

**IDENTITY, GENDER AND PERFORMATIVITY: A
STUDY OF BEN OKRI'S FICTION**

**Thesis Submitted For the Award of the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

in

English

Submitted By

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2023

DECLARATION

I, hereby declare that the presented work in the thesis entitled “**Identity, Gender and Performativity: A Study of Ben Okri’s Fiction**” in fulfilment of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.)** is outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of **Dr. Digvijay Pandya**, working as **Professor**, in the school of **Social Sciences and Languages** of **Lovely Professional University**, Punjab, India. In keeping with general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgements have been made whenever work described here has been based on findings of other investigator. This work has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.



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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph. D. thesis entitled “**Identity, gender and Performativity: A Study of Ben Okri’s Fiction**” submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the reward of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** in **English** in **Lovely Professional University**, is a research work carried out by **Mr. Vijay Anand (41800379)**, is bonafide record of his original work carried out under my supervision and that no part of thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or equivalent course.



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Abstract

Literature has always been a source of information and knowledge for the posterity. In order to unearth the reasons of various happenings many people explore the roots of literature, which is hidden in the lap of history. This thesis entitled ‘Identity, Gender and Performativity: A Study of Ben Okri’s Fiction’, is an attempt to explore the facts and factors responsible for societal disturbances in various parts of the world. Colonialism has occupied a great part of world history. Colonial powers have occupied several nations in Asian as well as African continents. Nigeria was also a victim of colonialism, amongst others. Many African writers wrote about the issues and problems faced by the people of all walks of life, during and post-colonialism. Ben Okri’s fiction too has reflected all sorts of issues faced by Nigerians. His novels contain the themes of perpetual poverty, female subjugation, search of identity corruption etc.

This thesis throws light on various procedures of identity and gender formation, these identities once formed, make an impact on the lives of the people in the society, and how these identities become the source of action and performance of a human being. The thesis is written keeping the following research objectives in view.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the historical roots of the origin of the concept of Performativity.
2. To understand Ben Okri’s Perception about gender in reference to Judith Butler.
3. To analyze the complexities of gender, and performativity as depicted in the selected texts.
4. To draw the comparison of the selected works by analyzing the pertaining issues.

To justify and fulfill above mentioned objectives, researcher has followed the chapter scheme given below.

First chapter of the thesis is entitled 'Brief Candle'. In this chapter, the researcher has tried to probe the literary genius of Ben Okri. Researcher has thrown a light on the life of the writer, pointing out the major events like his education and his literary career. In his works, major themes along with the relevance are discussed along with the focus on the theories and the theorists concerned to develop deep insight. Beginning with the identity, gender and performativity, researcher has talked about the various development stages of the theories, denoting the relevance of these theories in the present thesis, followed by discussion on lives, careers and other important works of the theorists.

'Identity Crisis: A Struggle for Existence'. In second chapter of the thesis, theory of social identity, propounded by Henri Tajfel, is applied on the selected texts of Ben Okri. Researcher has highlighted the various stages of social identity theory to know the reasons of competition and animosity among the characters of the selected texts.

In the third chapter, 'Gender Issues: Inequitable Measures', theory of Gender, founded by John William Money, and its application is discussed. Various gender socialization agents are discussed to point out their contribution, and formation of gender in the selected texts of Ben Okri.

Fourth chapter entitled, 'Performativity: Subversion and Evolution of Identities' focused on the origin of the concept of performativity, founded by Judith Pamela Butler. Theory is discussed and applied in the texts of Ben Okri to point out how action not actor, performance not performer, is given the center stage to form the identity of a human being.

In fifth chapter, conclusively a content analysis is done by portraying the life of a human being through the angles of identity, gender and performativity.

Scope of the Research

The present research further fructifies and benefits other researchers to gain deep insight of appropriation and application of theories of identity, gender and performativity in various contextual scenarios. The study would also facilitate the academicians and researchers to draw a comparison between the societal structures

found in the works of Ben Okri pertaining to the then existing problems and challenges with that of present times. Moreover, the study has the potential to be qualified for quality publications.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|---------|
| Title Page | i |
| Declaration | ii |
| Certificate | iii |
| Acknowledgement | iv |
| Abstract | v-vii |
| Table of Contents | viii |
| Introduction | 9-25 |
| Chapter I---Brief Candle | 26-85 |
| Chapter II---Identity Crisis: A Struggle for Existence | 86-134 |
| Chapter III---Gender Issues: Inequitable Measures | 135-166 |
| Chapter IV---Performativity: Subversion and Evolution of Identities | 167-204 |
| Chapter V---Conclusion | 205-248 |
| Bibliography | 249-260 |

Introduction

Since the evolution of mankind, literature can be referred to as a medium of expression for the person of high intellect who wants to store their ideas in the pages of history for the posterity. Though, divided in many overlapping categories, literature is mainly contained in two, namely fiction and non-fiction categories. Non-fiction type of literature is based on real life experiences of human beings in which they record all incidents which they come across in their lives. Such literature can be based on scientific observations and experiences of human beings or any mundane situation related to day-to-day life. Non-fiction kind of literature merely uses any imaginary platforms and is always based on factual descriptions where there is no space for imagination, whereas fiction type of literature is the literature in which imagination takes the center stage. All fictions are based on the creativity and imagination of the people, who after giving their remarkable contribution in literature; stand in the line of artists. All these people who contribute in the formation of literature can be entitled as artists. Artists play a pivotal role in the generation and formation of literature.

The other types of literature which are quintessential to discuss are oral and written types. As the title indicates oral literature is a type which is recorded and maintained in societies in oral form only. Various types of oral literatures are the rites, rituals and customs which are being followed in various societies. Beginning right from the bed time story telling practice of grandmothers to enacted forms of plays in oral form without any written record, all can be covered in broad type of oral literature. Written form of literature covers all types of written records, stores in the layers of history. Medium of expression and social contexts are integral to formation of literature. Imagination can take any course as way of expression while it evolves. Some famous and common ways of expression are prose, poetry, drama, novels, short stories, even rhymes and songs also. Literature contains endless genres too. Romanticism, Mysticism, Science, Religion, Politics and Mythologies are few of the types which have association with literature since ages. In Romantic literature, readers will find how romance and romanticism is explored by the writers time to time, in politics the writers of political inclinations have written about political issues a nation faced.

Religious literature is based on various religions of the world in which teachings of the religious leaders, the impact of the religion on the people of the particular society and all other religious aspects are covered. So it can be said that literature has been associated with various fields in the world. Further the people who have contributed in formation of literatures have always been applauded by the world visionaries. They are awarded with renowned prizes for their remarkable contribution. Pulitzer Prize, Man Booker Prize and Nobel Prizes are a few accolades given to writers, actors, poets, novelists, journalists and social workers in various fields, in order to encourage many others to write and produce meaningful works which are established as sources of inspiration and motivation to other people.

Inquisitiveness is the basic instinct of all human beings. There has always been an incessant thirst of knowledge and to quench and satiate the very thirst they keep on exploring innumerable areas wherever their interest lies. That is why the world today, is full of such inventions which were beyond reality for many, at one point of time. Their unending attempts have made them scale and touch greater heights. This exploratory has been amongst them since the evolution of mankind which in revert has made the life simpler, and it still carries on. History has witnessed this steady progress in all walks of life. No aspect of human life has remained untouched from this development. In the area of education too, there has been magnificent transformation, irrespective of any particular nationality whether it's the field of science, technology or literature. Man has always been in search of knowledge. Next phase of search is research which literally means, re means again and search means to see and find out but with a newness or novelty. In the words of Zora Neale Hurston, "Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose".

In research, researchers as per their interest and inclination choose various topics. Choice of a particular topic as per interest and inclination of a researcher is very important. If a researcher doesn't take any topic of his choice then he/she won't be able to justify his/her research. Research in literature, contains a wide array of topics. Since literature is quintessential to know about history of any place over a period of time, writing in literature should be original and authentic. Genres in literature too,

vary from place to place and time to time. A place which witnesses industrial revolution will leave the same imprint on the literature of that area and country. References of political unrest in literature indicate towards the chronology of some incidents in that place. All these issues are taken up and recorded in literature by the prominent writers of that period. These writers tend to write on all such issues which are of common interest of people. Based on their own interest, experiences and will, these writers, at times, write about all issues and matters which are in favor of the ruling government and become pro-state writers. In contradiction to this, many times, writers write about the issues due to which they stand against the state. Ruling governments in many countries, don't allow such writers to express their views freely and execute them, if need arises. To escape the atrocities of ruling governments in such cases, writers take refuge in other countries where they find the condition suitable for themselves and are given freedom of expression.

In many countries of the world writers became migrants as they were not allowed to write, and were forced to leave their lands. Writings of such writers include the struggle between them and the governments or oppressors and oppressed. Not only writers but common people too, at times, faced anti national or anti-racist issues and were forced to leave their lands. Apartheid system in Germany and racism in America are the apt example of such situations, where people of particular ethnic groups were made victims of atrocities of ruling elite classes. Such people, when subjected to exploitation and humiliation, took refuge in countries and territories where they could find themselves in much better positions. The area of literature which researcher wants to explore is African literature which is a store house of such instances that claim to happen in wake of cruelty of ruling government and upper stratum of Society.

African Literature

African literature contains range of themes which vary from European literature. Women subjugation, slavery, exploitation, trade of slaves, corruption, and cold war are few of the common themes prevailing in the various genres of African literature. Oral literature holds a prominent place in African history. In order to educate children

about age old rituals and traditions through folktales, poetry, drama, myths, legends and songs, oral literature plays an important role. People involved in such activities used to be extraordinary performers accompanied by local singers and percussionists. Early accounts in African literatures were the slave narratives which tell us about slave trade of Negroes which would take place between African powerful people and whites. Writers used to write elaborately about the repression, exploitation, humiliation, female subjugation and the struggle between the repressed and repressor. Black people's revolts time and again, used to be highlighted by the writers. African literature contained autobiographical accounts also. Some famous autobiographies are "*Ake: The Years of Childhood*" by Wole Soyinka in 1981, "*All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes*" by Maya Angelou in 1986 and "*The Abandoned Baobab: The Autobiography of a Senegalese Woman*" by Ken Bugul. These accounts also tell us about the chronology of incidents which took place during the life span of these writers.

Major Writers

With the advent and usage of newspaper many writers were facilitated to express their views freely and frequently. Now they were able to reach masses in a short while. Newspaper served the purpose of conveyance of expression of such writers who were out of reach for common people, it became a medium to publish and spread their nationalist notions. Since the source of information became cheaper, many writers started publishing their works and many African people started demanding freedom from dominating countries and subsequently started revolting. These revolts and agitations too started gaining attention through the writers and publishing houses. Many writers who found place in newspapers were Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Koli Awoonor, Osumane Sembene, Mongo Beti, Camera Laye, Ben Okri etc. They produced novels, poetry, dramas, short stories and essays in European languages and shared similar themes which showcased struggle and clashes between dominated and dominating nations. They wrote and condemned European Exploitation, took pride in African traditions and practices and endeavored to generate hope in oppressed and numb minds. Racism in South Africa and hatred against Afro-Americans were the

popular themes that took center stage in the writing of famous writers of that time. They wrote against the policies of ruling governments which were against the interests of common people of Africa.

By criticizing the government and its policies openly arguably, many of these writers were defined anti-national and anti-government. They were forced to flee their very own land and take shelter in countries where they found the suitable conditions to live. Many writers in their new shelters also, could not find any solace and were subjected to exploitation. Many others, who survived at new places, started writing about the problems being faced by many other migrants. They all tended to gather at a place where they could find easy means of survival. The incident of Harlem Renaissance is the similar kind of incident which took place in Harlem town in New York. Exploited Afro Americans in America were in constant search for a place which could serve their dual purposes of stay and food. Harlem provided suitable living conditions and employment opportunities to many needy Afro Americans. Since people from all African communities gathered there included literary intellectuals, there was a revolution in the field of Art and literature. People who were hated by their white counterparts and were without any kind of identity tried to gain legitimacy through their work and writings. Such people attempted to gain their identity in separate groups. They frequently wrote about the obstacles of dominated people, who were victims of colonial powers. Their accounts included biographies, travelogues, poems, stories, short stories, and essays etc. which were based on the suffering of the colonized people. Since all these writers were writing about people who migrated from place to place, their literature can be referred to as migrant literature. Their works, to some extent, were able to generate a hope in the numb souls of the depressed and heartbroken. Their incessant condemnation of colonial powers helped them to be noticed, subsequently their white counterparts too, tried to voice the concerns of their black counterparts. White intellectuals also became aware of the fact that blacks should be made free of stigma of blackness so that they can get rid of their alienation. Support from white missionaries and writers helped the Africans establish their identity in America. Many writers permanently settled in their new homes, while many others returned when their own countries got freedom from colonial powers and

resumed their writing there. In new set up and system after independence, it was difficult for new governments to establish themselves. The old class gaps and difference between rich and poor remained same. Poor people were not allowed to object to the policies of the government. New governments were unable to control the atrocities of rich over poor. Thus such situations led to civil wars within countries in which governments were on the verge to be uprooted by the powerful people in the society. Sensitive people like writers and artists continued to point out and condemn the system which could not provide respite to the common people. Suffering of poverty stricken, child labor, women subjugation, slave trade, corruption and class differences became the Common themes for writers to write about. The writer in west Nigeria who wrote about all such issues is 1991 Man Booker Prize winner Ben Okri.

Nigerian Literature

Highlighting the Nigerian Literature briefly is quite imperative before the stress is laid upon the writer to be studied. The works and contribution of Professor Wole Soyinka, Amos Tutuola and many other prominent writers and the subsequent recognition of their works were pivotal to bring Nigerian Literature to the surface of the world of writing. One may find it quite strange to define Nigerian Literature as English Literature. Literally, Nigerian Literature is literature which is written by Nigerian writers in Nigerian regional and national languages about the issues and experiences of Nigerian people in context of their various communities, religions, cultures and traditions. This is further translated or rewritten in English by modern writers, making it Nigerian Literature in English. Publication of literature in English or any global language is quintessential for its vast expansion and acceptance, which is evident in case of Nigerian Literature too. Recognition of Wole Soyinka's and other writers' works in form of Nobel Prize, serves as testimony to display its acceptance since its inception. Nigerian Literature has its roots in the oral cultural traditions of the society, where transformation of values from one generation to the other takes place in oral form in narrative styles. Such narratives, play an important role to keep the traditional practices alive in parts of the world where pen has not become part and parcel of people's routine and lives.

Living a life like this can be viewed as savage, uncivilized and orthodox by many, who have outer view of such societies. But inner view of the same society can be contradictory which is rich in cultural practices of its own type. Invasion or intrusion in such societies is invasion, in not only on the life and land of people but on their psychology, traditions, cultural values, language and even food. This type of invasion takes place where the weapons are mainly of colonialism, in which powerful governments and nations dominate the ones which are poor in modern weapons, industries, technology etc. Thus colonizers first diplomatically later forcefully colonize not only the lives but also the minds of people, through novel ways of industry, transport, education etc. As a result colonized minds tend to take the new imposed ways of life as a standard to be accepted in the society. Despite numerous negative aspects of colonialism, positives cannot be ignored which is exposure of intellectuals to the global world through the new learnt languages. With these languages, when used as medium of communication, many writers get opportunities to showcase their rich culture and traditional values to the rest of the world. Such writings become the medium to transfer the ideas from regional level to the national and international level, giving them a unique universal approach.

Ben Okri

Ben Okri is a Nigerian novelist and poet born on 15 March 1959 in Minna, West Central Nigeria. He is referred to be one of the foremost African writers in the postcolonial and post-modern traditions, and has been favorably compared to writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Salman Rushdie. Considered to be a member of Urhobo community, Ben Okri's father was an Urhobo and mother half-Igbo. In order to study law, his father Silver Ben Okri took the whole family to London, when Ben Okri was only two years old, where he spent the earliest years of his life and studied at elementary school in Peckham. Later in 1968, the family moved back to Nigeria for Silver Okri to practice law and help the poor people in need. That was the time when Nigeria was trapped in the shackles of civil war after independence. The whole country almost, had become the center of social disorder, ruckus, exploitation and loot. Ben Okri's exposure to this disturbance in civil war and the incidents in which he

along with his peers claimed to have seen and experienced the world of spirits, further provided inspiration to his fiction. His rejection for admission in a short university course in Physics, at the age of fourteen, led him take writing as his area of interest. Without finding a platform to express his views, he started writing articles on political and social issues. Criticism of the government in his articles landed him in boiling waters and further made him flee his very own land. With a wish to study comparative literature at Essex Varsity, sponsored by Nigerian government, Ben Okri moved to England in 1978, where he spent days in parks and with friends, as his scholarship funds were soon over. Completion of his first novel “Flowers and Shadows” at the age of 21 ushered him into success in 1980. His three years stay in a Notting Hill house helped him to reinvent himself and complete the manuscript of the novel “The Famished Road” which he was carrying with him and for which he won Man Booker prize in 1991. Ben Okri’s novels which researcher is going to discuss in his research are *“Flowers and Shadows, The Famished Road, Dangerous Love”* and *“The Freedom Artist”*.

The elements of Identity, gender and performativity will be used to study, interpret and analyze these four novels. Ben Okri who seems to be always in an attempt to establish his own identity, brings the identity related issues to the fore. Blacks, Nigerians and Afro-Americans were all deprived of their social status and due advantages because of their color. Eventually the very element which deprives them off their privileges helps them gain the same with the efforts of the writers like Ben Okri.

Identity, Gender, and Performativity

As the title of research “Identity, Gender and Performativity: A Study of Ben Okri’s Fiction” denotes the analytical evaluation of Ben Okri’s novels, it is imperative to discuss Identity, Gender and Performativity. First of all theory of identity will be discussed and elaborated.

Identity

Identity refers to a person's set of behavioral characteristics which determines his or her identity in a given situation at a particular place over a period of time. Identity of a person helps himself/herself relate to his/her family, particular group, community, society and a nation. Identity of a person becomes source of information for many people who want to study and analyze people of important backgrounds. There are many factors which help a person determine his identity. Family background or ancestral background of a person is the first and foremost factor to establish his/her identity. If the ancestors and fore fathers of a person or child, are politicians, child will get the kind of atmosphere which will help him become a politician in future. Honest truthful ancestors of a child will give child a pre-established identity according to which people will take him too, to be honest and truthful. That's why ancestral background of a person is integral to determine identity socially.

This theory was developed by Henri Tajfel and his student John Turner in their research work on intergroup relations at University of Durham, University of Oxford and Bristol University. Their proposal was that a person is always equipped with an inbuilt tendency and instinct to categorize himself/herself into a particular group and his/her identity is based and built on the basis of the membership of that particular group. Having its historical roots in "*Folkways: A Study of the Sociological Importance of Usages, Manners, Customs, Mores, and Morals*", an influential work of William G Sumner, social identity theory was brought to academic fore in late 1970s. Social identity theory was Henri Tajfel's remarkable contribution to psychology. According to Henri Tajfel, groups which people belong to; are great sources of pride, inspiration and self-esteem to the members of the group and these groups give them a sense of identity in society. Henri Tajfel and John Turner proposed that social identity theory is comprised of three stages which determine the people to be members of in groups and out groups. These three stages are social categorization, social identification and social comparison.

