution, was said to make her completely unsuitable for nursing Etsuko during bouts of illness. (Tanizaki 2010, p 41) Yukiko appeared to be the converse of Sachiko, in that she was a far better mother, but had no child of her own.³⁵ Both sisters used each other for gratifying their wishes – Sachiko told people that she allowed Yukiko to take care of Etsuko as she was unmarried, lonely, and did not have anything of her own, and Yukiko acted like the doting aunt to feel like a mother, and get out of tedious socializing. (Tanizaki 2010) Sachiko appears to be a childish mother, who enjoys motherhood without wishing to partake in the tedious aspects of it, and in Yukiko we see a woman who intensely wishes to be a mother, almost to the extent that she appears to not want a husband to distract her from her motherly duties. Thus, Tanizaki provides examples of the ideal motherly construct, the woman who identifies as a mother, the childish mother, as well as the nurturing woman wishing to be a mother. In doing so, he explores various facets of motherhood, including the feelings of loss and pain that haunt mothers that lose their offspring. Sachiko's miscarriage and Taeko's stillbirth illustrate the latter, and the description of Taeko's painful labour also illustrate the real, physical pain and exhaustion that is associated with motherhood. (Tanizaki 2010) Each maternal figure in the novel fails in some way – Tsuruko could not obtain the attachment Yukiko and Taeko had for Sachiko, Sachiko would never live up to the standards set by Yukiko in Etsuko's care, Yukiko would never be Etsuko's real mother, and Sachiko and Taeko would lose children. (Tanizaki 2010) *The Makioka Sisters* thus captures the various faces of motherhood, and illustrates it as a phenomenon in which perfection or uniformity is impossible, humanizing the mother figure and her failures.

4.2 Subversive Motherhood

Motherhood in 'The Crooked Line' is an essential theme, because the warmth of motherhood is always craved by the central character; as a child she wishes to receive it, and as woman she wishes to impart it, yet this desire always remains thwarted in the novel. The maternal love that is desired by Shaman is far-removed from traditional images of the same; maternal love in *The Crooked Line* is tinged by the psychosexual, and is shown as the first and strongest love-object of an individual and the prototype of all their later love-relations. (Khera 2016, p 19) The warmth of maternal flesh as experienced by the new-born was the kind of maternal love that Shaman wished for throughout her life due to her unfulfilled experience of the same in her childhood. (Khera 2016, p 20) This kind of maternal love was irrational, intense, and physical; and for Shaman, her desire for this phenomenon in her various relations with others was at times fused with sexual desire. Moreover, it also had an element of power; Shaman wished for maternal love from those who she could look up to and who could assert their power over her, allowing her to relinquish power over her own body. (Khera 2016, p 25) Thus, in portraying the maternal with elements of power dynamics and the sexual, Chughtai questions the benignity and chastity that is imposed on maternal love and presents a highly subversive model of motherhood. Shaman's incomplete experience of maternal love

³⁴ About Tsuruko, Tanizaki (2010) writes, "she was as a matter of fact by no means as self-contained as she appeared. When a crisis came, she would stand looking vacantly into space for a time. Then she would go to work as though possessed. Utterly selfless, one would have thought, and intent only on serving others. The truth was that she was too excited to know what she was doing." (p 121)

³⁵ See Tanizaki (2010). Yukiko was the one who most resembled the sisters' mother; "she had about her a sort of perfume to remind one of her mother", making her the closest reproduction of the ideal mother image, even though she hadn't given birth. (p 398)

with her first mother substitute Unna, leads to her projecting her desire for the same on subsequent figures in her life. She first shifted her affections to Manjhu after Unna was sent away and was extremely closed off after Manjhu married and moved away. It was only with her teacher, Ms. Charan, that she began to experience similar desires. Shaman craves maternal love from the position of the child, but she also wishes to provide it from the position of a mother. (Khera 2016) Her experience of puberty and its associated “illness”, an unfamiliar phenomenon, makes her believe that it was a consequence of pregnancy. (Khera 2016, p 26) When she understands her misconception, she is filled with sorrow for “the loss of this imaginary baby”. (Khera 2016, p 27) Her feelings for this imaginary offspring ran just as deep as her feelings for Manjhu and Ms. Charan, so much so that Shaman would wake up feeling as though this baby “were sleeping right next to her.” (Khera 2016, p 27) However, Shaman’s overwhelming desire to be mothered and be a mother never reaches fruition. All mother substitutes in her life eventually leave, and when she invites Manjhu’s child into her life in order to recreate the bond she had shared with Manjhu, this time taking on the role of the motherly figure, the young child passes away. (Chughtai 2019) This death rips apart any residual bond between Manjhu and Shaman, and symbolizes the death of Shaman’s belief in the maternal bond.³⁶ (Khera 2016, p 27) Thus, Chughtai showcases the ideal maternal relationship as unattainable, and the available models of motherhood as deeply flawed. Shaman’s birth mother is the image of the absentee mother, who is shown as producing several children, but being a mother to none. Her presence in the novel is shadowy, imitating her presence in Shaman’s life, and her cloistered existence combined with her infantilism pointed to her incapacity to be a strong, maternal, guiding figure. Bari Apa’s intense selfishness and self-serving ways act in direct opposition to the principle of selflessness that was attached to the traditional, sanctified notion of motherhood. Her maternal attentions towards Shaman were false and toxic; they were part of an unsaid responsibility laden on her as the older sister. She made no attempt to understand Shaman, and solely used her as a yardstick of waywardness against which her own daughter Noori could be judged superior. Unlike Tanizaki, Chughtai also provides a model of motherhood within which the mother is a negative figure, through Alma. A female Progressive, Alma completely abandons her liberal outlook upon pregnancy, likening her unborn child to a “viper” like his father, and thus falling back upon Biblical connotations of evil and chastity. (Khera 2016, p 68) As a mother, she emotionally and physically abuses her child who reminds her of his father, and is unable to form a love bond with him. She projects her emotional turmoil and instability upon her child and traumatizes him due to her inability to find absolution. The fact that her child passes away while she attempts to mend her relationship with him brings out the pathos in her situation as a mother, humanizing the maternal by showing it as fallible and capable of cruelty. Towards the end of the novel, Chughtai uses Shaman’s pregnancy to underscore the potential of motherhood; it could be a powerful anchor in an unstable world, a hope for the future, or it could push the woman deeper into despair and be a highly depersonalizing experience.³⁷ Thus, Chughtai effectively brings down the mother figure from a pedestal and pushes her forward for scrutiny, humanizing her by showing her darker aspects. In doing so, she differentiates between womanhood and motherhood, revealing how the former did not imply natural transition into the latter, shattering traditional notions that saw both as one and the same.

³⁶ See Chughtai (2019). “Manjhu blamed her for her daughter’s death, stopping short only of having her arrested for murder. If Shaman could help it she would give birth to ten such babies and throw them at Manjhu’s face.” (p 327)

³⁷ This can be seen from Shaman’s response to her pregnancy, where she felt mixed emotions, of weakness and courage, anxiety and contentment, all at the same time.

Thus, the multiple manifestations of motherhood shown in both texts provide an insight into the layered nature of the same. Motherhood and the maternal could be experienced and expressed in multiple ways, and there could be no single way of being a perfect mother. The texts pushed beyond the propaganda of motherhood being disseminated in both cultures to present a realistic image of the same. Tanizaki's descriptions humanized the mother, brought to light her internal struggles, but did not challenge the inherent benevolence accorded to the maternal. Chughtai on the other hand disparaged this notion, showed the mother of being capable of immense cruelty and misjudgement, and created a distinction between the maternal love desired and the maternal models available, revealing that the latter were often not capable of providing the former. Thus, it can be seen that Tanizaki revealed the challenges and tribulations of inherently good but imperfect mothers, whereas Chughtai questioned the whole concept of good mothers and the naturalness of motherhood. In doing so, both authors questioned the monolithic, flat, and exhausting descriptions of motherhood promoted in their respective societies to provide realistic and insightful descriptions of the same.