Gender

Formation of gender and gender identity does ideally take place, when children normally attain the age of three. By this age, children try to differentiate themselves and compare with other people of the society. Based on their biologically assigned genders they are given special kinds of attire to wear. They live in and are provided the kind of atmosphere and environment, their kind of genders live in.

Gender identity once formed, is very difficult to change. Since this identity is formed on the natural biological basis, any attempt to change or reassign identity can result in gender dysphoria. In gender dysphoria, it would be difficult for the person to coordinate between his naturally acquired and forcefully reassigned gender identity. John William Money, founder of gender identity theory, claimed in his research that if parents, nurture their children in contradiction to their nature means biological sex or gender then they could be reassigned their gender and further gender identity, though he had failed in his experiment of David Reimer. David was born as a boy but operated to be a girl, wore girl's clothes and stayed with girls, but could not feel comfortable with them and attempted to do suicide at the age at 13. So it can be concluded that it is difficult to reassign or reconstruct gender identity biologically. But many believe that gender is not what is biologically and stereotypically assigned but socially constructed. This gender identity is socially constructed on the basis of the acts a person does, means the gender is constructed on the basis of performance of gender.

Performativity

Performativity refers to a person's quality of being performative. A person does perform actions which can be attributed to his identity in a particular social context. The term performative was coined by British Philosopher of language J L Austin, in his work on ordinary language philosophy "*How to Do Things with Words*". J L Austin in this work has focused on two types of statements constative statements and

performative statements. Constative statements which can be referred to as true or false, are different from performative statements which further result in some actions. Performative statements are called so because of the performance that takes place at the time of utterance of the statement. Few of the examples of performative statements are I do, I bet, I promise, I declare, I apologize, I order, I suggest etc.

This term performative, coined by J L Austin can be connected to speech Act theory. Speech Act theory is the theory in which speech is associated and does take place at the time of action, and such actions performed repeatedly, supplement the identity of the doer, means actions define and maintain the identity and become the source of evolution of the identity of the person. His research is further applied in many fields. In the field of gender studies, gender theorist Judith Butler explains about the formation of gender identity on the basis of the actions or performances of the person. Judith Butler in her book “Gender Trouble” written in 1990, coined the term gender performativity in which she explains that gender identity cannot be determined only on the basis of biologically and socially assigned gender but on the basis of the actions of the person, which further define his/her identity. She firmly believes that repetition of performances and actions by the person has paramount importance in the Identity formation of that person, which she says is, gender performativity.

Review of Literature

“The Enchanted Vision of Reality Ben Okri’s Fictional World”, this study is undertaken by researcher Manju CR in University of Kerala, Kerala, under the guidance of Dr. Maya Dutt in 2017. The researcher has tried to scrutinize various ways through which Ben Okri imagines and gauges the depth and broadness of African culture in his works, understanding and interpreting his ideas from aboriginal resources of Africa.

“Cultural Spaces across Borders Dislocation and Negotiation of Identity in the Novels of Amitav Ghosh and Ben Okri”. This research is undertaken by research scholar De Asis in Jadavpur University, Kolkata, under the supervision of Dr. Sobha Chattopadhyay in 2014. Researcher has tried to research,

explore and comparatively analyze selected novels of Amitav Ghosh and Ben Okri to point out identity search and cultural differences. Analysis of identity research is explored through different angles of history. Logically, the change in history further ensures changes in the form literature and the various elements subjected to exploration by researchers.

“Re-dreaming the World Fantasy and Reality in the Select Novels of Ben Okri”, is the research undertaken by researcher Sruthi N in Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tamil Nadu, under the guidance of Dr. Joseph Duston G M in 2017, in which the researcher has taken into account the elements of fantasy and reality in the selected works of Ben Okri. Researcher has tried to analyze how Ben Okri endeavored to mix reality with fantasy in his works.

“Cultural Hegemony: A study of Select Novels of Ben Okri”, is the research done by researcher Kendre, Rahul Baburao in Dr. Babasaheb Marathwada University, Aurangabad Maharashtra, under the guidance of Dr. Nanaware D C in 2019, in which the scholar has thrown light on the cultural impacts of dominance of one nation over the other.

“Theme of Freedom in the Selected Works of Ben Okri”, is the research done by researcher Nidhi Rana in Punjab University, Chandigarh, under the guidance of Dr. Anil Raina in 2016, in which the researcher has tried to gauge the depth of freedom in the texts of Okri through his central characters. Researcher has tried to analyze how Ben Okri has connected the freedom of a society with the freedom of people and further with that of a nation.

“Constructing the Narrative a Comparative Study of the Select Novels of Amos Tutuola and Ben Okri”, this research is done by research scholar Saradashree Choudhary in Tezpur University, Assam, under the guidance of Dr. Madan M Sarma in 2015. In her research the researcher has tried to compare the construction of narratives in the select novels of Amos Tutuola and Ben Okri, with the

help of “Theory of narrative” founded by Robert Scholes, Robert Kellog and James Phelan in their book *“The Nature of Narratives”*.

“Socio Cultural Matrix in Ben Okri’s Trilogy” this study is undertaken by research scholar K Saranya on 9 Sept 2019 under the guidance of Dr. A Selvalakshmi from Periyar University, Salem, Tamil Nadu. In trilogy (*The Famished Road, Songs of Enchantment, The Infinite Riches*) researcher has tried to highlight social set up using socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky.

“Race Gender and Identity in the Select Novels of Alice Walker” this research is done by Somayeh Zare on 7 August 2014 from Osmania University Hyderabad under the supervision of Dr. A Karunaker. This research highlights Negro women’s trials and quest of identity, gender and racism in the works of Alice Walker through her own theory “womanism” which was introduced by herself only.

“The Novels of Chinua Achebe: A Study of Community, Culture and Identity” this study was undertaken by research scholar Sankalp Jogi on 1 August 2017 under the guidance of Dr. S P Tiwari from VBS Purvanchal University. Working on five novels of Chinua Achebe, the researcher has tried to focus how writers of third world took the onus to portray the true picture of colonized people looking to reinvent their culture and identity.

“Retelling National Culture: Identity, Performance and Survival of Contemporary Storytelling in Kenya” this study is done by researcher Joseph Murimi Gaita under the guidance of Dr. Makrand Paranjape and Dr. GJV Prasad on 10 December 2014 from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. Researcher, in his research has tried to bring importance of oral narratives to the fore, which plays an important role to safeguard the age old traditions of community storytelling in Kenya.

“Issues of Identity and Culture in the novels of Chinua Achebe A Study” this research is done by research scholar Sanjay Haribhau Zagade on 4 January 2017 under the supervision of Dr. Rajesh S Latane from Savitribai Phule Pune

University, Maharashtra, in which he has attempted to explore post-colonial literature to identify the economic and cultural discrimination among the people who were in struggle with the people of elite classes to gain their identity.

“Race, Gender and Cultural Politics in the Select Novels of John Maxwell Coetzee” this research is done by research scholar A Saravanan on 10 March 2020 under the guidance of Dr. T Deivasigamani from Annamalai University, Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, in which researcher has tried to explore South African writers’ way of portraying common peoples’ issues related to indigenous race, gender and culture which is misinterpreted and misrepresented by the white colonizers.

“Gender Politics and the Strategies of Subversion in Select American Feminist Science Fiction”, this study is undertaken by the research scholar Athira Sasidharan on 9 January 2019 under the supervision of Dr. K Reshmi from Pondicherry University, Puducherry, India. This research throws light on the feminist science fiction and its ways of dealing with multiplication of genders/intersexuality, homosexuality, clones and other advanced reproductive techniques which are women centered.

“Interrogating the Notion of the Self and Identity” is a study undertaken by the research scholar Mohammad Hassan Gholampour on 7 March 2015 under the supervision of Dr. K Yeshoda Nanjappa from the University of Mysore, Karnataka. This thesis has stored the comparative analysis in the works of two writers Gloria Naylor and Paule Marshall to further highlight the quest of self and identity among Afro-American women.

“Retracing the Roots Traditional and Cultural Identity in the Novels of Gloria Naylor”, this research is done by the research scholar M Mahesh under the guidance of Dr. P Kolappadhas from Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, on 15 October 2019. With in-depth study of novels of Gloria Naylor, this research examines the contribution of African American writers, the impact and place of their writings in American Literature.

“Race, Gender and Class in the novels of Toni Morrison a Study”, this study is undertaken by the researcher K Sumana on 8 April 2016 under the supervision of Dr. S A Khayyoom from Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh. This research shows how deep the elements of race, gender and class are explored in the works of Toni Morrison which have further helped her achieve an international stature giving her works a unique universal approach of its own kind.

“Issues of Identity in Select Novels of Amitav Ghosh”, this research is done by research scholar Sachin Shankarrao Rajole on 11 September 2019 under the guidance of Dr. P R Bhabad from Savitribai Phule Pune University, Maharashtra. In this research, researcher has taken the seminal works (*The Circle of Reason (1986)*, *The Shadow Lines (1988)*, *The Calcutta Chromosome (1995)*, *The Glass Palace (2000)*, *The Hungry Tide (2004)*, *Sea of Poppies (2008)*, *River of Smoke (2011)*) into account to study the issue of identity and reevaluate its effects on an individual and society.

“Race Identity and Isolation in the Select Plays of Athol Fugard”, this research is undertaken by the research scholar Abrar Ahmad on 13 October 2016 under the supervision of Dr. Shaheena Tarannum from Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh. This research throws light on the selected plays of Athol Fugard to pin point the conflict and struggle between oppressor and the oppressed or between natives and the others in the wake of flawed draconian policies of the ruling governments.

“Identity and Exile in the Novels of Samuel Selvon”, this study is done by research scholar N Nagabhushanam on 11 May 2013 under the supervision of Dr. V C Sudheer from Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. Researcher in this thesis focuses on black intellectuals’ reactions resistance approach and acceptance of colonialism, after in depth study of selected novels of Samuel Selvon.

“Themes of Nationalism and Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in East and West African literature”, this research is undertaken by the research

scholar Veenu G Sharma on 10 July 2014 under the supervision of Dr. Aniruddha Sharma from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. Researcher, in this research has tried to explore and suggest Literature and Nationalism to be studied and viewed in an integrated way to gain deep insight and aftermaths of colonialism and post colonialism in African countries.

Research Gap

Based on the above studies undertaken, it is observed that adequate research is done about comparison of Ben Okri with Amitav Ghosh and other writers keeping in view identity and other cultural differences in their works. Among other themes, researchers have thoroughly explored animist realism, impact of colonialism, post-colonialism, freedom of a nation vs. freedom of people, gender issues and racialism in Africa, importance of oral cultural narratives, misinterpretation and misrepresentation of indigenous issues and culture by white colonizers. But no research has taken place analyzing Ben Okri's selected texts using concepts of identity, gender and performativity which has prompted the researcher to read, scrutinize, analyze, interpret and highlight the selected texts of the novelist through the lens of aforementioned angles.

Research Methodology

Since this research is qualitative in nature, the researcher would adopt content analysis as the methodology. A detailed textual analysis would take place to meet the requirement of the present research. Ben Okri's selected works will be thoroughly explored through the angles of Identity, Gender and Performativity. Reputed libraries like that of Central University of Punjab shall be visited to obtain original texts. Theories of Social Identity, Gender and Performativity along with the respective founders will be thoroughly studied. In the proposed research, MLA style latest edition guidelines will be followed.

Chapter Scheme

Chapter Scheme consists of the sequential laying down of facts to present the thesis in a meaningful way. Beginning with the introduction part stress would be laid upon origin and development of concepts of Identity, Gender and Performativity along with extensive study of life and works of the selected writer in the first chapter. Issues of Identity, Gender and Performativity will be discussed in the selected works of the writer, in the following chapters separately. Conclusion shall take place after the content analysis of the selected texts. Precise chapter scheme is given below.

Introduction

Chapter I Brief Candle

Chapter II Identity Crises: A Struggle for Existence

Chapter III Gender Issues: Inequitable Measures

Chapter IV Performativity: Subversion and Evolution of Identities

Chapter V Conclusion

Bibliography

Conclusively introduction part focused on the complete outline of the thesis that included various steps and phases that would take place while writing the same. Introduction is being followed by in-depth study of origin and development of concepts and theories of identity, gender and performativity and their respective theorists and the writer Ben Okri, beginning right from his birth, early and higher education, literary career, thematic study of his seminal works, the broad area of his writings, his contribution to the particular area in research, awards, accolades and his position in the literary circles.

Chapter I – Brief Candle

This chapter has been devoted to bring into light the evolution, determination and the constant development of theories of identity, gender and performativity. Many researchers have explored the works of Ben Okri from the angles of negritude, feminism and as a migrant post-colonial writer but no research is done from the angles of identity and gender performativity. In the beginning the researcher has attempted to explore the origins and the continual development of the aforementioned theories.

Identity of a person or a group is a set of characteristics, qualities or beliefs which makes that person or group connected, associated or different from other people and groups. Identity provides an answer to the question, ‘who I am’, and ‘what am I going to be in my future. In modern world with increasing connectivity, defining identity, in general or in particular, is a quite complex task. Since the birth of a child, based on certain parameters, he is given an identity and is identified and associated with particular groups in society. This identity helps that child to see him associated and connected with a group based on certain similarities, and different from the other group due to certain differences of dissimilarities. Identity of a person is attributed to certain parameters right since he is born. Family of a person plays a vital role in development of a child, which becomes the very first and basic parameter in determining a person’s identity. A person is bound to act as per the reputation or background of his family. Other than family, area of the person where he lives, the language he speaks, religion he follows, his political affiliation and personal character traits, tastes and interests, the community he belongs to, his ethnicity, even the food he eats tells us of his identity. These parameters time and again determine as well as strengthen one’s identity. A person’s association and affiliation to a certain group, helps many others to know about him, his personal, social and political life. Identity acts as a source of knowledge. A person being identified with a group gets the recognition; in return identity also gets complemented and widened through the people who become its carriers, believers, holders, keepers and saviours.

Formation of identity

There are several theories of growth and development which are helpful in formation of a person's identity. Famous Psychologist Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development best fits to elaborate the formation of identity. Erikson believes that at different stages of life a human being faces different kinds of conflicts and dilemmas.

‘I shall present human growth from the point of view of the conflicts, inner and outer, which the vital personality weathers, re-emerging from each crisis with an increased sense of inner unity, with an increase of good judgement and an increase in the capacity ‘to do well’ according to his own standards and to the standards of those who are significant to him (Erikson 91-92).’

These dilemmas and conflicts should be successfully sorted out so that person moves easily towards the further stages. He counts adolescence very important for formation of identity. In formation of identity, there is a particular stage which Erikson says is ‘Identity versus Role Confusion’ that takes place during adolescent age of a stage. At this stage, Erikson says, adolescents find it difficult to figure out what they want to be in their future and are concerned about their personal, social and professional identities. This confusion, dilemma or difficulty is further solved when an adolescent attains an identity after he is exposed to different values and system or situations which help him to associate himself with some while dissociate with others. This determination and attainment of identity helps him to move to next stage of development. If this confusion about identity is not properly resolved then it will usher adolescents into complexity and instability about their future plans, subsequently they lose their confidence and positivity and become mentally and psychologically weak, depending on others to take important decisions in their lives.

With the passage of time, identity is either strengthened or gets altered due to certain factors. Family, community, nation, language, politics etc. are supplementing or strengthening factors of a person's identity whereas personal traits of a person can either enforce and cement or alter his identity. Formation of an identity does happen on similarities of dissimilarities of a person or a group. People on the basis of

similarities, form in group means their own groups and, on the basis of differences form out groups which are different from their own groups. This categorization and framing of in groups or out groups make them feel comfortable, unique and different from others respectively. These groups become the source of identity for the members of the group, who take privilege to be a part of the group, develop liking instinctively to the policies and participate actively in all group activities, and feel uneasy, develop instinctive dislikes in policies and activities to the members of the other groups.

Kinds of Identity

With the constant displacement of human beings in society their identities also keep changing. A person at a place has many identities which at times seem to overlap. The very parameters which determine the personality and identity of a person become the source of kinds of identity of that person. A person being a member of a particular group carries the identity of that group, for example a child, when joins the group of students or becomes a student, naturally is expected to show disciplined behaviour, which is an attribute of student group. So a child as a student has another identity, as a player or as a member of a particular club or team has a different identity.

Like this, a person being a member of a particular community is viewed as a representative of that group or community. Community or groups help a person establish his identity and decides the type of that identity which is different than other groups. Types of a person's identity may vary at different levels. Such types are determined by the character traits or attributes of a particular group. The kinds of identity at a person's personal, emotional, social, linguistic, communal and national level may be different. People who have different identities at communal or social levels may share the same identity at broader or national level. Below given is the detail of the types of identity.

Self-concept - Self-concept or self-identity of a person is his personal beliefs, interests or self-acquired conceptual understanding about himself, which helps him to think how, he/she is unique, similar or different than others.

Cultural Identity - cultural identity of a person is the particular features of the culture as group, a person is member of.

Ethnic and National Identity - this identity is bestowed upon a person due to his ethnicity and the nation he belongs to.

Regional or Community Identity - Community and regional identity of a person is determined by the community and the region he belongs to. People who share the same national identity may have different regional identities.

Professional Identity - Professional identity of a person is his professional attributes which tells us about that person's roles, responsibilities, and structure and value system of the organization, where the person is working.

Linguistic Identity - linguistic identity of a person tells of language used by him as the mode of communication, interlinked to his regional identity.

Religious Identity - religious identity is a set of beliefs, rituals, practices and the festivals of the religion that person follows.

Political Identity - political identity of a person tells us of his political affiliation and core values, ideology, political beliefs and functioning of his political party.

Gender Identity - gender identity of a person is the set of features associated with the gender of the person and the role offered to him due to association to that gender in society.

Social Identity - social identity of a person is determined by the societal structure a person is a part of. It tells us about that very person's social group, family, friends, language, culture and all other features attributed to the society.

The type of identity which will be discussed to analyse the works of Ben Okri, is social identity, founded by Henri Tajfel a social psychologist from Poland who worked on the broad field of social identity and prejudice. Before I proceed with what

social identity is, I would like to throw light on Henri Tajfel's life, works and contribution.

Henri Tajfel

Born as Hersz Mordche, famous Polish social psychologist Henri Tajfel's life spanned for 63 years. He was born on June 22, 1919 and died on May 3, 1982, whose contribution in psychology is his famous social identity theory. Henri Tajfel was bred and brought up but left Poland, to learn Chemistry at Sorbonne France. He served as volunteer in French army when world war two broke out. Later, when German army captured him as prisoner-of-war he was in dilemma whether to reveal his Polish identity, and nationality or not. He later did not decline his Polish identity and roots but claimed his French citizenship also, on the logic that later revelations would certainly lead to his death on the pretext of deceiving and treason. His return to home, after his survival of war in refugee camps and as prisoner-of-war, was marked with his discovery of native Germans' prejudice and hatred towards Jews which had resulted in the death of his near and dear ones, which subsequently founded his research and works on intergroup relations and psychological prejudice. Working with the United Nations International Relief Organisation and many other relief organisations, Henri Tajfel was instrumental to give refuge and rehabilitate many orphans who had lost their families owing to war, majority of whom were Jewish children. He considered this welfare work of resettlement of children, his greatest contribution to society and humanity.

In 1946 after taking French citizenship, he moved to England and met his would be wife Ann Sophie Eber, who was born and brought up in Germany but had moved to England prior to second world war. There the couple set up their home and had two sons Paul and Michael. He started his studies of psychology in Birbeck College, University of London, in 1951. On the topic of prejudice, he wrote an essay and won a scholarship meant for adult mature students. After graduating in 1951, he started teaching in University of Durham and later at University of Oxford. During his research and experimentation processes at Oxford University Tajfel closely analysed and examined various areas pertaining to social psychology which included aspects of

nationalism and the most important cognitive dimensions of prejudice. He was honoured to lay the foundation and was made member of board of directors of Linacre College at Oxford. At Bristol University he was honoured and given chairmanship of Social Psychology Department in 1967.

Contribution in Psychology

Tajfel closely analysed and examined the procedures of social judgement during his research and experimentation at University of Oxford and University of Durham. He highlighted the contribution of cognitive aspects in categorization which further had strong impact on the psychological development of prejudice, which were against the established norms and facts of that time. According to the established opinions, several prominent psychologists believed the extreme hatred and prejudice were attributed to impact of extreme personalities. As per this opinion, only authoritarian and monarchic type personalities become prejudiced and have baseless contempt and hatred for those who are different than them. Tajfel believed this idea as misconceived with his observation and reference of Nazism. He countered this view with the logic that many ordinary German citizens supported the government in killing Jews, and ordinary citizens were not extreme personalities, without whose support and assistance, Nazism was almost impossible. Tajfel further sought to experiment with the basis of prejudice, roots of which were to be searched in ordinary thinking process. To investigate, the role categorization plays in the development of prejudice, he undertook several experiments, which further disclosed how people react, think and judge when they are put in a particular category. They, when imposed a category, instinctively developed a liking for the members of their category. The similar liking was absent for the members of the other category and group. In his experiment he explored how people react when they are not categorised and the immediate shift in their thinking and behaviour, when they are put in a particular group and category.

Tajfel's experimentation and the findings were of paramount importance to investigate the role played by categorization in social analysis, judgement and prejudice. More exploration in this experiment disclosed that categorisation of people in particular groups like Indian, American and African made them perceive similarities more than

they actually (within same group) had. For differences with the members of the other group, their perception also was exaggerated than they actually had. Categorisation of people was leading them to exaggerate similarities and differences for in group and out group members. With profound implications, this experiment showed that roots of psychological development of prejudice can be found; not in particularly extreme personalities, but in general thinking process, which was that of many ordinary citizens who supported German government. Making his example more valid, Tajfel said that before Nazism, the same ordinary Germans were living harmoniously with Jews, except few communal or social conflicts, which are very common in any social setup, whereas, Hitler's movement, by categorising Germans, filled them with prejudice and grudge against Jews. There was a shift in the simple thinking process of Germans, they hated Jews and became instrumental to make Nazi movement successful.

Revolutionary, pioneering ideas of Tajfel were published in his article "*Cognitive Aspects of Prejudice*" first in 1969 and then republished many times subsequently. For his research and defining work in this article, Tajfel was honoured and given the Annual Gordon Allport Intergroup Relations Prize, by Society of Psychological Study of Social Issues. After moving to University of Bristol, Tajfel started his research and observation on Intergroup Studies and Relations and, undertook a series of his famous experiments which is called minimal group paradigm experiments. In these experiments, the subjects were chosen without any kind of similarity, in completely disorganised way.

Their division into two different groups was completely baseless, irrelevant without any kind of logic. No participant knew anything about anyone. They were completely unaware of each other's family background, hobbies, interests, financial status, regions they lived in, food they ate etc. They had no similarity in common nor they had any idea that they were going to, in near future, interact with each other. Nevertheless, despite all odds, members of the both groups shared and managed the resources in a unique way due to which they were going to favour in group members to maximize the output of their group so that they all could come and share the common ground.

Henri Tajfel simply wanted to show how categorization increases people's beliefs and values in the system of their own group and gain maximum benefit for the members of in group against the members of the out group.

Henri Tajfel has influenced social psychology significantly in England and many European countries. The influence of his research and studies has reached beyond the perceived views of social identity, judgement and prejudice. Henri Tajfel's greatest contribution in the field of psychology and prejudice is social identity theory, which he developed along with John Turner, his student. In this theory, they have offered proposal that people in general have instinctive tendency of grouping or categorisation. Based on their personality traits, they form the group and share the identity of that group. This identity is further called social identity, which is distinctive and unique than the identity of the other groups.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity of a person tells us of his relation with the social group he is attached and associated with. To know more about social identity we need to explore the fabric of social identity theory proposed by Henri Tajfel and his student John Turner. It is imperative to study the findings of Tajfel's series of minimal group experiments, which he undertook in the University of Bristol, to learn how social identity of a person is formed. In his experiments, Tajfel strongly focused on interpersonal relations and intergroup relations. Tajfel in his experiments divided the test subjects in two groups called under estimators and over estimators, without any common context. Nobody knew anything about each other. They were entirely unaware of each other's social roles, family backgrounds or any other aspect.

‘In the experiment by Billig and Tajfel (1973), the height of absurdity was reached in the method used to divide the subjects into ‘groups’. Even the pretence of differences between the groups in aesthetic preferences was dropped, and each subject was explicitly and visibly assigned to one group or the other on the basis of a random toss of a flip of coin (Tajfel, p- 234).’

In certain experiments, the grouping was done even on the flip of the coin, which was completely baseless in context of selection and division of groups. After division, participants were simply conveyed to give points to each member of in-group and out-group. It was an unreasonable task for participants to give points without any set parameters. Though the findings and results of the experiments were astonishing, participants shared and managed the resources available with them in the laboratory, so strategically which would benefit the members of in-group by awarding them points, even after they were revealed that their assignment of points to other members of the group could not benefit them personally, they attempted to favour their in-group members. Observers of the experiment were expecting members to assign the points fairly to all members of the groups, but what was observed, was not expected.

Participants favoured their in-group members more than the members of out-group. In fact it was evident that they were willing to assign points to the members of the other group if it was promising to benefit their own group members in return. Without a particular given situation, context or historical background, the experiments had hidden implications as participants were following a predictable pattern to manage resources and assign points. In initial arguments, Tajfel et al. (1971) reiterated and pointed out the participants were following competitive behaviour in groups. But why were participants following competition or rivalry, why were they not impartial, fair and objective in their approach, while awarding points? The answer of this is given by Tajfel in social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Henri Tajfel and his student John Turner, while expounding the theory threw light on the interpersonal and inter group interaction among people and pointed out that interpersonal interaction, which is case between human beings is purely personal, based on their personal, family backgrounds, instincts, nature, interest, hobbies and habits, whereas in intergroup relations and interactions people thought and viewed each other to be representatives of the groups. Approach and intensity of interaction was at a different and unique level, talking as parts or heads of groups, keeping their personal traits and aspects away. It was observed that their shift from interpersonal interactions to intergroup interaction shifted their way of representing to each other.

Their perceptions and analysis about themselves and each other changed from personal to group behaviour, for which cognitive aspects were responsible.

Elaborating more on the cognitive domains, Tajfel stressed that the simple process of dividing people in groups, mere division of people in 'them' and 'us' changes their perception about each other. When people are imposed under a category or group, they tend to exaggerate their similarities within group and enhance their differences with the members of the other group. This categorisation leads to one's own reassessment. Category of a member of a group, makes one feel different at personal level. His behaviour, attitude, emotions are affected in the group, whereas at intergroup level one's image is viewed as not his personal but group image and identity. His behaviour, his attitude and way of presentation is seen as the image and identity which he has derived from the group he is member of. There are few questions. Why competition or rivalry, why not unbiasedness? Tajfel and John pointed out the concept of self-conception in the group.

'One way to define social conflict, or rather distinguish it roughly from other kinds of conflicts, is to say that it is a conflict between large-scale socio-economic or socio-political groupings as distinct from conflicts inside an individual, between individuals or between small groups (p-230).'

Once divided in groups, people cognitively tend to form, maintain and believe in good reputation for their groups. In order to achieve that status of repute, members favour the other members of the group, so that collectively they could establish the positive image or identity of the people, who carry the identity of the group. So, to attain the position and distinction over to other groups, members of one group tend to favour their mates.

In another nagging scenario, psychologists spent a great deal of time and energy to sort out what if people are members of a group having low esteem.

'Between these extremes, the various degrees of access to exit may determine the strength of voice, or of attempts to change from within a deteriorating situation (Tajfel, p- 290).'

They came with plethora of options, from one's leaving the group, viewing only the aspects which enforce positivity in the group, to engage in planning to change and overturn the existing system and hierarchy of the group, selection of a suitable strategy to be followed, depends on the prevailing circumstances, including the level to which boundaries and roles of group members can be extended. Tajfel believed his social identity theory imperative for the social change.

Categorisation

Social identity theory's comments and findings about intergroup relations and studies were based on cognitive aspects, motivational, social and historic considerations. In 1982, post Henri Tajfel's demise, his student John and his colleagues decided to expound theory's intergroup and intragroup procedures. They recorded the observations in their famous book, "*Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-categorisation Theory*". They concluded that their ideas in the book have come up with a new theory that is self-categorisation theory, consensually agreeing that social identity and self-categorisation theories share the similar ideology and analytical base. Many people, though, still consider it same. Like in social identity theory, Turner also focused on categorisation, in self-categorisation theory.

‘Individual emphasis neglects an important contributing aspect of an individual's self-definition: the fact that he is a member of numerous social groups and that this memberships contributes, positively and negatively, to the image that he has of himself (Tajfel, p-254).’

Unlike in social identity theory, in which interpersonal and intergroup relations were seen as opposing ends, in self-categorisation theory, identity seems to work at different levels not on opposite levels. Proponents of the theory asserted three different levels or standards of self-categorisation that are vital in determining self-identity or self-concept, which are superordinate, intermediate and subordinate levels. At superordinate level, self-identity is seen as simple human identity of the person, intermediate category tells of a person's identity and membership of a social in-group,

and subordinate category tells of a person's categorisation on the base of his interpersonal identity in the group comparisons.

Categorisation Theory and Depersonalisation

The element of depersonalisation is believed to be a cornerstone in self-categorisation. Proponents of this theory think that people tend to prototype their groups in social representations.

After a category or a group becomes relevant, members of that group begin to see and analyse themselves and other members of the group less as personal and individual identities more as cornerstones or prototypes of the group. Prototypes represent the defining fundamental attributes of the social category or group which are psychological and subjective not material or objective, which according to situation or contexts keep on changing or fluctuating. These group identity attributes not only tell what it is to be the member of the group, but prescribes the type of behaviour, emotions and attitudes also, which are appropriate in a particular social context. The idea of depersonalisation in a group, also determines the various roles for the group members who further strengthens the group hierarchy and protocol. With all these explorations and findings, proponents of theory revealed various minute intricacies of intergroup procedures, which was part of intergroup studies and relations in social identity theory.

Social identity theory has time and again been used to redefine the pre-established phenomena. Theorists have argued that perceptible shift in categorisation could lead to group polarising phenomenon, which means the tendency for shift in someone's personal opinion towards the direction of goal and mission oriented group setting. Theorists further asserted that this phenomenon of polarization is on account of depersonalisation which adds to the group's foundation, solidarity and prototypes.

Social identity theory has worked to redefine the notion of stereotypes. Against orthodox views, which believe stereotypes to be fixed abstract representations that cannot be subjected to change, proponents of social identity theory say and argue that

comparative social context or situation can lead to shift and transformation in age old stereotypes also.

Many theorists have used social identity theory to explore the formation process and various dimensions of cases of riots and violent disturbances in society. For ages the theorists were stuck to the idea of de-individuation which furthers the aggression subsequently, the logic was based on the focus on environment and spontaneous situational factors like anonymity, cohesion and spirited motivations which lead to less self-conception and the clubbing of the symptoms or factors promoting behavioural aggression which was socially unaccepted and prohibited. Many factors fuel the fire to reinforce such kind of behavioural patterns like less abstention of aggressive behaviour, inability to regulate and monitor one's own thought process, less worried of being assessed by other people, loss of self or personal identity and to adopt group identity. Many other theorists while working on various dimensions of social identity theory argued that de-individuation was understood not as losing one's self-identity but a shift of identity from self or personal level to the social level. In this spontaneous situation whatever is done by the other influential group member would lead one to follow the same because of being a member of that group, since he has adopted the identity of group as his own identity. Being emotionally and psychologically connected to group, the members are prone to act what the majority of members who are in higher positions in group protocol, think and ask them to do, to save and reinforce the image of the group. In such situations, group members tend to act and respond as per the directions and demands implied contextually which might be against or in favour of social system.

Social identity theory worked to influence approach and interpretation of one's rioting or aggressive behaviour patterns. According to established theory and opinion, such rioting and violent behaviour was the result of many group members coming together with a sole purpose under a particular norm or mind-set. In such contextual situations those words and actions of distinctive, prominently influential people of group, become momentary norms with a contagious impact on members of the group, including the likeminded people in gathering, which just come and witness the

situation. Response of the group members stimulates common people who are not affiliated with the group but try to adopt group's identity as their own identity at that moment. (Turner and Killian, 1957). This notion was challenged by Reicher, (Reicher 1987) with his argument that it is the particular purpose of the group members that bring them closer as a crowd with their violent aggressive behaviour. Specific purpose due to group identity, is common to all the group members, who, after violence or riots attain a strong feeling and sense of accomplishment owing to their social or group identity.

Social identity theory finally responds and offers new dimensions of social influence, norms, conformity, generation and execution of powers. Self-categorisation theorists believe norms of an in-group are a reliable source of knowledge and information about suitable ways for members to think, interpret and act accordingly. With the procedure of de-personalisation, influential member of the group internalize group norms and believe other members of the group to follow, showing the psychological agreement of group members to the norms set by their group leaders. This set-up and formation of norms are followed by everyone publicly and is subjected to out-group members' response to norms, power sharing and execution, authority and leadership.

In this scenario, influential people in the group are seen as epitome of group's rules prototypes, thinking process, behavioural patterns, attitudes and value system of the group. People at higher position in system, use their oratory skills and exert their influence to settle themselves among the core members of the group or system, and become the most reliable and legitimate representative of the group. Turner (2005) observes this categorisation procedure as driving force to power and leadership. With this aspect, group prototypes lead to maximizing the extent of influence, image and identity, which further becomes the base for power. Power makes the leaders to gain control over group resources which can further lead to biasedness, partiality, subjectivity and favouritism in the system.

Social Identity Theory: Merits and Demerits

In spite of its wider influence and usage, social identity theory has its own share of criticism which leads to denote its strengths and limitations. It is observed that at present much attention and focus is on other identities like subgroup identification, cross-cut identities, out-group identities and criss-cross intersection of self and group identities, it seems that the relevance of original self-categorisation theory is over emphasized (Abrams and Hoggs, 2004). This is also claimed that more emphasis to reduce uncertainty and de-personalisation in theory has bottlenecked the limits for members of in-groups to tolerate and accept the dissent in their own group. Some critics point out its approach to be more comfortable to explain in-group acceptance and favouritism than intergroup genuine rivalry and hostility and derogation of out-groups. Thus we can see that with such limitations, this theory is always moving ahead and has scope of improvisation.

Turner (1999) leaves the task of defence of social identity theory to others. Doubtless to say that this is not possible to imagine, think, write and analyse intergroup studies, relations and various intergroup procedures without interpreting the major constructs of the theory like categorisation or self-categorisation, comparison, identification, legitimacy etc. which is making this theory an integral part of social studies to be viewed and studied saliently. Its origin, emergence and development has played a crucial role to reinforce interest in intragroup and intergroup studies along with various aspects of social psychology, with peoples' ever increasing interest and inclinations for theory with the passage of time. While other theories are narrowing down in scope and approach, social identity theory is still in vogue and becoming instrumental for many budding theorists to expose and explore new horizons in social context, literary and political world. It is giving a scope and providing a ground for many, to investigate and reinvent minute details of social structure while becoming a tool of experiment for many aspirants to discover and unearth new perspectives in life. Therefore, it seems the theory will keep on persisting as long as people are interested to locate and relocate various facts in history and in present time which would help them predict near future also, to some extent.

Next phase of research presents the origins, emergence of gender, its usage, development and perceptive interpretation.

Gender

One of the widely explored theories in literature is gender theory which is still under lens and is constantly changing the forms. It is essential for a researcher to understand the concept which is to be used as a tool by him to explore, interpret and analyse the various concepts. The idea of gender has been a complex one which has been contested by many theorists time to time. Below mentioned are the details of its origin and sequential social and contextual shifts.

The notion of gender, according to traditional perception, engages us to view two biologically different human beings as boy or girl, man or woman or masculine or feminine. General perception says it is a set of features or characteristics which is attributed to the gender of a person with his being a male or female. Undoubtedly, the base for this perception remains the biologically assigned sex to any human being at the time of his birth, but a modern and updated view does not sync in with its older counterpart and needs interpretation and analysis at broader level. Old perception asserts that on the basis of sex, since the birth of child, a person is declared male or female by society indirectly, with the child's parents', friends', school mates', and neighbours' direct interaction and involvement. After this declaration and assignment, the very child starts viewing the world from the perspective of being a male or female and starts taking part in those activities that are associated with his gender assigned by the society. Moving in details, a boy is given the freedom to go, play and enjoy outside with his friends, he helps his father in such tasks wherein he needs and uses his physical strength. Girls on the other hand, are considered to be very submissive, do play with dolls inside the house and help their mothers in house hold chores, like cooking, washing, cleaning dishes, dusting etc. Boys take part in adventure sports, become rough and tough, have bossy attitude, and prepare themselves like their fathers, to lead a family in the future. Girls, being exposed only to household work prepare themselves to be good wives like their mothers, to be helpful to their husbands in home affairs while taking care of family members.

Both of them, as adults, get involved in biological activities and become part of the chain of reproduction process. Other than these two genders many social structures have third gender which is neither a male nor a female. Such genders are called neuter or third gender or 'hijra'. A person born in the third gender is despised and not accepted socially by the very members of his family or society.

In contradiction to this view which is based on the biology of the person, modern theorists and psychologists define the gender on the basis of the role the person plays in society. They are of the opinion that, not only biology based but all other tasks, activities and roles performed by man and woman, further strengthen their identity as male or female.

‘The age of establishing conceptual language is also the age of establishing a self-concept. This self-concept is by its very nature gender-differentiated. It is often referred to as the core gender identity. Establishment of core gender identity is obviously a process of learning, insofar as it takes place in social interaction (Money, p-176).’

In this way their gender becomes what is socially constructed and perceived and gender is defined not only on biological bases but the roles offered to men and women which further supplement and establish their gender. The whole world was unaware of this aspect of gender until brought into light by famous psycho-sexologist John William Money through his research and studies in 1954.