5 Comparative Assessment

Women's position within traditional family structures in both Japan and India was being affected due to forces of modernity and reform; both Tanizaki and Chughtai bring out the multifaceted nature of this change. The tension between tradition and modernity that characterized this flux stemmed from the differing degrees of exposure to modernity and reform experienced by different generations of women within the family. Within both texts we find women who are deeply embedded within the traditional core, women who traverse tradition and modernity with ease, and women who exist at the fringes of familial structure. Neither were the women belonging to the traditional sphere represented as entirely helpless or oppressed, nor were women outside the family shown as completely secure and liberated in their modernity. Through the characters of Taeko and Shaman, the theme of the new, modern woman and the complexities of her existence can be witnessed. The dilemma of being caught between the stability of tradition and the heady emancipation of modernity is displayed through these two characters; both women constitute an alternate model of womanhood, but their potential for rebellion is undercut by the elements of tradition they subconsciously foster within themselves. The feminine is utilized to explore the political conditions that form the backdrop of the text, albeit in different forms. Tanizaki repudiates wartime values through his focus on the feminine, whereas Chughtai questions the lofty ideals of the nationalist movement through the intertwining of personal feminine experience and the nation's experience. The feminine was thus deployed to reveal what truly constituted the nation's essence (in *The Makioka Sisters*), and re-examine the principles and structures that constituted the freedom struggle (*The Crooked Line*). The theme of motherhood was brought out as a multifaceted phenomenon, in direct contrast to the existent propagations of motherhood within nationalist discourses in both nations. Tanizaki humanized the mother figure, revealed her anxieties, concerns, and dilemmas, and Chughtai further questioned the perceived naturalness of motherhood. *The Makioka Sisters* showcased flawed, imperfect, but benevolent motherhood, whereas *The Crooked Line* illustrated subversive, problematic, and even hostile motherhood. The deeply layered nature of the phenomenon, as well as the repudiation of the idea of motherhood and womanhood as one and the same, was demonstrated in both works.

The notions of womanhood, motherhood, and femininity which were moulded in the 1930s have had an essential role in shaping ideas about the same in present times in both India and Japan, making the comparisons within this paper relevant. In the following sections, two important policies regarding women in present times shall be briefly analysed to reveal their philosophical underpinnings that trace back to the 1930s.

5.1 Womanhood, Motherhood, and Abenomics

In Japan, post-war reconstruction implied sweeping changes in several aspects of the social, political and economic fabric of the country, but the goals of womanhood, as envisioned in the 1930s, remained unchanged. Reforms were brought in, but the attitudes towards womanhood and the importance of motherhood in a woman's life saw continuity. Wartime saw the clear-cut division of feminine and masculine roles – women at home, managing the household and giving birth to future soldiers, and men in the battlefield, fighting for the nation. In the Post-War period, this division was hardly challenged; only its goals were changed – women took sole responsibility of raising their children and managing their household, while men worked in the public sphere to realise the national goal of economic reconstruction. Institutional arrangements continued to work around this internalized division³⁸ – for instance, Japanese

³⁸ Even Shinzo Abe's "Womenomics" Policy, to include more women within the workforce, stemmed from a business or economic imperative of resolving Japan's labour force crisis. Promotion of gender parity or the view of women's rights as human rights was hardly the motivation for the

corporations often give husbands whose wives stay home a bonus, and the Japanese tax system punishes couples with two incomes. (Semuels 2017) Despite changes in ideas about what constitutes perfect motherhood, the image of the perfect mother (which Tanizaki questions in *The Makioka Sisters*) continues to loom large in Japanese women's psyche, and the pressure to conform to this new, changed ideal remains intense.

Promotion of gender parity or the view of women's rights as human rights was hardly the motivation for the same. Conservatism regarding women's roles continues to be deeply ingrained, particularly in policymaking, as can be observed from the implementation of the Japanese Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEO) (1986). It was shaped by politicians and organized interests embracing notions of women's roles as mothers and upholding principles of "motherhood protection". (Coleman, 2016, p 7) Thus, the state continues to actively exert control over the feminine, and through state-sponsored feminism, portrays this control as beneficial for women and the nation.