John William Money

Born on July 8, 1921 in Morrisville, New Zealand, to the parents who were English and Welsh descents, John William Money took his early education from Hutt Valley High School. After schooling, he took admission in Victoria University of Wellington, in 1944 graduated with double Masters first in Psychology and then in Education respectively. After he graduated, in Dunedin he joined University of Otago as member of Psychology faculty. He is mentioned in the autobiography “*An Angel at My Table*” of Janet Frame, who as a part of her training as teacher, had attended John Money’s sessions on Psychology and was very much impressed with his theories and analyses.

John Money was instrumental in her appointment in Psychiatric Department at Dunedin Civil Hospital. In Order to study and join Psychiatric Institute at the University of Pittsburgh, in 1947 he moved to the United States. Soon he left Pittsburgh to Join Harvard University and completed his Ph. D. in 1952. He is best known for his works and specialisations in gender, gender role and gender identity. He worked on origins and development of many gender oriented theories. He joined Johns Hopkins University where he was appointed as professor of Medical Psychology and Paediatrics and served there up to his death on July 7, 2006. With his pioneering work on gender in 1950s, John Money gave new directions and meaning to the established perception of gender. His views on gender, being socially constructed were novel and innovative against the old perception, according to which gender was only the result of biology of a person.

With a series of articles he wrote and published in 1950s, and in a book which he co-edited "*Transsexualism and Sex Reassignment*" in 1969, John Money's majority of works are centred on the gender. Talking elaborately on reassignment of sex, John Money opines that biological sexes, with the help of parents of the child, can be reassigned, if they provide them the suitable environment. This idea of Money goes as 'nature versus nurture'. According to this idea if a child is nurtured against the biological sex of the child, means against his natural sex since his birth, then with the help of environment provided by the parents, sex of a child can be changed and he/she can be assigned the opposite sex. John Money's works throw light on the difference between gender role and sex role. Sex role is obviously centred on the sex oriented activities of human beings, whereas gender role defines all the activities of the person pertaining to the socially constructed gender assigned to him. He considers sexual activities and other aspects, as his definition of gender and gender role.

The Term gender, for John Money is more inclusive and broader, not merely limited to being male or female, not only one's status and identity as being a man or woman but his personal identifications, social recognition, construction and reassignment, legal manifestation and behavioural patterns, which moves beyond genitalia and the activities related to genitals. John Money's seminal work is "*Man and Woman, Boy*

and Girl” which he published in 1972. The book gives us the glimpses of cases of gender and sex assignment, the case of John and Joan or David and Brian. Book also contains one of the very famous terms ‘body mind’ which discloses the connection and relation between mind and body presenting them as single unit against the western approach in which mind and body are viewed separately.

John Money’s claims and theory of reassignment of sexes is based on his studies and analyses in hermaphrodites. Hermaphrodites are study of animals, including human beings and plants which have both sexes. Hermaphrodite animals can use their either organ with the corresponding organ of the other animal. Based on this study only, John Money was moving against nature, giving idea of nature versus nurture, for the reassignment of sex among human beings. Not ignoring biological and other complementary factors, John Money highlighted that gender was a psychosocial construct that helps the hermaphrodites to adjust and live in the society with the newly assigned sex. The ideal opportunity, for Money to prove his point, presented itself when the parents of twins David Reimer and Brian or so called John-Joan, approached him for medical advice for David who had an irreparable damage to his penis, when he was very young .

‘The parents were young people of rural background and grade-school education. They were understandably desperate to know what could be done and suffered through a rather long saga of finding no answer. Then a consultant plastic surgeon, familiar with the principles of sex reassignment, recommended reassignment as a girl (Money, p-118)’.

By that time the children were 17 months old. (David had a botched penis surgery by another surgeon when he was 7 months of age). At this point John Money advised his parents to see and bring up child as a girl not as a boy. On John Money’s advice, parents started giving girlish environment and identified him as girl. Testicles removal surgery was suggested and later performed by Dr John Money when David’s age was almost 2 years. John Money greatly emphasized and reiterated that after introductory procedure, the sex reassignment is a continuous process which needs proper observation and care from parents of the child. In case of David, later signs and

records showed child's healthy response and acceptance of new sex as girl, though parents became ignorant to Dr Money's instructions to be more watchful and continuous monitoring him as girl. Actual success of the case could be counted only after the puberty attainment of the child but the worse twist in this case was the negligent attitude of parents, who had turned a blind eye to John Money's cautionary words of parental support and aid to child.

With this specific case, theory and experiment of sex reassignment; Dr Money had tremendous impact on many other sexologists, who happily accepted his findings and made it a base for their cases to perform surgeries. Though many other sexologists and physicians criticized Dr John Money for his findings which they found were very dubious and unclear of any particular conclusions, proved true to some extent as Dr Money could not claim and publicize final results of the case, on the premise that his client had refused to meet him. This case and the repercussions proved a setback in the career of John Money, when reported in media.

David Reimer's biography "*As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who Was Raised as a Girl*" written by John Colapinto, was published in 2000, became best-selling book as reported by The New York Times. Book recorded the David's interviews, accounts of other meetings which he had with another sexologist Milton Diamond in 1997, severe criticism of Dr Money's ruthless process of experiment with both David and Brian, which included his forcing both children to perform sexual activity and making them undress publicly. Money's attempt of justifying the practice as 'childhood sexual rehearsal play' was straight away condemned and rejected by even the mainstream intersex experts who were expected to support but were equally critical of Money's ways to handle the case. Matter turned from bad to worse for John Money, when Brian was found and declared dead owing to overdose of medicines and David as Brenda committed suicide, after years of suffering from depression. John Money was charged with intentional concealment of facts and falsified representation of finding and outcomes of case, to justify thousands of intersex surgeries in many other parts of the United States. David's parents charged Money with inappropriate methodology to

deal with their sons David and Brian who, according to them, were forced to commit suicide.

John Money's research work is not only focused on gender but he pioneered and established transsexuality as a solution to sex related issues in America and many other European countries. He along with others became instrumental to establish John Hopkins Gender Identity Centre and started with the processes and surgeries of sex reassignment in 1966. The matter of sex reassignment and establishment of institute was enough sensationalised in the press which further attracted Money's rivals also, and things turned against him. Fame of institute attracted many gender experts, psychiatrists, surgeons and psychologists from academia to join and serve but it led to controversial environment and rivalries in institute. Few of the rivals of Money wanted to close the psychiatry department of institute, unaware of Money's research on the subject. Many others who had poorly conceived Money's ideas joined the movement and had the department closed with political motivation.

John Money's research include various aspects of human sexual approaches and his interests lied in novel ways of exploration to educate the common people. His academic articles were meant for his students and colleagues along with other influential readers and audience. His maximum students co-authored a number of articles with him, who were inspired and learnt a lot from his genius. This practice of co-author and co-publication was pioneered and flourished by him; his students developed a great insight in the subject of human psychology and sexuality and further wrote articles for readers who were professional surgeons. Money was the one to get funding for the field of sex so that ample research can be carried out by devoted learners.

Dr John Money who fulfilled the duties of a scholar as well as a teacher, supervised the publication of various academic articles. His remarks infuriated many article writers though they were aware of his literary capabilities and were equally impressed by him. He was one of the harsh critics, almost impossible to be convinced by anyone. His relations at the John Hopkins show how cranky natured he was who always developed troubled relations with his colleagues, though he was soft and protective for

few, including his maximum students. John had very embarrassing moments with the Reed Erickson, who sought his assistance to found Erickson Education Foundation. John helped Erikson to recover from a psychic condition which he had due to overdose of medicines. Erickson was cross with John for the reasons nobody knew, but everyone guessed to be odd behaviour of John, who at one hand appeared to be very concerned, and critical on the other. John's contribution in the field of sex is remarkable with his research in gender identity, with that he gave new dimensions to human behaviour and understanding.

To honour him for his contribution, Society which he founded (Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality), has initiated awarding a prize on his name to the deserving candidates. He would be infinitely remembered by his followers and students for his research and theories. His works and legacy in the form of John Money Collection and John Money Fellowship is preserved in Kinsey Institute, which gives an opportunity to the of SSSS awarded prize winners to stay at the Institute for a period of eight days a year to do research as a part of fellowship.

Development and Socialisation of Gender

In the books "*Transsexualism and Sex Reassignment*" and "*Man vs. woman, Boy vs. Girl*" Dr John Money elaborates that gender does permeate in almost every aspect pertaining to child's life, environment, and society which he/she is a part of. Cultural practices and systems in wider sense like family, dominating attitude of males, submissive approach of females, all define and affect child's gender in his home, in his school and social circle. Environment and society directly, indirectly frame and affect child's gender, and play vital role in his development of through various processes.

Socialisation procedures

In socialisation procedure, the perspective of social learning, matters a lot. According to this perspective, complementary notes of parents and observers become significant. They praise the very child, for example a girl for wearing a beautiful frock rather than when she wears a t-shirt and jeans. These compliments reinforce and strengthen

child's behaviour and his gender identity, as children start comparing themselves with other genders and among same genders. Cognitive process too, plays an important role. In this process observation of child takes centre stage. A child observes keenly the behaviour of others, through the different activities they are engaged in, and notices the impact of such behaviours on them and on others. Such observations determine a child's gender development at initial stage. With his observations a child is prone to imitate another child in same sex category, when the other child, engaged in an activity plays a role model and is appreciated by the elders and others. Observation based learning does not necessarily confine to imitation only, though imitation remains a foundation. A child notices that ideal behaviour in others too, along with his observation of related situations, locations, styles etc.

Children note the different appropriate behaviours with their observation, along with the related sexes and their occupations and interlink such behavioural patterns, impacts, occupations and influences with the related gender. Environment plays a significant role in all situations and helps in gender development of children. So gender conduct and construction takes place with the interaction of personal with behavioural and environmental factors. Gender development to great extent is attributed to social components like family friends, neighbourhood etc.

Construction and socialization of gender in family

Family, first school of the child, provides us with various ways to raise sons and daughters separately, constructing and socialising their genders subsequently.

Reinforcement of gender based activities

Parents and guardians provide their children with distinct social environment like toys, clothing, TV programmes etc. Different kind of treatment further encourages gender based activities which results in children being more interested in same sex games and activities than that of other sex. For example boys are more interested to play with other boys and girls with other girls. Such gender based activities later determine their personal efficacy in almost all aspects including shaping their nature and the way to deal with different situations.

‘From the time that children can walk, boys and girls begin to lead a different life (Money, p-136)’.

Boys being sent to play with friends in village or at different other levels, help them to solve many leadership and decision making related issues, later in their lives, whereas girls who are confined to four walls helping their mothers in general, help their family members later in family issues. Thus children's learning is affected by the type of exposure they get from the family members, which have hidden implications in their lives.

‘Children tend to choose between matched pairs of illustrations concordantly with their own sex, even though not specifically requested to do so. Boys tended to be more in their preferences than girls were feminine. There were too many discrepancies, however, for the procedure to be precise in individual evaluation (Money, p- 181).’

Another extremely significant factor in upbringing and socializations of children is the socialisation of parents themselves. Socialization process of parents has dual impact on the growth and socialization of their children. Parents who have been quite successful in their lives tend to provide same kind of situations to their children, whereas parents, who socially, financially have remained underprivileged, attempt to give better environment to their children.

Reinforcement of gender based instincts (personal and social)

Parental socialization and development has determining impact of children's gender based personal as well as social attributes (Huston 1983). Parent’s level of interaction with their children, achievement based encouragement, disciplinary restriction and strictness, permission to take part in neighbourhood and social events, communication, guidance and counselling etc. are the activities which determine their children's personal as well as social attributes. The direct and obvious results are the girls becoming more responsible, submissive and homely whereas boys being carefree, confident and aggressive at times. It is reiterated that environment plays a defining role in such scenarios.

More research in this aspect shows different kinds of treatment in different situations. For instance parents will have a different kind of home environment when the children are two boys or two girls at home and a completely different approach and environment when there is a boy and a girl at home. In these two scenarios parents' own role is also changed. In case of two boys, males in the house would be more active in general, and in case of girls it would be mothers and females who will be active. Both would have little different roles when there is a boy and girl also. In case of both boys and both girls, communication process would be different which can be boys or girls oriented, getting instructions from a single parent, whereas in case of a boy and a girl, it would be much in balance. Though instruction and communication is again environmental and context based but a mother's communication with the daughter can be too much talkative and emotion based whereas father's dealing and communication with the boys can be strict, reserved and to the point in general, which can make girls more emotional, expressive and talkative and boys can be carrying his father's communicative skills and attributes.

Parents' own stereotypical and instinctive beliefs about their girls and boys having different qualities, even if they don't have, also affect their communication. Such different communication treatment is given, owing to parents' own different experiences in their socialisation processes. Sometimes parents compelling their children choose different subjects at school, shows parents' own interest, understanding and attitude of subjects which is almost different than that of their children. Parents' such perceptions and beliefs further influence their children's tastes, interests, behavioural patterns and perceptions. Such strict and restrictive environments lead children into a kind of mental trauma which can affect and leave a permanent imprint on their nature and mind which is connected to the gender and social situations. Thus it can be said that parents' socialisation plays an important role in the upbringing of their own children. Though at times, parents leaving children with their choices and giving them enough space leads to very positive results.

Ideals at Home

What roles do parents play and how do they become source of inspiration for their children, and what impact does it have on children's thinking process, behaviours and attitude? Occupations of parents are important in this case. Normally, father is considered to be working outside home and mother seems to take care of family matters. This is a traditional kind of situation and has impact on children's gender and personality formations. In non-traditional situations in which mother seems to be working outside home and father takes care of child as baby sitter or of family matters, the observation, impact and learning of child will be different. In a separate situation where both parents are found working, observation and learning of children would be different than first two situations. Both parents who stay at home and manage family matters including children, their own gender preferences and understanding matters a lot in child's psychological and emotional development. A completely different context of social egalitarian of a family leaves a different impact on children.

Parents own values and attitudes such as their own perceptions about gender equality attributes and egalitarian and non-egalitarian attitudes influence children's observation and understanding of gender related matters at home. It is reflected in their assignment of gender related tasks to their sons and daughters separately and seen as gender related reinforcement of their children. Such roles and factors are not always similar in the different societies and vary to great extent. Even the age of Children affects their learning in this matter. Parents' dealing with their elder sons and daughters differs than their dealing with the younger ones, which leads to psychological disturbance of elder children sometimes.

Historical and Cultural Variations

Historical and cultural variations do matter in shaping one's attitude and values about a gender. For example European Western culture may reject any division between genders whereas any other culture like in African or in Indian societies, people stick to it in family and social situations. The perfect example of this is the ban on sex

determination tests in India which is due to female foeticide and high mortality rate of girls during infancy in India. In European societies and countries there is no discrimination between genders and daughters and sons are raised and treated equally. Therefore they reveal the sex of child at the very early stage before birth, and don't feel the need of any such kind of test. Though cases in various cultural and social situations might be different, means in a culture or society where people boast of the gender equality might not be true and vice versa.

Different Family Structures: Single, Lesbian and Gay Parenting

In comparison to traditional family structure where there are two parents, single parent family structures which are non-traditional have a completely different kind of impact on children. In single parenting, in divorce cases, if children are in custody of mothers, which generally happens, they miss the presence of a male as father's role. In cases fathers taking care of children, child's feeling absence of father can be considered non-traditional when he is off to work, though child misses presence of female as mother at home. But in cases where the children are adopted from orphanages seem to have a less influence of their so called mothers and fathers generally. A single mother staying at home and a single mother working, both different situations will have separate impacts on children. One of its kind situations, in which parents are lesbians, will raise girls, which will show less to female type of clothing, behaviour, language and even food. So it is not surprising that less-traditional family systems raise children in non-conventional ways which are not particularly gender centred.

Sibling Impact

Children, to great extent, have sibling impact on the formation and determination and strength of their own gender related interest, understanding and attributes. Research in this aspect shows that the children who don't have any sibling or less no. of brothers and sisters show egalitarian gender beliefs concluding that sibling impact promotes gender types (Ruble & Martin, 1998) even more strongly than the parents. But sibling impact depends on the order of birth of children, age gap, equal as unequal no. of siblings of particular sex, and hence making the impact inconsistent. Sibling

relationships though are important to conceptualise modelling and needs during one's adolescence.

Impact of gender socialisation in school

Like the home of a child, school also does provide and promote gender related environment for students. Majority of female teachers in Nursery or early education system and male persons in powerful administrative posts gives the first glimpses. Schools normally develop the system with personalised attention in classrooms; with this children observe and learn from the kind of treatment being given to their peers.

Personalised Attention and Treatment

Teachers' different and personalised attention and interaction with boys and girls at different levels in a school, shapes their behaviour, reinforce stereotypic aspects in both boys and girls separately. Maximum early education teachers, in general, encourage gender centred activities and discourage gender improper and inappropriate activities, whereas schools which are non-co-ed situation can be drastically different.

Effects of such differentiation may vary at different levels. In junior grades teachers' response to gender is greater than that of teachers in middle and upper grades. In middle grades, boys attract more criticism from teachers than girls do. Teachers' response does depend on their sex and subject they take. Normally male teachers taking Maths and English will interact more with girls than boys and vice versa. The most significant and interesting point is, if teachers' do reflect biasedness and partiality in their treatment and if students are willing to respond to that. Early education teachers motivate boys more to respond than girls irrespective of the fact that both boys and girls need to be encouraged and attended to when they volunteer.

Teachers opine differently for both boys and girls, based on their observation, of boys being more careless and quarrelsome whereas girls being more shy, introvert and studious. Instinctively, however teachers' opinions for their students irrespective of their genders are accurate, based on students achievements and characteristics and

rarely rely upon the sexual as gender stereotypes. Enough attention is paid to teachers own abilities and expectation and its impact on students behaviour and success rate. Effects in this case are less evident, but exist, depending on person to person contexts and motivation. Though brilliant students are assumed and expected to perform and score well, even if they are being taught by the teachers who expect very less from them. So it is viewed and widely recognised that practices and systems in school promote sex and gender related preferences among students in school. Many activities like seating arrangement in classes and standing arrangement in assemblies indicate different treatment. Such treatment and activities have great influence on student's behaviour and their gender related perceptions, which are further, incorporated and become integral part in their interests and natures.

School Based Role Models

Students frame their gender oriented perceptions with their observation of males and females playing various roles in various activities. Men, in general, are said to hold powerful administrative posts, whereas females opt for teaching jobs especially in early education system. In senior grades, however, the matter can be different with male teachers in teaching positions, promoting male gendered environment and behavioural patterns. Role models affect gender development mainly in two relevant issues. First issue is the effect of lack or less no. of male teachers employed in early education system, which is subject to constant research. Second is the relevance of same-sex or same gender school like that of girls' school or boys' school than the co-ed school. Some studies and research (Lee & Byrk 1986) show the positive impact of same-sex school systems whereas other studies (Harker, 2000) show the negative or no impact of such systems on boys and girls.

Peer Pressure and Influence

Peers' contribution in role modelling and socialising of gender, through various activities is vital. These activities matter a lot in peer socialisation. The influence of same sex activities in determining social roles is seen greatly, as children spend a lot of time with same sex children and learn about various styles and behaviours.

Variation in Treatment

Among boys who do not play well and are more inclined to girls, and girls related activities, are not liked by their peers, whereas among girls' criticism to each other is less or not there (Fagot, 1977). Recent researches show the element of disliking being more explored, with girls disliking mates more who show off and are extrovert and boys disliking their introvert and studious mates. Both sexes showing extreme gender-abnormal behaviour receive teasing and criticism equally from their mates, with boys more from the other boys than girls less from the other girls.

Peer Role Models

Though, peers are said to have a great influence on gender development but mainly it is a socialisation process. Peers are seen as role models in extremely positive behaviours which is constantly reinforced and appreciated by the parents, peers, elders and other observers. For example a player, irrespective of his identity is applauded by every spectator in the ground. On the other hand, extremely negative behaviour which is subjected to constant observation and scolding from elders and parents, affects the direct receiver as well as indirect receiver, who is the peer observer.

In general, during adolescence, children try to imitate and be like their role models who can be anybody from family, neighbourhood, school or peers. Boys love to be addressed as cool, rough and tough, confident and physically strong. And girls are more concerned about their studies, appearance and their parents' social status.

Influence of Other Sex Activities

In peer socialisation process, influence of other sex activities is found to be greater to control one's behaviour than the same sex activities. For examples hyperactive behaviour of boys is seen to be under control to great extent when they are made to engage in activities in which the other participants are girls. The same is found in case of girls. Findings in recent research show the behaviour environment and gender development much in balance in co-ed school system than boys' school where

hyperactivity is found in excess and girls' school, where environment lacked balance in enthusiasm and spark.

Role and Influence of Media

Media whether electronic or in print form plays important role in gender Development of children. With the advent and expansion of technology at a wider level which has made the whole world a kind of village and parents' inclination and approach for work, has exposed children to electronic media to great extent. Parents have found assistance in form of mobiles and TVs and have given open access of such gadgets to children. Children's unrestricted handling of phones and unchecked usage has added fuel to the fire. They are always busy viewing their favourite programmes on TV, which affect their physical as well as mental growth and their viewing of their favourite channels make frame and determine gender roles in family and in society. TV becomes a source for them to spend time in absence or at times in presence of their parents also. Thus I have tried to point out all the factors which are responsible for the formation, determination and the development of a child's gender soon after his birth.

Next phase of my research will throw light on the process of origin, determination and development of theory of Performativity. Judith Butler has convincingly made an elaboration that it's not the actor but action, not the doer but deed and not the performer but performance, repeated over a period of time which subsequently creates a repetitive impact that enables and establishes identity of a human being.

Performativity

Performativity is defined as a quality of a person being performative. It is a word or a set of words which at the time of utterance gets transformed in to a contextual action and is followed by an impact. The words, when uttered get enacted and become performative. For example when one says, I promise that time speaker is not only saying these words 'I promise' but performing the action of promising also and is

making an impact of certainty, surety and definitiveness on the listeners or viewers. This state or situation of performing this whole act is called performativity in which performer is performing the action with simple enunciation of the words. Although the term 'performative' is coined by J. L. Austin from Britain, well known for his contribution and development of his famous theory 'speech acts', theory of performativity is propounded by an American feminist Judith Pamela Butler.

Judith Butler

Born to Jewish parents in Ohio, Cleveland, the US, on February 24, 1956, Judith Pamela Butler is an American author, feminist theorist and critique. Her orthodox-turned reformer mother was the only survivor of holocaust among her maternal ancestors. She learnt Jewish Ethics as an adolescent and was inclined to Nazism, German ideology and theory of existentialism. After graduation in Philosophy from Bennington College in 1978, she pursued and completed her doctorate from Yale University in 1984. Along with her association with many universities and educational institutions, at present she teaches at University of California, Berkeley. Her seminal works include her unconventional ideas about sex, sexuality and categories of women. Against the established notions of gender, according to which gender is culturally formed through the doer, she opines that gender is an act, a performance. This act or performance, not performer is rendered as an instrument to establish idea of gender. Focusing and analysing works of many other thinkers and authors, Butler questions the stability of notion of gender and asserts that gender can neither originate nor end but is a process in making. She is simply trying to trouble the idea of gender in her famous book, '*Gender Trouble*'.

'*Gender Trouble*' is a seminal text, a ground breaking work of Judith Butler on feminist studies. This book is an attempt to destabilise the stable notion of Gender. Published in 1990, this landmark text is divided in three sections given below.

1 Subject of Sex / Gender/ Desire

2 Prohibition, Psychoanalysis and the production of the Heterosexual Matrix

3. Subversive Bodily Acts

This book presents before us Judith Butler's revolutionary idea of gender identity and gender being performative which goes against the concept of gender as a cultural production of sexual binary. She questions the legitimacy of gender binary according to which, genders which don't fit in this binary are illegitimate. She shows a difference between gender performance and gender performativity on gender being performative. Gender performance is like a performance on a stage in which actual gender of the performer is crucial to the gender performed on the stage. Gender performativity as gender being performative is an effect of series of performances in which gender is performed too many times. That performer naturalizes the gender, and makes it an inherent part of his/her personality. Gender is legitimated by performer as it is performed and produced many times. Butler says this performance and production is gender. In other words, the repetition of performance and production establishes the notion of gender which is internalized by the performer; thus Butler defines the gender as follows.

'Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being (P-45)'.

'Rigid Regulatory Frame' which Butler refers here, is the gender binary system as heteronormative structure which considers only the categories of men and women socially acceptable and legitimate. Butler aspires to reread, analyse and deconstruct this rigid regulatory frame and heteronormative structure to discover the parameters responsible for the formation and production of gender and its legitimacy, which is socially naturalized, internalized and accepted.

'A political genealogy of gender categories, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate the account for those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender (Butler 45)'.

By rereading and reanalysing the genealogy of gender, Butler wants to locate and point out the possibilities which will enable its reformulation.

‘To expose the contingent acts that create the appearance of a naturalistic necessity, is a task that now takes on the added burden of showing how the very notion of the subject, intelligible only through its appearance as gendered, admits of possibilities that have been forcibly foreclosed by the various reifications, of gender that have constituted its contingent ontologies (Butler 46)’.

Judith Butler questions the production of woman as a subject and category. Butler analyses and examines viewpoints of many other feminists. She draws a difference and comparison between bodily and cultural conception of women and conveys that category of male/female as sex of a person, is a physical or bodily attribute on which culture plays an essential role. Culturally the females or the persons with vagina are expected to take the reproductive responsibilities of a mother in a heterosexual system and are categorised as women whereas persons with penis are addressed as husbands and fathers, categorised as men. Butler maintains that it is not only the sex of a person which determines the category and subject of women, but culture also plays an important role. She questions the legitimacy of subject of women which is not stable and permanent. She further talks about the contradiction between politics and representations and conveys that these terms are different from each other in usage and nature.

‘On the one hand, representation serves as the operative term within a political process that seeks to extend visibility and legitimacy to women as political subjects; on the other hand, representation is a normative function of a language which is said either to reveal or to distort what is assumed to be true about the category of women (Butler, p-2).’

On one hand representation is used as an operative process to give visibility and legitimacy in a political process, on the other hand it has a normative structure in which language can be used either to distort as reveal the actual facts, pertinent to a particular subject. And, when we see representation as a normative function of

language, the role it plays or it has played to establish the identity of women and to represent and legitimate them can never be rendered doubtless.

‘But the subjects regulated by such structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures (Butler, p-3).’

Women’s representation is sought for their emancipation from heteronormative societal structure, which means to highlight their position, roles and discrimination done against them. This process of emancipation can never fructify if juridical systems represent women with some exclusionary practices. For Butler, moreover qualifications of a subject must be met first before it is represented, and subject and notion of women is not sufficiently stable. There is a very little agreement what constitutes the category of women.

Butler cites Michel Foucault’s notion of how social powers produce subjects. Michel Foucault in his essay ‘History of the Sexuality’ discusses how power notions are regulated in negative terms that is by limitation and prohibition. In a social structure subjects are made to act in a prohibitive manner so as to fit them in particular norms. This system is developed and internalised by subjects with regular and repeated practices. The subjects or the people who are said to be unfit in the systems are considered illegitimate as these are not accepted widely by other components of the system. Formation of any subject in a society is done through representation. A language is the most effective component of a narrative through which representation takes place.

‘For Foucault, those prohibitions are invariably and inadvertently productive in the sense that “the subject” who is supposed to be founded and produced in and through those prohibitions does not have access to a sexuality that is in some sense “outside”, “before” or “after” power itself. Power, rather than the law, encompasses both the juridical (prohibitive and regulatory) and the productive (inadvertently generative) functions of differential relations (Butler, p-40).’

Narratives are the discourses which take place to establish the legitimacy of a given subject. But the legitimacy of the very discourses lie in suspicion when the processes and medium of communication remain in the brackets of biasedness. Butler throws a light on gender as a cultural product and sexed bodies. She further points out that sexed bodies are anatomically differentiated bodies which are the passive recipients of unstoppable cultural law. A law which is coated with the culture is justified and accepted by all people in a social structure. Nobody can object the values and systems produced by such kind of authoritatively unstoppable law.

Judith Butler comments on the work of Simone de Beauvoir 'The Second Sex'. Simone de Beauvoir is a prominent feminist writer who has given a famous statement, 'One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one'. Beauvoir takes women as secondary. For her, the primary, the Principal or main sex is man. Beauvoir says that one becomes a woman when she is bound to act in typically rigid cultural framework. This book 'The second Sex' written in two volumes, throws light on the facts and myths about a woman and how in her whole life, she is made to follow the set norms of social structure. Butler examines her work and critiques the systems and values which force one to become a woman. Butler furthers Beauvoir's statement that if one becomes a woman it means one does not originate or end but becomes. If, it is the act of becoming, it can un-become and re-become also. If, in a heterosexual matrix, the act of reproduction makes one female become a woman, it is again questionable. As not only a female but a male can also be contextualised and addressed as woman.

Butler analyses French author Luce Irigaray's view point on feminism and women. Irigaray says women constitute a paradox in the discourse of identity. Women are un-representable or linguistically absent from the discourse in which language is phallogentric. She closely examines how language is misused and misappropriated in relation to women. Irigaray endeavours to uncover the absence of female subject position in a narrative. Judith Butler sought to point out the need for a radical rethinking of identity categories. She questions the whole structure of a narrative along with its components, advocating reshaping dialogue through coalitions rooted in multiplicity than unity. In unitary structure of dialogue, the main position is occupied

by the man who has appropriated and established himself by taking speaking position. Butler points out that the results of a dialogue are always biased if positions of the speakers are not equal. Multiple speakers with equal positions only, in a coalitionary system can fructify better results in a discourse.

A Grand narrative can never take place in which speaking subjects are of dominated and dominating statures. Butler further claims that identity of a person can never be isolated from the gender or gender identity of a person. She is of the opinion that a person only becomes socially intelligible, once his/her gender is appropriated. A person who does not fit in the ideal gender binary finds it difficult to be identified among mainstream people of society.

Butler discusses Monique Wittig's analysis of language. Wittig asserts that language is a tool which is not misogynist in structure but in its application. She emphasizes that power of language is used either to place women on subordinate positions or to exclude them from a discourse.

Judith Butler talks and analyses the notions of prohibition, psychoanalysis and production of heterosexual matrix. In a given social structure, how certain people are prohibited to intersect each other socially and sexually, which further leads to mental obstruction and dysfunction resulting in either mourning or melancholia. In order to appropriate the relations in a system, heterosexual matrix is promoted.

Butler discusses Claude's notion of universal kinship. Structuralist Claude Levi Strauss gives the idea that culture acts and controls nature that is body of a person through gender, justifying regulatory practices linguistically.

‘According to *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, the object of exchange that both consolidates and differentiates kinship relations is women, given as gifts from one patrilineal clan to another through of marriage (Butler, p-52).’

Butler objects to exchange of women in universal kinship law which Strauss connects to incest taboo. Butler highlights the works of Michel Foucault, Monique Wittig and Julia Kristeva. She discusses Kristeva's idea of semiotic dimension of language.

Bulgarian born French psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva coined the term semanalysis which is the combination of semiotics and psychoanalysis.

Butler points out Foucault's understanding of Herculine Barbin's case in his essay 'The History of Sexuality'. Foucault states that sex and sexuality are co-extensive with power; however he maintains that Herculine was outside the univocal sex. Butler finds Foucault's stand on sex contradictory and states Herculine's life in conflict with set sexual norms of power which emancipates, regulates and defeats lives of people in a societal structure.

'Although he argues in *The History of Sexuality* that sexuality is coextensive with power, he fails to recognize the concrete relations of power that both construct and condemn Herculine's sexuality (Butler, p-128).'

She disagrees with Monique Wittig's notion of keeping lesbianism away from sexual binary. Wittig wants women, lesbians and gays to wage a war against man, who is a speaking subject to solidify their own positions. Criticizing Wittig's idea, Butler suggests the redeployment of language to form new kind of gender and gender categories.

Butler refers to Foucault's analogy of discipline and punish; in which criminals (and their bodies) are used by the authorities to exert their idea of discipline by punishing them. She points out, to strengthen her idea of bodily inscriptions and performative subversions, the drag performance in which performer mocks the gender binary and originality. She ably talks of construction of gender on body's surface and claims that gender is neither true nor false but only produced through repeated acts. If it is produced then it can be de-produced and re-produced. Judith Butler, through her landmark text tries to subvert the established notions of the gender which will eventually enable to locate new ways for evolution or reformulation of the same.

The Writer whose works will be explored through the angles of identity, gender and performativity is an African Genius Ben Okri.

Ben Okri has been considered one of the most prominent African/Nigerian writers of postmodern, post-colonial era, whose extraordinary works have left a lasting

impression on the minds of the readers. He is favorably compared to the other reputed writers like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. His stellar writings have helped him gain international recognition in spite of a humble beginning. He has been exposed to warlike conditions in cold war affected Nigeria. A prolific and versatile writer whose writings range from novels to collections of poems and short stories along with many non-fiction works, seem to be very difficult to be put under a particular category. With a unique style of writing and a fusion of African traditional practices with modern European ways, he along with his works, is subjected to exploration by many aspirant researchers. Below given, is a detailed account of Ben Okri and his works highlighting various features in his texts like themes, plots, setting, and characterization.

Ben Okri: A Glimpse of His Life and Works

Early Life

1991 Man Booker Prize winner, novelist, poet, short story writer, Ben Okri was born in General Hospital of town Minna, Nigeria on March 15 1959, almost one year prior to the independence of Nigeria from British colonial rule on 1 October 1960. His father Oghenegueke Loloje Silver Okri was an Urhobo, a lawyer by profession and his mother Grace Okri, an Agbor, was a caterer in a local restaurant. When Ben Okri's age was almost two years, his father Silver Okri took the whole family to London, England, so that he could not study law over there. There Ben Okri was given admission in John Donne Primary School in Peckham, making him the only African child studying in whole school. Soon after his father completed his law studies in England, the Okris returned to Nigeria in 1965, two years post Nigeria was declared Republic nation in October 1963. Back home in Nigeria, Ben Okri took admission in children's Home School in Sapele to continue and complete his Primary schooling. He joined Christ's High School in Ibadan in 1970 and Mayflower School in Ikenne to further complete his higher education. At Urhobo College in Warri, Ben spent five years to complete his 'O' levels, while he was staying in Ajegunle a ghetto slum with

his family, where his father was helping underprivileged, disenfranchised poor as lawyer charging nominal fee.

At the age of fourteen, when Okri wanted admission in university to study Physics, he was denied the same due to being very young and unqualified. This denial made Ben Okri take a turn towards writing poetry, which eventually he chose as his career. Okri's early exposure to racism in his school in England and his acquaintance with the impoverished clientele of his father who were deprived of their basic human rights of social equality, voting and justice made him very sensitive and had a lasting impression on his mind which further became the corner stones of his writing. One of the very first encounters about identity and violence is which Okri himself spoke about with a journalist and columnist Vikram Kapur, in an interview in Jaipur Literature Festival in India in 2012. Okri, when enquired about different backgrounds of his parents and what effect did it have on him growing as writer, responded as follows.

“One day when my mom came to collect me from school I was stopped at a check point. I was seven or eight then, and had just come back from England and could not speak my father's language well, which was the language on my identity card. In those days people were being killed for not being able to speak their father's language. I came close to being killed for not speaking the right language. I suddenly became aware that you are not just your father's son or mother's son and that the whole nature of identity shifts and changes” (Okri).

Such horrible incidents in his childhood had long lasting impact on his sensitive and innocent mind which is further reflected in his writings. Such profound experiences coupled with his keen observation which his father's profession provided him, indicate towards the themes and styles, his novels, short stories and other writings contain. For about two and a half years, from 1967 to 1970, when Biafra declared itself independent and separated from Nigeria, the whole Nigeria was burning in the fire of social mistrust and communal disharmony. There was ethnic, religious and political unrest among Igbo, Yoruba and Urhobo communities, which were

fundamentally different from one another. With the eruption of riots, there was loot, ruckus and lack of law and order all around. Corruption and military coups changed the whole Nigeria into a battle field of cold war. Power was in the hands of military which mismanaged the public funds freely and inappropriately. This disturbance continued up to 1970 till Biafra declared itself to be included in Nigeria. Even after the inclusion of Biafra in Nigeria this disturbance continued to prevail and provided no respite to Igbo and Yoruba people for long time. Death of about 100,000 civilians including starving children shook the whole world and the thinking process of many creative minds like that of Okri. Acute tensions and problems in Nigerian social structure had acute imprints on the minds of sensitive and innocent people.

Literary Career and Hardships

After refusal to admission to study Physics, Ben Okri took to writing as career and started exploring many unexplored shadowed areas. Living in Nigerian Ghettos and writing about social issues was not an uphill task for Okri. He began writing about the fundamental rights of the common people and the problems of people who were deprived of these fundamental rights as a social rights activist, like his father who was helping the poor and impoverished. He wrote about the discriminatory policies of the Nigerian government. His writings, (not published initially) in which he constantly criticized the corrupt practices in Nigerian government offices and victimization of civilians through these policies, were later published and highlighted in print media put him into boiling waters. Though, his literary genius was appreciated and recognised later, when he was awarded a scholarship by Nigerian government to study literature in Essex University in England. It can without any suspicion be assumed that, by awarding scholarship to Okri, Nigerian government got rid of him. After his arrival in England the scholarship was stopped. Though, Okri had taken admission in Essex University, fall in the funds made him sleep in public parks and spend endless days and nights with friends or at bus stands or at railway stations. Fortunately, he carried his first novel “Flower and Shadows” manuscript along with him which he completed during that free time. Later; he started living in a rented flat in Notting Hill, which was provided by his publisher friend Margaret Busby. Such hardships in life

gave Okri an utter urge to write, survive and live. During this tough time only, Ben Okri worked hard and got his novel published. Publication of his first novel helped him gain wide attention, appreciation and recognition. He became very famous in the world of writers, at the young age of 21 years and became a source of inspiration for many budding Nigerian writers/artists. This success helped him to be employed by 'West Africa' a London based, magazine, where he worked as poetry editor from 1983 to 1986. He published many poems there based on human suffering against the likings of magazine publishers, due to which he was fired out of his job. Later he worked for the BBC, British Broadcasting Corporation African Service as freelance broadcaster. For one year he worked at the Arts Council of Great Britain as a Bursar and continued with his writing. Later he was named the Trinity Fellow commoner in the Creative Arts by Trinity College under Cambridge University.