The "Womenomics" policy (2013), part of Shinzo Abe's "Abenomics", involved the undertaking of concerted reforms towards not only reducing workplace gender inequality, but also stimulating economic growth. (Weathers, 2018, p 47) Despite Abe's historical support of the gender-equality backlash movement and conservative parenting education programs, he proposed increasing the support for and uptake of childcare leave by men and women, reducing the waiting lists for day care, and setting the target for women to occupy 30 percent of leadership positions across society. (Coleman, 2016, p 4) It is stated that these policy measures stemmed from a business or economic imperative of resolving Japan's labour force crisis, and to bolster the nation's image as a protector of women's rights in the international arena. (Weathers 2018) . Other critics feel that Abe's Womenomics initiative, then, represented another shift in the strategic calculus of how Japanese women could contribute to the productivist goals of making Japan a great, strong, internationally respected country. (Coleman, 2016, p 7).

However, what is not generally noticed is that Abe's economics and geo-politics went in different directions. While Abe's geopolitical vision was nationalistic (emphasis on aggressive defence spending and effort to change Japan's post war pacifist contribution), his economic policies (popularly referred to as Abenomics) were aggressively expansionary and decisively anti-deflationary. Abe's efforts to reverse the crisis associated with Japan's rapidly ageing population, also explains his desire for reversing gender inequality in the workplace as well as at household level (by insisting on the role of men in rearing children). While, in the ultimate analysis, these policies were driven by the imperative of getting women into the work force, Abe's idea was also impelled, in some ways by the idea of 'new women' as spelt out by Yosano Akiko (Laurel Rasplica Rodd, op,cit) as well as the quintessential mother that Tanizaki imagined through his character Tsuruko.

same. For further information about the historical context of the policy, see Mark Crawford, "Abe's Womenomics Policy, 2013-2020: Tokenism, Gradualism, or Failed Strategy?" *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, February 15, 2021, <https://apjif.org/2021/4/Crawford.html>.

5.2 Shahbano and the “Protection” of Muslim Women

The symbolic role of the feminine within the nationalist movement in India, intensely tied to motherhood, with the nation itself being feminized as “Mother India”, has had lasting influence on ideas of womanhood within the nation. The female was associated with being a symbolic and nurturing figure who must be fought for and protected; here, the coalescence of womanhood and family/ community/ national virtue can be witnessed. This notion has seen continuity even after Independence, particularly with regard to Muslim women, who have often been victimized and dehumanized within right-wing Hindu discourse. The right-wing portrays Muslim women as devoid of femininity, secluded behind purdah, possessing ‘unbounded sexuality and immorality’, victims of polygamous Muslim males and an extremely regressive legal code, who are rescued from their plight by heroic nationalist Hindus – even as it views attempts by Hindu women to renegotiate their relationship with Hindu men as ‘Westernization’. (Kazi 1999, p 17) While having ill bodings for all Indian women, the implications of right-wing ascendancy for Muslim women are particularly alarming due to the contradiction between its professed commitment to women’s rights and its active complicity in human rights violations against Muslim women, as was seen in the 1992 communal riots. (Kazi 1999, p 19) Within the Indian Muslim community, restricted agendas of organizations like Jamiat-e-ulema-e-Hind, which focus on the retention of Muslim personal law; the Jamaat-e-Islami, wishing to preserve the Shari’a; together with the revivalist and missionary activities of the Tablighi Jamaat, which propagates a particularly rigid and puritanical Islamic doctrine, have led to the discourse of women being represented by men claiming to represent the community. (Kazi 1999, p 20) Therefore, the negation of the Indian woman’s voice, particularly the Muslim woman’s voice from politics and self-representation, and ascription of reductive communal values upon the female body has continued into present times.