Ben Okri and Literary Influences

Before proceeding towards the next phase of my research on Ben Okri's works, I feel it is quintessential to study literary influence on Okri as a child and a writer as well. Access of Okri to his father's library benefited him to great extent to develop his interest in books and in literature. After returning from England, Ben Okri's father Silver Okri presented him many books. As a child, Ben Okri liked and read Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*" and "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*" of William Shakespeare, along with many other books. He liked the works of Anton Chekhov, Guy de Maupassant, Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe. In writing his works are compared to that of authors as Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Salman Rushdie. His first novel "Flowers and Shadows" when compared to "*Things Fall Apart*" of Chinua Achebe and Salman Rushdie's "*Midnight Children*", indicate how similar and identical their works appear in aspects of themes and setting. In general, an overview of Okri's works exhibits common post-colonial themes of Africa, such as poverty, slavery, women subjugation, exploitation of the poor, social inequality and discrimination, atrocities of the ruling class. But more deep study and analysis shows how his work is different than that of many other writers, who seem to have a great impact on him as child and equally on his writings. This difference solely is attributed

to his observation, experiences as a child and his close encounters with endless unforgettable incidents and his upbringing in a different kind of atmosphere than that of those writers. But there are writers who also appeared to be sailing in the same boat. For instance, his being born in a recently freed British colony, which became integral and has paramount importance to determine his own background and the background in his novels, is found similar in the works of Amitav Ghosh and Salman Rushdie. His works are compared with that of Amitav Ghosh due to their similar kind of life journeys. His works containing the themes of colonial violence, corruption, poverty, exploitation and discrimination of poor are compared to the 'Midnight's Children' of Salman Rushdie; as the writers belong to India and Nigeria, both countries were British colonies before independence. Ben Okri is more compared to these writers because of his wonderful creativity in short stories which are equally similar to the depiction and presentation in short stories of these writers.

Ben Okri seems to be more versatile when it comes to short stories, due to his personal experiences and extreme exposure to racism and discrimination. Another vital factor which played a key role in the writings of Ben Okri is the African Oral Narratives. These oral narratives are the accounts which are kept alive by the local artiste in oral forms, performed whenever any kind of social gathering or important celebration is there. There are no written records that contain such accounts at local level. These accounts find occasional ready references in the books of keen observers/writers/visitors who visit such gatherings out of curiosity to explore and witness something unique that has newness with aesthetic elements.

Language and Works

From novels to collections of short stories and poems, Ben Okri has produced a variety of works that contain a myriad of post-colonial themes. When it comes to medium of expression Okri's language is English. In depth critical analysis of his works, shows evolution and maturation as a writer. With the publication of his first novel "*Flowers and Shadows*" in 1980, from a young writer, to his latest addition, "*The Freedom Artist*" in 2019, it seems much water has flowed under the bridge, and

Ben Okri has emerged as a significant figure in the world of African Fiction, with his sharpened creative genius and honed expertise.

Flowers and Shadows

“Flowers and Shadows”, his first novel was published when he was 21, is an example of realistic work set in the Lagos of cold war affected Nigeria. Protagonist of the novel, young boy Jeffia Okwe is the only son of well off parents. A dominant theme of the novel is corruption which is plaguing the lives of common people. The themes of moral degradation, poverty and corruption are evident in the next novel *“The Landscapes Within”*. These themes are reflections of writer’s exposure to racism and corruption in the society. Okri draws critics’ attention to these works with his usage of regional dialects of Nigerian English and development of plot making it a bildungsroman and Kunstler roman respectively. Both protagonists in first two novels are young, innocent and sensitive. Like Jeffia Okwe, Omovo also suffers at home and feels entangled in the vicious web of ethically corrupt systems. He tries to express his sentiments through his portrait *Related Losses* (scumscape) which is subsequently banned, as authorities find it an invasion on the system and extremely inappropriate depiction of social conditions.

The Landscapes Within

Ben Okri's *“The Landscapes Within”* draws comparison with the James Joyce’s *“Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man”*. The basis of this comparison is the usage of stream of consciousness and the predicament of protagonists. Ayi Kwei Armah, a Ghanaian writer’s novel *“The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born”* is compared to this novel of Okri, due to presentation of similar themes, characterisation, setting and background, with minor differences. Mastery of Ben Okri’s art is hidden in his attempt to move beyond the set standards of literary production to generate his unique masterpieces. This newness and uniqueness is visible in every work of Ben Okri, though, his every new work has outshone the previous ones.

Collections of Short Stories

Ben Okri's evolution as an artist is predicted through his collections of short stories "*Incidents at the Shrine*" and "*Stars of the New Curfew*". The writer himself acknowledges the fact as he has honed his writing skills while writing short stories. He is of the opinion that writing short stories is an apprenticeship to writing novels which is proven with the publication of his master piece "*The Famished Road*". This novels seems to vouch for the fact that craftsmanship of a novelist is perfected while writing short stories, and aesthetic development of Okri is a live example of this. Okri's experimentation with the themes in short stories was witnessed before the publication of his first novel. Though this experimentation and unrestricted criticism was not digested and liked by Nigerian government.

During his two collections of short stories, Okri mastered his prowess of experimentation of African culture and mythologies combined with western literary perspectives. Another example of this experimentation was the combined presentation of pre and post-independence social structure of Nigeria that contained a variety of themes connected to a single strand. "*Incidents at the Shrine*" is a short collection of only eight short stories. These stories are depiction of cold war affected Nigerian society, in which all characters are simpletons who find life very difficult to live and struggle the atrocities to find food and survive. Mere survival for these characters is not less than accomplishments. Stories in the "*Stars of the New Curfew*" tell us incidents of military coups, and the psychological dilemma of people engaged in duping businesses. The versatility in short stories is owed to different kinds of experiences Okri had as a child.

The Famished Road

Ben Okri's creativity has manifested greatly in his Abiku series. The first in the trilogy "*The Famished Road*" was published in 1991, for which Ben Okri won Man Booker Prize. It is a rare example of artistic genius, creativity and craftsmanship of Ben Okri. This novel certifies how deeply, Okri has understood and mastered his

skills of combination and experimentation. This novel is undoubtedly Magnum Opus of Ben Okri which exhibits his evolution and maturation as an artist who has scaled greater heights with the passage of time.

The most prominent creation tells us the story of an Abiku boy, whose name is Azaro. Azaro, an African Abiku, has taken birth several times like an adventurer. Moving into both worlds of living and dead, finally he plans and tries to settle in the world of mortals out of pity for his would be mother who has expected and waited for him for a long time. Oscillating between two worlds, he is in dilemma, and is constantly harassed by his sibling spirits to change his decision and return to their world. Once, while trying to pacify his sibling spirits, he is taken as dead by his parents who placed him in the coffin. Miraculous recovery of Azaro left his parents in wonder and astonishment who helped and saved them many times. His father does carry loads to earn money for his family and mother hawks and sells throughout the day in the hot sun. Madame Koto a bar owner; is interested to employ Azaro in her bar, which adds twist in the story. She believes Azaro to be a sign of good luck and makes him simply sit and attract customers in her bar, which is a favourite haunt of mysterious figures. Okri presents the lack of democracy through the corrupt political parties who try to induce poor people to gain confidence, votes and win elections. Azaro's parents did not like the tactics used by the party of the rich to tempt poor by giving them free but rotten milk, which poor villagers consumed and started vomiting. Azaro's presence in Madame Koto's bar attracted many spirits as human beings which frightened him and makes him feel trapped among strangers. Madame Koto increased her involvement with the political parties to manipulate and allure poor people to help rich party politicians win the elections.

Story proceeds when Ben Okri's father decided to be a pugilist due to his sturdiness and physical strength. He fought many boxers who are sent by politicians to destroy the ghetto area and kill ghetto people. He takes himself to be Black Tygar who fights and kills Yellow Jaguar and Green Leopard in nearly deadly fights. He became very famous and thinks of establishing his own political party with the help of beggars and poor people. The sequel of "*The Famished Road*" is "*Songs of Enchantment*". This

story shows us shift in setting and plot and storyline. First part of trilogy moves around a single family of three members, second part tells us the exclusion of Azaro's mother from family and the empowerment of bar owner Madame Koto who becomes rich by manipulating many innocent lives. Ben Okri, in the second part of the series introduces socio-political twist with mythological base. Azaro, as in earlier part keeps on moving into different worlds. Third part of the series is "*The Infinite Riches*". This part includes many pre independence colonial themes. The death of Madame Koto marks the end of all spirits which had suffocated and haunted the place throughout the series. There seems to be no dearth in the hardships of common people. Authorities have single mindedly planned to destroy the age old cultural practices and monuments of Nigeria with military actions. These three novels of Okri show us his mastery over the language, experimentation and presentation which have altogether knitted all themes and characters in a masterful way. This series bereft any suspicion remains Ben Okri's best creation.

An African Elegy

After "*The Famished Road*" Ben Okri's next venture as a writer was the publication of collection of poems "*An African Elegy*" in 1992. These poems give us a closer glance of plight of the poor in post-colonial Nigeria. Poet finds and counts himself as one of many sufferers, who were dragged into depression and desperation by the policies of government. Poor strive to survive the hardships vehemently, and seek revival of their lives and identities equally. "*Astonishing the Gods*" another novel published in 1995 does not contain any specific kind of complexity, political engagement and experimentation, due to which novel receives poor and mild critical appreciation. The protagonist in the novel tries to escape the hardships of life by remaining invisible. He tries to make himself visible but later found refuge and comfort in being invisible to escape the harsh realities of life, much representing the wish of many Nigerians through author symbolically. Not only fiction, Okri has attempted to explore the area of non-fiction also with the publication collections of essays "*Birds of Heaven*" in 1996, "*A Way of Being Free*" in 1997, "*A Time of New Dreams*" in 2011.

Dangerous Love

In 1996, Ben Okri published "*Dangerous Love*" the refined version of his earlier novel "*The Landscapes Within*" published fifteen years ago in 1981. A well textured novel "*Dangerous Love*" is set in 1970s Nigeria when the nation was on the pinnacle of systematic corruption and tribal animosity, it seems to be a perfect example of Kunstler roman, presenting a love story with a combination of political engagement and freedom of a young man as an artist who is thought to be an outsider due to his strange and haunted haircut.

Protagonist Omovo, who is living with drunkard father and step mother Blackie, felt the victim of home violence along with his mother who passed away owing to his father's beatings. Pain of loss of his clerical job in a paint company, is coupled with the agony of his incomplete love for a beautiful young married lady Ifeyiwa, who is mastered, dominated and beaten by another drunkard Takpo who happens to be his neighbour. Omovo endeavours to find a solace in his paintings which is not liked by the local authorities, who think, its extreme portrayal of poverty in unjustified and inappropriate. Okri's another novel "*In Arcadia*" published in 2002, is a story of search by the film crew hired and monitored by a mysterious figure. Protagonist, narrator Lao exhorts the group of people to move in search of Arcadia. The novel is set in Europe where people are moving to find Arcadia, a place which seems to be imaginary. Lao's offer to move in search and complete his movie is accepted by the film crew, which, according to Lao, they have accepted out of depression to compensate their failures and lost lives in past. This journey to find out Arcadia is their own journey to find and rediscover themselves. This search is symbol of the search of many Nigerians who are in quest of their own identities and search to compensate their failures, and their attempt to connect with the traditional heritage of their very own country. Ben Okri has aptly used the combination of African myth with western style of presentation to highlight the personal search of crew members which is connected and united with the driving force of the Lao who is in the helm of affairs.

The Freedom Artist

The Latest addition in the works of Ben Okri is his novel "*The Freedom Artist*" published in 2019, widely acclaimed as the best and the most significant novel by Okri, after his master piece "*The Famished Road*". This novel seems to depict Ben Okri's impression about his own country which, according to him, as a nation is very young and is still struggling to deal with the practices which have chained it since independence. This is the story of a young man Karnak and his desperate but futile search of his beloved Amalantis who goes missing, after asking a question "who is the prisoner". He looks for her, first desperately and then with a realization which is steadily growing. He tries to understand the question his beloved has asked before she disappears. During his futile search for her, Karnak realizes how passive people have become and how passive responses he is getting from whoever he comes across. His search has turned into realizations as to how human beings have been turned into machines. Humans have lost their humane touch after surrendering their lives to the system, which doesn't allow anybody to question and to object to anything. In the vividly fast changing scenarios people have become ignorant and have forgotten that they have become the slaves of the system. This system is enforced over them so naturally that they have happily surrendered to it and have turned a blind eye towards the idea of questioning. Through the setting and theme of novel, Ben Okri hints at the future state where people have become slaves of the system and have lost their power of analysis so naturally that they have accepted the policies, regulated and deployed over to them by their authorities. Ben Okri at one hand, attempts to question the system, on the other hand tries to highlight the pathetic state of mind of such human machines that have stopped thinking out of the box. It is later discovered and realized that everybody has become the prisoner in the symbolic prison of the system. Ben Okri has successfully demonstrated stream of consciousness and his experience with reality which is exhibited in this novel.

With a variety of themes in his novels, Ben Okri has emerged as an epitome of writing. While leading from the front, he believes a writer as an artist with his proactive approach towards life, is a catalyst, a face of change. While laymen in

society may feel satisfied and saturated, artists never compromise with the substandard quality of life and system. They believe to transform their dreams into reality. *“Flowers and shadows”* protagonist Jeffia Okwe grew up with the realization of all wrong doings in society. Irrespective of the fact of his father's unethical business, he knows it is he, who has to redeem and compensate the wrong doings of his father. By not succumbing to social pressure, writers not only kindle a hope for humanity but re-dream new possibilities for society and nation. *“The Famished Road”* characters are perfect examples of such artists who symbolize the approach of author. Their undying spirits and positivity match with constant efforts of sibling spirits to bring Azaro back into their world. Azaro’s dad’s character and his mother’s determination are exemplary instances portrayed by Ben Okri. Even sibling spirits are symbolically presenting the spirit of artists not to give in, even in adverse circumstances. Failure of spirits among the moving men, leads to failure of nations which makes the writers melancholy. But the job of an artist, with his profound tool of art, is to predict the reality, even in harsh situations. Through art, artists attempt to bring the realities of life on the surface of the world giving them their aesthetic touch. This is what Ben Okri has done as a writer.

Similar deeds are performed by protagonists in his novels. In the novel *“The Landscapes Within”* and its sequel *“Dangerous Love”* central character Omovo is a reflection of Ben Okri himself. Portrayal of Omovo is the portrayal of writer's own sensitive and sensible nature and his social and ethical commitment. Blank canvas of Omovo is the symbol of scope and possibilities to explore many hidden potentials of human intellect and society. Omovo’s painting scumscape represents the writings of Ben Okri himself, the fate of his painting which was later banned is the story of Ben Okri’s own writings which were not liked and published initially. Whenever artists face problems with the authorities and the system, whole nation faces problems and difficulties for survival, survival of not only art but of identity too. Identity is a source of self-esteem, dignity, knowledge and inspiration to many others. Identity is an identification tag for every individual and without which, individuals are simply individuals. This identity seems to be hampered in British colonial rule. The identity is trying to gain its lost form and legitimacy in the eyes of the world. The identity is to

be preserved even at the cost of life and survival. Ben Okri being a modern writer does his best to give a vision to his countrymen and contributing his bit to establish the identity of Nigerian and Nigeria through his protagonists in his novels. By giving vision to the fellow Nigerians and his readers, he endeavours to usher everyone in to the era of realistic world igniting their spirits. Characters of Jeffia Okwe, Azaro and Karnak are the reflection of his own attempt to gain identity and help his countrymen awaken their spirits which are long lost or asleep.

Ben Okri: Major Themes

African writers in general have explored and written about the issues which were prevailing in the contemporary societies, with the combination of their personal experiences. Such common themes are poverty, corruption, political instability and unrest, civil war, social and communal disharmony, magic, indigenous beliefs versus Christianity, women subjugation, identity etc. Ben Okri's case is not an exception than his contemporaries. The fundamental difference between his themes and that of other writers' is unique way to view, perceive and analyse the issues. In depth analysis and thematic review of Ben Okri's works tells us of a universal story line which depicts that there seems to be similarity in the presentation, setting and background of his various works. The protagonists or the central characters in Ben Okri's novels are all sensitive and sensible natured men who deem themselves as the heroes of society and nation. They refuse to succumb to the social pressure and disorder prevailing in society. They are always in conflict with their elders mostly their fathers who instinctively are very cruel and brutal natured practical men. His central characters seem to naturally shoulder the responsibility of redemption of society and compensate all the wrong doings in the system. Source of inspiration for them, has always been the female characters in the role of beloved, wife or mothers, who too are victim of system and circumstances and have not given up. Okri's protagonists are a kind of silver lining in the clouds, a hope for society and humanity, and an embodiment of love, care, compassion and wisdom.

Manifestation of Poverty

There is a variety of themes, Ben Okri has written about. I have tried to put all themes into six categories. The first in this category is manifestation of poverty. The biggest and most significant source for Ben Okri's writing about this theme is his own observation of his father's poor clientele who used to visit him for legal advice in their ghetto home. Ben Okri was so much obsessed with this issue that in his first novel "*Flower and Shadows*" protagonist's father Jonan Okwe makes it a motto in his life. When Jonan Okwe saw his father dying of poverty, he made it sure that he earns ample money to give a comfortable life to his family. Okri tries to depict how poverty in extreme, can alter the perceptions of common people in society. His novels "The Landscapes Within" and its sequel "Dangerous Love" are also depicting the hellish effects of poverty on common people. Young Omovo has to take the job of a clerk in a paint company keeping his artistic skills at bay. He faces difficulties to survive in the company where everybody turns against him as he refused to accept bribe. Life became a hell for him when he was fired out of his job. Ben Okri's collections of short stories are full of theme of poverty. The most wonderful creation (till date) of Ben Okri "*The Famished Road*" is also containing the elements of poverty. Azaro and his parents are very poor people. His father is a load carrier and his mother hawks and sells goods in streets in the hot sun to assist the family earn money and food. So we can see poverty is a fundamental theme used by Ben Okri in his major works.

Women Subjugation

This theme is widely explored by majority of African writers. Colonialism and slave system in African countries became the source for writers to write about this theme. Ben Okri too, has shown women subjugation in his novels with one exception of Madame Koto who was empowered in the society and Blackie, step mother of Omovo who dominated Omovo's father. All Female characters in Okri's novels do live a life of ignorance in a sorry state of affairs. Most prominent of all characters is, Azaro's mother. She has no name but an identity of an African woman, who does not give up. In order to support her family to earn food and money, she roams in the streets of the town to sell the things. She is submissive but is very strong in her character. She stops

her husband when he decides to fight the goons sent by the politicians. She bears the pain of giving birth to an Abiku many times. She is a symbol of hope against all odds and hardships of life. She craves for Azaro whenever he faints as he is disturbed and harassed by other sibling spirits. She moves into oblivion, thrown out of her home in *"Songs of Enchantment"* and reappears when she sees her husband is being arrested in *"Infinite Riches"*. Jeffia Okwe's mother feels the absence of her husband who has almost abandoned her along with Jeffia in his lust to earn more and more money. Omovo's mother in the novel *"Dangerous Love"* succumbs to the home violence and dies of her husband's beatings, leaving her son alone. Omovo's beloved Ifeyiwa is also completely dominated and hit by her drunkard husband Takpo. Thus we can see glimpses of women subjugation in a couple of Ben Okri's novels.

Civil War

Civil War is a theme widely used as the background for other themes of social turbulence, communal disharmony and corruption. These themes are evidently prevailing in almost every novel of Ben Okri. Jeffia Okwe has seen his father Jonan Okwe's unethical practices to earn money. To remain at the helm of affairs as CEO of the company his father, though inspired by the parting words of Jeffia's grandfather, got rid of many people by deceiving them and took the reins of company in his hands. Corruption is again visible in *"Dangerous Love"* when Omovo refuses to accept bribe as clerk in Paint Company and was fired against a man, his boss' nephew, who was a shrewd and suitable candidate for that job. Ben Okri's collections of short stories, *"Incidents at the Shrine"* and *"Stars of the New Curfew"* contain many accounts which tell us of malpractices in the society of the colonial and postcolonial Nigeria. Common people in short stories are fighting to survive in their lives. They want to escape the system enforced over them, they revolt and protest against the odd policies. Town life in *"The Famished Road"* is the best example that contains social disturbance. Political parties' attempt to gain control over voters by tempting and bribing them, tells us of the social disorder and lack of democracy and system. Politicians' decision to send bad elements to destroy town property and kill innocent, poor town people, is testimony of their mean tactics. Omovo's painting is also a proof

of social disorder and low standard of people, living in the society. Ben Okri best presents all themes with the major theme of civil war in background to show malpractices in colonial Nigerian society.

Magic Realism

Though Ben Okri has time and again denied his works containing the elements of Magic Realism, he says that in Africa, magic is so profound and common that it is deemed as part of routine. The novel which represents magic realism in the best form is his master piece, "*The Famished Road*", the novel for which Ben Okri won Man Booker Prize in 1991. The story is of an Abiku child Azaro. Abiku means the one who is born to die. Azaro takes the birth after dying so many times. Azaro decides to stay in the world of human beings when he sees the bruised face of the lady who is his mother. Though, Azaro is in dilemma to choose, and he keeps on oscillating between two worlds, finally decides to stay with parents to make them happy. It took him long to pacify his sibling spirits about his decision to stay with his parents who believe him to be dead. When they put him in the coffin to be buried, Azaro with the help of king of spirits; comes back quickly to his body and life. With his miracle recovery, Azaro becomes very famous in the town; he saves his parents from fire. Madame Koto became aware of invisible and inherent powers of Azaro, takes him as a sign of good fortune offers him a job of waiter. With Azaro's presence in the bar, she started getting many customers who were spirits actually, who have come in the forms of human beings in disfigured shapes to visit and kill Azaro. Azaro notices them unlike Madame Koto and feels as a stranger among moving spirits who continuously stare at him. In another instance, Azaro is chased by spirits when he moves into the forest to avoid them at the bar. He is again caught by his sibling spirits who persuade him to return to their world. Again out of pity the king of the spirits intervenes; and sends him back to his parents, though he faces a lot of problems while returning home. Azaro loves his father very much and compares him with Black Tygar, a mysterious figure. His father, who doesn't like political activities in the town, decides to be a pugilist owing to his strong physiques. He believes to take the form of Black Tygar and defeats Yellow

Jaguar and Green Leopard in furious battles. These battles are fought in the mind of Azaro's father. Thus we can see the rich description of magic realism in this novel.

Who is the Prisoner?

The latest novel of Ben Okri "*The Freedom Artist*" published in 2019 is difficult to be put in a category. The driving and binding force of the novel seems to be a question, 'who is the prisoner', which finds space on the cover of the novel. In the novel, the question is asked by a young girl Amalantis, who immediately after asking this question, goes missing. Her lover Karnak, protagonist of the novel starts his search for her. His search after initial excitement, becomes futile, owing to the passive responses of the people, he gets after meeting them. During his search, Karnak tries to understand the question, his beloved had asked before disappearing, after that a steady realization grows in his search for her. Passive and listless responses of the people make him understand the meaning of the question. He proceeds to believe that all human beings have turned into machines. They have become the slaves of the system and have lost their power of reason. In the race of materialism to make the life more comfortable, which they think they have made, they have not realized that they have lost their spirits and courage to object and question their authorities against all odds. They think they have progressed very much and become civilized but they have not realized that they once were free and now have become slaves of the system. Ben Okri, at one hand is embarrassed to see the people's acceptance of the system and posed a question in front of them 'who is the prisoner', on the other hand, questions the authorities as to why this system, which spoils and mars the newness and creativity, is enforced over the citizens. Novel points out towards the terrible future state where nobody is permitted to ask questions and everybody has become/will become the prisoner in the prison which system has put them into.

Quest of identity

This theme is covered by plethora of writers in African Literature. Ben Okri, too, being a Nigerian writer, seems to have worked on this theme. Almost all protagonists in the novels of Ben Okri have a void to fill and are in quest of identity. Identity of a

person is of paramount importance in his life, a source of self-respect and reputation. That is why protagonist, when they see their identity, whether personal or universal is targeted, hampered and lost, they try to re-establish and regain it to regain their dignity and self-esteem. Jeffia Okwe takes this responsibility to compensate and pay for the unethical business practices of his father. Omovo's expulsion from the paint company tells us the strength of his character not to succumb to his boss and retain his identity and real self, even at the cost of his job. Azaro's decision to stay with his parents tells us of his love for them, the love which is one of the core human values. Madame Koto's wish to increase her business, in first part of the trilogy, and benefit the townsmen is also an apt example. The most appropriate examples are set by parents of Azaro, who despite being poor refused to give in and fought against all odds in their lives. Problems faced by the protagonists in the fictions of Ben Okri, it seems are the problems faced by the Nigerians themselves. By not giving up in even adverse circumstances, Ben Okri tends to show the character and undying spirit of the Nigerians. Thus we can see that all characters are the reflection of Ben Okri's own self, his endeavour to find and determine the identity of the protagonists, the author himself and many fellow Nigerians.

Ben Okri: Literary Styles and Movement

A broader review and analysis of Ben Okri's works give us glimpses of Postcolonial themes which are commonly used by many other writers before Okri and his contemporaries. He seems to voice concerns of the poor Africans and highlight the gap and struggle between African indigenous traditional practices and western culture. As soon as one turns his attention from this thematic analysis and content, it is noticed how his works are different from many other monotonous, routinely and average works and contain a uniqueness in his creatively explored combination of literary styles, settings, genres, backgrounds and characterizations, with his deep insight, complexity and profound imagination. Ben Okri depicts the urban Nigerian society after independence with the blend and combination of realism and modernism in his first two novels "*Flowers and shadows*" and "*The Landscapes Within*". Works of Okri, his being a migrant writer born in Nigeria, tells us of his awareness of

problematic history of the country. This awareness signals us the realistic problems presented in a modern way. A special feature of his works is that other than the struggle between colonizers and colonized, he has displayed - the struggle of survivor for survival in civil war which ate into the vitals of Nigeria after its independence. Creativity in his literary style is his narrative technique, he used this technique to narrate the stories in first person and third person, especially in short stories. He used this narrative technique to give the glimpses of African folkloric elements in a dramatic way. Combination of African mythologies and western techniques is used to develop his first novel as bildungsroman and second novel as *Kunstler roman*. His works, containing post-colonial themes widely, present us the impression of a writer belonging to African fraternity in general, where as in particular, makes him leading the Nigerian literature from the front.

Usage of Art seems to be profound in the works of Ben Okri. Direct and most appropriate use is, in *"The Landscapes Within"* and its sequel published fifteen years later *"Dangerous Love"*. This novel, in which the plot is developed as *Kunstler roman* but with African background, tells us the story of hardships of a painter Omovo and his doomed love affair with a pretty young married woman Ifeyiwa. Ben Okri has amply used the stream of consciousness to explore the mental state of his protagonist. Omovo, who keeping his artistic talent at bay, joins a painting company as a clerk, does not succumb to official pressure to accept bribe and leaves the job, slowly matures as an artist. Uncompromising as an artist, he tries to create order in disorderly society joining the pieces of fragmented world. This creativity has helped him to attain objectivity in his painting which exhibits and expresses poor social conditions, further banned by the authorities. Through Omovo, Ben Okri seems to highlight the role and importance of a writer's upbringing in society. Undeniable feature of this novel is reinterpretation of a *Kunstler roman* novel with African elements in background, giving it a political twist in collaboration with postcolonial themes. Omovo truly seems to be a representative of Okri as writer in his approach and objectivity.

Writers often find the artistic utility of language to make their writings look more authentic and acceptable. Like many of his contemporaries, Ben Okri has also used

English as his medium of expression; in majority of his works. References of regional dialects of Nigerian English can be seen in some of his novels, first novel and short stories mainly. With this, like other writers, he has shown the usage of language to make writings more credible and presentable, not merely as a tool of expression in written or oral forms. In return, it benefits language also as it reaches the masses and wider audience. The notable fact depicted here is that acceptance of the works of any writer leads to acceptance of language and such techniques globally. A writer uses language to establish his identity and reach wider audience, in other words writer gets benefited and vice versa. In wider context, many writers including Ben Okri have experimented with the form of prose fiction, they have moved from the set standards of fiction to give fiction a unique, personalised appearance so that their works gain wider and global receptions. They create distinction by producing prose poems and novellas. Ben Okri has also accepted this technique with the publication of his variety of works.

Shift in writing marks the shift in approach and attitude of writers to perceive, view, understand and analyse the facts in various different ways. In case of Ben Okri, greater shift in dealing with the themes and presentation can be viewed with his shift from novels to short stories. This transformation in approach which is not overnight and is evident as there is a huge difference in the long forms of writing which Ben Okri has written after the publication of his collections of short stories "*Incidents at the Shrine*" and "*Stars of the New Curfew*".

The most significant feature of Ben Okri's works is evident in his most acclaimed novel "*The Famished Road*". This novel shows the combination of Oral African traditions, modernism and realism techniques along with stream of consciousness. It is regarded as the epitome of magic realism. While talking about his work, Okri doesn't want a distinction between magic and realism or reality. He doesn't want the magic world to be taken next to real world, he opines as magic to be an integral part of real and materialistic world without which this world should be non-existent. In broader view, Ben Okri has talked about the issues pertaining to the colonialism which are widely covered by other African writers. This fact is established owing to his

Africa/Nigerian background, and writing about the issues of African/Nigerian society. But his recurring usage of imagery, stream of consciousness, surreal dreams, blend of realistic modernism, mythological usage of African traditional practices and ample African oral narratives, usage of art, his own idea of vision and revision collaborated with his personal experiences makes his writings unique and globally accepted. Ben Okri has written about the incidents which he himself has experienced either as a child, either in England or in Nigeria. He has lived cold war, he has lived corruption, he has lived poverty, he has lived discrimination and exploitation, he has lived the spirits, he has lived the tensions and threats, and he has lived colonization and Nigeria. All these personal experiences give him an extra edge over other writers and make his work more credible, creative and authentic.

Critical Appreciation and Accolades

Ben Okri has been one of the most reputed and internationally acclaimed writers of his age and his remarkable contribution in highlighting and bringing Nigerian and African Literature to the fore, is recognized both by European and African critics. Chinua Achebe, one of the greatest African writers, in a dialogue with Alastair Niven, mentioned the name of Ben Okri, saying that future of Nigerian Literature has been passed from his generation to the young generation that of Ben Okri and other young writers. Okri's appreciation by Achebe, therefore, not only tells us of his extraordinary expertise and talent but also of emergence of many budding artists, who are taking the writing and African literature to new heights. With their extraordinary understanding and uniqueness, writers like Ben Okri are setting examples and paving an ideal way, beckoning many others to follow breaking the barriers of race.

Ben Okri's works considered postcolonial broadly, have been critically appreciated worldwide, due to the distinction of their own kind. Ben Okri has been awarded honorary doctorates by a slew of universities namely University of Westminster London, England, University of Essex, England, University of Exeter Devon, South

west England, University of Belgium, School of Oriental and African Studies London, England, and University of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, England.

Apart from honorary doctorates, Ben Okri has held several positions of repute and won many prizes for his contribution to literature, many publishing houses acknowledged his works. His books have been short listed, translated and published in many languages. Below given is the detail of the prizes he won till date.

Commonwealth writers Prize - Established in 1987 and discontinued in 2011, this prize was given every year for best book and best first book. Ben Okri won this prize in 1987 for his book *“Incidents at the Shrine”*.

Aga Khan Prize for Fiction - This prize is given by the editors of the magazine The Paris Review to the writer of the best short story published in the magazine. Ben Okri’s story *“Stars at the New Curfew”* was shortlisted for this prize.

Man Booker Prize - This prize is given every year to the writer of the best fiction written in English language and published in United Kingdom. Ben Okri won this prize in 1999 for his novel *“The Famished Road”*.

Grinzane Cavour Prize - Founded in Italy in 1982, this award is given for the promotion. Ben Okri won this prize in 1994 in the category of Best Foreign Fiction for his novel *“The Famished Road”*.

Order of the British Empire - Ben Okri was entitled for Order of the British Empire knighthood in 2014 for his contribution in Public Welfare Service at charitable work.

Bad Sex in the Fiction Award - This award is given by Literary Review an English Literary Magazine established in 1979 for extraordinary fiction. Ben Okri won this Prize in 2014 for his *“The Age of Magic”* novel.

Analytical Outcome

First chapter of the thesis is hereby concluded with the elaborate discussion on the origin, development and application of identity, gender and performativity theories and their founders respectively, followed with the wide exploration of Ben Okri's works. Okri's works contain versatility in themes and uniqueness in artistic styles, it is elaborated how his works with a deep insight and creative uniqueness, have been a beacon for many other Nigerians to follow him. Researcher will read, review, analyse and interpret the selected works of Ben Okri, through the lens of identity, gender and performativity, in the following sections of the thesis.

Chapter II - Identity Crises: A Struggle for Existence

Identity

Identity of a person is his recognition, his image, qualities, looks, expression, beliefs and personality, attributed to his associations with several different people at different levels in a social system. He acquires this identity at times before he is born and sometimes with his association with different groups, after his birth. It can be said that a person is a part in the chain of identity which is imposed on him since his birth; he merely modifies, improvises and supplements the identity, after he is born. A person, due to his association with a particular family and community in which he takes birth, is accompanied with the identity of that family and community.

A person's gender (male, female, neuter) helps him gain that very gender identity. A family of goldsmiths gives a person identity of a goldsmith. A community of teachers makes a person teacher as soon as he joins teaching profession. A child after taking admission in a school is regarded and addressed as a student. Thus, association of a person with a particular group gives him group's unique identity. Choice and usage of even food and language by a person contribute a lot in formation of his identity in a social structure. Area, culture and ethnicity of a person too, matter a lot in the determination of his identity. Political interest and choices of a person establish him to be a member of a specific political party. Being a citizen of a particular country gives him national identity.

Not only at a broad level, identity of a person is marked with his behavioural patterns and beliefs at micro level like a family or a group. A person has, at a personal level his personal or individual identity or self-concept, which is attributed to his beliefs, interests and choices at a personal level. Other than the personal identity which a person has at a personal level, a person has group identity which he attains being part and a members of various groups. A person's personal beliefs and interests contribute a lot at his group level dealings which further has a deep impact on his various group identities which overlap at different levels. Not only his individual identity, a person's group association and identity too, contribute significantly and has a deep impact on

his personal life and identity, so it can be said that a person's self-concept or self-identity and group identity in a social structure, modify, supplement and complement each other and has deep impact over one another.

The identity which is in focus for the studies and analysis of selected works of Ben Okri is the social identity. Social identity of a person is determined and is attributed to his association with various groups in societal structure. Various parameters which are discussed earlier also, are a person's family community, sports and other interests, language, religion, food, political affiliation, profession, nationality etc.

Social Identity Theory: Human Groups and Social Categories

Henri Tajfel fundamentally explored and worked on social identity theory due to two reasons. One of two reasons was personal, which is discussed earlier. Another prominent reason for the development of thought was the inappropriate and insufficient progress done on the topic and theory in the previous years. Progress done in the previous years was inappropriate as the social psychologists had ignored the social element in the theory. The work was done keeping in mind the individual values and scenarios, the situation or the social context part was ignored, which should have been in focus as a theory cannot be considered a social theory if the social context which is shared by the people is not highlighted. The work done was insufficient as very few psychologists were interested in complicated subject and the experts could not contact one another in due course of time to discuss the progress and outcome of progress from time to time. It all started with the participation of Tajfel in an essay writing competition on the topic of prejudice, which established his name as an expert in this specific field. Winning a scholarship in this competition led him to appear in many interviews as an expert. He was invited at many shows for guest lectures. It was at this time Tajfel found himself too, getting engrossed and becoming very much interested in the subject. Talking about personal approach towards his profession, Tajfel did not deny the influence of his personal background on his work. Instead, he was; in his conviction, of the opinion that his exposure, experience, contribution, analysis and observation in WWII camps had great impact on his

intellect, like many other social psychologists, that had created his interest in the subject.

The defining moment in the development of thought came when Tajfel was invited to attend a conference in Jerusalem to discuss the methods of recent and historical research of Holocaust. Later, in Bad Homburg he was taking part in a different conference namely 'Human Ethology: the claims and limits of a new discipline'. As per Henri Tajfel, "When I started preparing my contribution to the symposium, I had no idea that the Jerusalem experience would find its way, without any planned intention, into the conclusion of a text concerned, on the face of it, with a completely unrelated theme. The prise-de-conscience came later, when I was invited to contribute a chapter to a Festschrift for Jerome Bruner (Tajfel 1980)". These incidents show the development of thought or the unifying thread at the intellectual level of Tajfel, which got manifested in front of him, unintentionally many times. The work on the thought almost got initiated by chance, when two colleagues of Tajfel, John Lanzetta who was in London and John Thibaut who was working in Paris visited Europe which further led to creation of a committee. The other members of committee were Mauk Mulder, who was a professor at university of Utrecht and Robert Pages who was from Sorbonne. The members of committee, after their first meeting at the right time and right place, held a first ever meeting of social psychologists in Europe in 1963. The first task, the committee discussed, decided and worked on subsequently, was the recognition and listing of social psychologists in Europe. This task further helped Tajfel to follow the course in the development of discipline. After the formation of committee, members literally wanted to check the validity of thought and the acceptance of thought subsequently. The proceeding and developments of initial years were presented and published in 1972 in Louvain conference (Tajfel 1972).