This is particularly apparent from the debate which arose from the Shahbano case. In 1985, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of Shahbano, a divorced Muslim woman, allowing her to receive a maintenance of Rs 179.20 (approximately \$14) per month from her husband, Mohammad Ahmed Khan, and dismissed the husband’s appeal against the award of maintenance under section 125 of the 1973 Code of Criminal Procedure. (Pathak and Rajan, 1989, p 558-559) This judgement of the Supreme Court was upheld by Indian feminists, as well as the Hindu right-wing, and received immense backlash from Islamic fundamentalists. (Pathak and Rajan 1989) As the loss of a sizeable Muslim vote bank seemed imminent, the ruling party changed its stance and allowed the passage of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights in Divorce) Act in 1986, which denied Muslim women the right to maintenance under constitutional law. (Kazi 1999) Consequently, widespread mobilization of women’s groups occurred on the matter of personal law, addressing the disjunction between constitutional law premised on the principle of sexual equality and religious laws which discriminate on the basis of this very category. (Kazi, 1999, p 21) Parties like the Jamaat-e-Islami added that Muslim personal law is divine, beyond human intervention and that any attempt to change it would represent an erosion of Muslim cultural identity. (Kazi, 1999, p 21) The BJP (representing Hindu nationalism) aggressively campaigned for a Uniform Civil Code, which would replace Muslim personal law. (Kazi, 1999, p 21) The debate soon degraded into issues of “minority appeasement” and anti-nationality, and the question of Muslim women was yet again overshadowed. To be framed by a certain kind of discourse is to be objectified as the “other,” represented without the characteristic features of the “subject,” sensibility and/or volition. (Pathak and Rajan, 1989, p 563) The Muslim woman, as subject, perpetually remains absent or fragmented in the various legal, religious, sexual, and political texts that develop into a discourse supposedly about her. (Pathak and Rajan, 1989, p 563) Moreover, these discourses address limited aspects of the Muslim woman’s identity, and ultimately resort to homogenizing the subaltern subject (here, the Muslim woman), particularly through a discourse of “protection”. (Pathak and Rajan 1989).

6 Conclusion

This MIJSC paper is a contribution towards connecting India's literary works with those of Japan, based on a comparative approach. An earlier effort focused on the application of comparative analysis to the classical performing arts from the two countries (Damodaran,2020). It is our assumption that pursuit of interconnections of the kind tried out would enable exploration of varied perspectives some of which may prove to be a challenge to dominant discourses in both countries leading to deeper intercultural understanding from which thought-provoking research may emerge. The writing styles of Tanizaki and Chughtai differ distinctly, and the foci of their respective texts vary as well – Tanizaki offers a nostalgic presentation of women within a traditional Japanese family, trying to hold on to their familial prestige. On the other hand, Chughtai provides a deeply personal, almost psychological exploration of a single female character, who always stands out against her social environment. Tanizaki's writing evokes a sense of loss, of changing times and the dimming of Japan's quintessence. Chughtai's writing denotes a desperation to understand the fragmentation and confusion that underscored the development of her personal self and her nation, and the inability to reach a conclusion regarding either. Yet, both texts provide us with living systems, whose detailed observations allow for exceptional insight into the thoughts, motivations, and challenges surrounding women, their sphere of existence, as well as their negotiations outside that space, especially within two Asian nations at the brink of watershed historical events. The constructions of womanhood fomented in this period in both nations continue to inform public imagination, manifesting even within policy decisions surrounding women. Women continue to be used strategically by conservative governments to support a variety of political ends, whether as upholders of constructed traditions of family life, as biological reproducers of the nation, or as workers to be mobilized in pursuit of national economic goals. (Coleman, 2016, p7) Additionally in India, they are also utilized for the purpose of communal identity politics. Thus, the alternate viewpoint of history offered by Tanizaki and Chughtai within their texts, which reveal a rejection of monolithic conceptions of womanhood, continue to be of great importance in present times. Exploring such cultural production which engages in alternative historiography from the point of view of the subaltern allows for vital enrichment of existing histories and surrounding academia in India and Japan, and also provides for the fortification of India-Japan relations through more nuanced exchanges in the cultural sphere. Moreover, this comparative analysis of Asian womanhood hopes to provide a foundation for further communication, discussion, and collaboration between feminist scholars and activists in India and Japan, aspiring for the creation of an intellectual community transcending national boundaries. Furthermore, this paper also hopes to be a steppingstone for deeper forays into integrations of subaltern studies and cross-cultural analyses between India and Japan. Given the long-standing commitment of both countries to honour their cultural ties and exchange notes on shared histories, it is the assumption that studies of the kind presented in this paper would help to improve intercultural communication and understanding, thus deepening India-Japan relations in the realms of culture, arts, and literature.

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