"Human Groups and Social Categories", book written and published by Henri Tajfel in 1981 is a collection of essays written on the discipline of social identity in the previous years. The essays and articles not necessarily but as per the need, are presented chronologically so that the readers can develop deep understanding of the thought. The book is written mainly to achieve three aims. The first one, which was

discussed earlier, is to find out the reasons of Holocaust and other similar incidents in which man has become destructive to man, followed by the works done in this discipline after such incidents and how much valid and effective these works are.

Though writer reiterates the impact of one's personal background on one's professional life, he considers the work done to reduce the pain and suffering of sufferers of war, is much greater than the work done in academics. Second aim is to draw together the stranded links of the progress done in the past and how much relevant this progress has been in recent times, the third aim is to draw a comparison between the work done in the past and recent work so as to learn and gain maximum from past's experiences and bring improvement and perfection in the recent research.

As far as the presentation and sequence of content in book, is concerned, the brief description is given. The writer has divided the book broadly in four parts, which are further sub divided into fifteen subparts as chapters. The book begins with foreword given by Jerome S. Bruner who was in close association of Henri Tajfel for around 25 years and who was his friend other than an academic support and assistance. It accompanies the development of perspective based on personal and social dimension, First part includes experiments done in the past, and how individuals and inter individuals react and function in social psychology and various social processes.

Second part of the book throws light on perceptual judgements and its shift to social stereotypes. This shows how exaggeration works. How prejudice works cognitively among human beings, how humans perceive each other when they are prejudiced and what actually are the processes of prejudice. These points are discussed that includes the processes of categorization and assimilation and search for coherence. Definition of man is given and how man adapts to the environment, is shown. Man: a rational model and a blood and gut model, distinction is given. A general definition of ideology is given and how it is used by mankind to suit its best fit interests. What kind of people are genotypes and phenotypes and how they work in different given situations, is explained. One of major points discussed is the study of human behaviour at biological level, psychological levels, sociological level and psycho-sociological level.

The situations that enable a man to be a social animal and the behaviour that a man displays as a social animal are well elaborated in the book. The concept of social identity, an action and the notion of appropriateness are expressed separately. Like ideology, how appropriateness is used positively by mankind, is highlighted. Equity theory is explained widely; how theory is applied by human beings and they tend to go against established value systems following this theory, is explained. Stereotypes play an important role in a social system. How a stereotype becomes a social stereotype, four functions of stereotypes, the most significant cognitive functions of stereotypes and, the roles individual values play in a social system, the links between social causality and justification and differentia are other main points elaborated in seventh chapter in second part. The idea of insiders and outsiders is discussed in third part of the book. An experiment was conducted through a competition, on the topic of 'Experience of Prejudice'.

The experiment was meant for the foreign students only to know their views about prejudice. Participants were asked to disclose their perceptions and prior experiences before their arrival in Britain; they were supposed to express their experiences in Britain. What image of Britain they were carrying and what changes occurred in their attitude, with their passage of time in Britain. The idea of Ethnocentrism was discussed, how children devalued their own ethnicity and nationality at earlier stage and how it shifted at later stage, all points are covered. Three components of group i.e cognitive, evaluative and emotional are covered and explained. How human beings shift their approaches from inter-personal to inter-group in a continuum is elaborated. Distinction between social mobility to social movement is made. The processes of social categorizations, social identity and social comparison are made clear to the readers. How our society is divided into groups since its inception and how there is no society existing with categorization, is explained well.

Difference between secure and insecure identities is detailed. How people can move from one group to another group individually or in groups, using exit or mobility and how they can voice their concerns and change the scenario or situations to avoid the deteriorating functionality in group. How individual exit, group exit and group chorus

take place is all explained. How certain people use voice and retain status quo and compare socially themselves with others is explained. Last part of chapter throws light on how people move from social stability to social change, how they move from acceptance to rejection, various patterns of acceptance of their own values and rejection of others' ideas, is all explained in detail.

Social Categorization

Human beings, since the inception of mankind, have developed themselves in a unique way, due to which they are perceived as the wisest of all kinds of animals in the whole universe. Among all kinds of developments, the development of the intellect is the most significant and the greatest. This development of intellect has given them an edge over millions of species of animals. Due to this development of their intellect, human beings are in a better position to observe, understand and analyse the facts properly. They are able to analyse what is good and what is not good for them, as they can perceive the things perfectly. This power of perception, to view, observe and analyse facts, is due to this ability to distinguish the things. This power of distinction is the greatest achievement of humans, which they have got due to their development of intellect. With this ability of observation and analysis, they are able to distinguish almost everything in their surroundings. They are able to categorize things and people in their society. Though, other types of animals like birds and other species too, have this ability to make distinction but human beings have evolved themselves in a far better way. Human beings make distinction in almost everything in their surroundings. As per intellect they group houses, fruits, vegetables, cities, countries, religions, languages, and people in the family, in society, in their own community. This ability helps them to gain control over others. They feel deeply associated with some while dislike others on the basis of this power of distinction. This ability only, helps them to make friends as per their interests, nature, approach and education which they receive from time to time. This categorization helps them to view and perceive things in a clear way. With this distinction only, they are able to move positively in certain directions, while leaving remaining for others to follow.

Flowers and Shadows

This element of categorization is very much evident in all novels of Ben Okri. The first novel, "*Flowers and Shadows*" which Ben Okri has written when he was merely 21, throws light on the themes of poverty, corruption and suffering. The novel is set in Nigeria, which is the place of the writer himself. The central theme of the novel is depicted with the help of one sentence, which Jonan Okwe's father says to him at the time of his death. Jonan Okwe's father who was consumed by a mysterious plague could not save himself, gave a life learning lesson to his son Jonan with one sentence, 'My son, poverty is a curse'. This single sentence of his father had a deep impact of on Jonan, who throughout his life worked very hard, ran pillar to post, never left any stone unturned to earn money and become rich. With his hard work he was able to set-up a paint factory in Nigeria 'Afioso Paints'. For him earning money was the single and the most significant motto of his life.

He made a big fortune for himself and his family with his untiring efforts. In order to run his business smoothly he trapped his half-brother Sowho also, who was his partner in the factory. To remain at the position of CEO of his company, he tried to control Gbenga who was fed up with Jonan's completely selfish approach. Gbenga resigned from his post in the factory and was about to set-up his own shortly, which is not seen happily by Jonan. Jonan knew that Gbenga was his right hand and was instrumental to set up and bring his factory right back on track. Gbenga knew very much about the malpractices of Jonan, that's why Gbenga's decision to resign did not please Jonan. Things started taking a turn for worse, when Gbenga, in an accident planned by Jonan to teach him a lesson, died, in which his son Jeffia also got involved co-incidentally:

Categorisation in the novel happens to be between Jeffia Okwe and his father Jonan Okwe. Two groups described as us vs. them, are of son and father. It all started and took place when Jonan was too busy to pay attention to his family. Though, Jonan in his single minded approach to earn money, was able to give comforts to his wife and his son, but could not compensate to fill the void which was created by his absence. In this categorisation, it was Jeffia's mother, who was an academician, always favoured her son. She was right enough to hold Jonan responsible for ruining their family life

by not paying enough attention to his son and family. She was devastated to find Jonan's engagement in his business, due to which, not only to his family, he was not able to pay attention to his health also.

“She watched him. He had removed his shoes and began padding about in his socks. His stomach was like a pillow under his shirt. His trousers, without his shoes, looked baggy. He looked shorter than he actually was (p-41).”

Jonan's half-brother Sowho was against him as he was falsely trapped by Jonan and was put into prison. Jonan, though completing all wishes of his family by giving them luxuries of life; could not justify his role in his family. Jeffia, who was a simpleton in his approach, wanted to become a teacher. He had great influence of his mother because she also was a teacher. Soft, simple and delicate approach of Jeffia could not please his father Jonan, who wanted his son to be tough in his life. He did not like his son in the company of Cynthia, who was Jonan's another worker's daughter whose life also was ruined by Jonan. Jeffia was very much aware of his father's malpractices in the paint factory. He was always shocked to see people's reaction whenever he used to tell them his surname with his main name. Later on, when he grew up enough, he understood the reason of this. He did not like the way people used to react knowing him son of Jonan Okwe. Jeffia's sensitivity helped him win the heart of Cynthia who was tender at heart but a resolute in her approach and actions. She looked after her father, after the death of her mother. She was firm to face difficulties in her life. She could not refrain from helping Gbenga, who was stabbed by Jonan's men at night.

Irrespective of the other person being her friend or not, she helps everyone. She did not let her being a girl, come into her way, when her mother died and her father's job was gone because of ruthlessness of Mr Jonan Okwe. It was not a child's play for her to manage a family in which mother has died and father, after losing his job, has become a drunkard. Against the carelessness and selfishness of Mr Jonan Okwe, she, irrespective of the fact that she is poor, looks after her father who drinks excessively, and works in a hospital even at night to earn money to meet the needs of the family.

She falls in love with Jeffia, who is equally delicate and sensitive towards other people in life.

“But why do you have to sound so much like my mother? I asked. Without waiting for a reply, I went to bath. By the time I came out, feeling much fresher and lightened in mind, she had completely cleared up the room (p-186).”

She does not stop loving him even after knowing the fact that he is Jonan Okwe's son, the person who is responsible for the suffering in her life. She even proved an emotional support to Jeffia when Jonan Okwe died and his mother met with an accident at home. Another person, who was against Jonan was, his half-brother Sowho. Sowho was once a right hand and a partner in Jonan's paint factory. He was trapped and deceived by Jonan. He was falsely alleged and imprisoned by Jonan for embezzlement in factory. With the interference of some relatives, Jonan took back his charges and Sowho was freed on condition of leaving city forever. He later returned when things started moving downhill for Jonan. His return troubled Jonan out of his life and became the reason of his death. Sowho wanted revenge, he wanted to destroy Jonan. He did not have grudge against Jonan's wife and his son Jeffia, as he met with them lovingly. Sowho hated Jonan, and his reason to turn against him was Jonan's attitude towards his best employees, and Sowho was one of them.

Jonan, who was the reason of almost everybody's suffering in the novel, was the sole member in us vs. them category. The reason of Jonan's inclination for earning money, (which subsequently resulted in everyone's grief), were the last words of Jonan's father to him, 'My son, poverty is a curse'. These words shaped Jonan's approach towards life and family. He had seen his father dying of a mysterious disease at the time when rich people of the village fled the place. He knew, had he enough money, he too, would have gone from there and saved his father. This experience and learning had an unforgettable impact on his life. He made sure he would give all comforts to his family. In order to earn money he worked hard and established paint factory. To keep the reigns of factory in hands, indirectly to keep the earning of factory in hands, he got rid of everyone who could obstruct his way, irrespective of the contribution they had made in establishment of factory.

“Jonan had been as adamant as the union. He refused to budge. It reached such a state that communications almost broke down between them. The management soon persuaded Jonan to call off the negotiations for the time being while they worked out their side of the offer (P-148).”

To let factory go into others' hands meant to let money go. How he could let money or factory go into others' hands, which was the single motto of his life? Jonan, as per his nature and policies treated everybody, ignorant of the impact it had on others, which created a void between him alone and all others, including his family members. His approach only, led the family and society into two categories and groups as us vs. them. This situation of us vs. them occurred because of two types of people in the family and society. This divide of us vs. them in the novel also is created because people are of opposite natures in the novel. At one side Jeffia, his mother, Sowho, Cynthia and others are there while in the other group only Jonan is there.

Dangerous Love

The next novel which is selected for study and analysis is '*Dangerous Love*'. This novel, published in 1996, is an updated version of Ben Okri's second novel '*The Landscapes Within*' published in 1981. This novel too, presents the people divided into two categories, us vs. them. Unlike first novel, this novel contains categories or the groups as us vs. them at various levels. In one instance, Omovo, who is the central character of the novel, is addressed as an outsider as he got a strange hair cut from an inexperienced apprentice of a barber in Lagos, in city Nigeria. His strangely shaven head gives him a haunted look due to which all people who watch him address him as an outsider. People addressing him as an outsider, irritates Omovo very much for which he responds that he is not an outsider, this first instance categorize the protagonist as an outsider and others as local natives. In another scenario, which is prominent in the novel, is the division of people into sufferers vs. oppressors, and dominated vs. dominating. In the category of people who are dominated and sufferers are Omovo himself, his mother who succumbed and died of her husband's beatings and Ifeyiwa, who is beautiful, young neighbour and beloved of Omovo. On the other side, it is Omovo's father who is poor and drunkard. He has beaten his wife (Omovo's

mother) to death, lives with another lady Blackie, who is Omovo's step mother. Blackie is living with Omovo's father but loves to spend her time with others. Another person in the category is, Ifeyiwa's husband Takpo. Takpo is a middle aged man who has married young Ifeyiwa. He was a drunkard, tried to win heart of Ifeyiwa but could not, and this angered him and made him very brutal in his dealings with her.

All people in both categories are poor as the theme of poverty put everyone in single boat. Omovo basically is an artist, who feels the absence of his mother who is maltreated to death by his father. His father is not violent with Omovo, but does not support him in education and leaves him to fend for himself. Omovo struggles very much to get formal education but could not succeed. He painted a picture and depicted the scum in their locality. This picture is immediately banned by the authorities as they find it presenting a poor picture of the system. Omovo, after trying a hand in painting which resulted in failure, finds a job of a clerk in a paint company. There too, he faced a lot of problems as nobody treats him properly. Everybody tries to exploit him by giving him work in excess. He was not friend with anybody. Everybody hates him and wants to get rid of him in factory. The reason for this kind of behaviour is honesty of Omovo. Omovo is extremely honest and doesn't entertain any one, whoever tries to win and bribe him.

“This is an efficient team. You are the odd one out. Always loitering. Consider this your fourth and final warning. Omovo stared at him. For the first time he noticed the leer that lurked on the Manager's mouth. The manager obviously disturbed by Omovo's cool reception of the warning, strode back into his office (P-246).”

Everybody disliked him because he was becoming a problem in the whole system. Due to his honest and unaccommodating attitude, everybody targeted and forced him to leave his job. Unemployment in the area was too much but Omovo did not care and fought against bribery. Manager's nephew was appointed at his place. He was worldly wise enough to understand the ways of practical modern world. Omovo's mother did not find much reference in the novel. She, like other mothers, loved her son very much, was a victim of home violence and died due to her husband's excessive

beatings. She wanted her son to grow rich and live a meaningful life. Omovo, seeing the bad behaviour of his step mother Blackie, misses his mother very much.

Ifeyiwa is another member in this category. She was born and brought up in a poor family. She was a wonderful student and had a great understanding of life. Since her childhood, she wanted to study a lot but poverty became an obstacle in her way. After the death of her father, her mother wanted her to be married. She took her as a burden as she did not have enough financial resources. With her relatives' regular insistence, her mother agreed to marry her to Takpo, who was wealthy enough to take care of her and feed her. Ifeyiwa, because of her poverty, had to succumb to the pressure of mother and relatives. She found solace in laying her eyes on Omovo, who was not so handsome but a sensitive boy who sympathised with her. She became victims of Takpo's violence, who wanted to win over her and dominate her. She felt downtrodden and alienated in the company of Takpo, who usually beat her. She was tender at heart, wanted to be in the company of Omovo. She held meetings with him secretly.

“Omovo stopped and turned to her. She looked childlike in the half-darkness. He noticed, for the first time that she was wearing eye-shadow and mascara and that she had on the gentlest trace of lipstick. She moved on, beyond the lights, and he followed (169).”

Though not much open, she loved him very much. The people in the other category are Omovo's father, who was unemployed and a drunkard. Due to his excessive drinking, he was in habit of hitting his wife, who subsequently died. Not openly, but he loved his son Omovo. He got married to Blackie, with a hope to get a better company in his old age. Blackie was young, she married him as she wanted a shelter and somebody to look after her and fulfil her needs. She started looking for someone else for sexual pleasures when she found Omovo's father's inability to satisfy her. Secretly, she used to meet others whenever her husband was not around, and was cheating on him in that way. She always avoided encounters with young Omovo, who never felt comfortable to talk to her.

Later, when her secrets were revealed to her husband, she regretted a lot. She had consumed all wealth of her husband and could not prove of any use to him in return. The third main person in this category was Takpo. Takpo was a drunkard, not too much but he had enough wealth to have many friends in the locality. Though he was middle aged but rich enough to get married again. With the help of acquaintances and relatives, he got married to Ifeyiwa. Though he was kind enough to her, but in his drinking he used to beat her whenever she resisted his closeness and touch at nights. He did not want to get into her forcibly. He even tried to change himself for her, but could not win her heart. This irritated him a lot, he only had married her to have a better company and a life full of love, but could not succeed in that.

“Takpo got carried away, and then he shouted, stood up and pushed Ifeyiwa. She went crashing at the door. Tuwo rushed to help her. Ifeyiwa got up and picked up the fallen objects. The two plates had broken into bits. Bones had scattered everywhere. She did all this methodically and patiently (122).”

This attitude of Ifeyiwa made him suspicious of her, he doubted her of her association with somebody else which proved right when the name of Omovo emerged and associated with her. He became more watchful of her and tried to catch them red-handed. In these two categories in this novel, we can see family members are divided due to their natures and wrong habits. Due to their habits they have created a void in each other's lives. They are not thinking to supplement each other's lives but to take advantage of others. Their character, natures and ways to perceive the world divided them into two groups, two categories us vs. them. As conveyed earlier, element of poverty made everyone sail in the same boat. Under poverty and filthy living condition, everyone seems to be in same category. But other than poverty it is their different natures and qualities which divided them into two categories.

The Famished Road

The Third novel which is selected for analysis is the most famous novel of Ben Okri, which was published in 1991 and for which Okri had won Man Booker Prize in literature. “*The Famished Road*” is a story of a boy who is an Abiku child. An Abiku

is a child who dies a few days after he takes birth. He takes birth to the same parents and dies because his fellow spirits keep calling him. This child is called a spirit child also because of his association with the spirits. In this case; this spirit child Azaro is time and again harassed by his sibling spirits as they keep calling back him. The story is all about defiance of Azaro of his spirit friends, and his determination to be with his parents who have longed for him for a long time. Categorization and division of people in various groups, in this novel also, happens at many levels but the actual categorization throughout the novel remains between Azaro who is alone, and his sibling spirits who are there on the other side. Since the birth of Azaro, which he took against the wishes of his sibling spirits and for the sake of pain, suffering and longing of his mother for him, he is harassed by spirits. This continuous harassment by the spirits forced him to leave the world and be with them momentarily many times. This is the sacrifices of his mother and father who want him to return to them. Once he was in a coffin, when his parents took him to be dead after waiting for him to revive for a long-2 time. Well, reality in this case was that Azaro was not dead or dead momentarily, while he was there with his fellow spirits trying to persuade them not to disturb him and let him stay with his parents. But his sibling spirits somehow were not going to relent and let him go.

In another scenario to escape spirits, Azaro fled his home and by mistake took shelter in the family of police officer. There, police man's son had died. So they also, out of strange affection, took care of him, and were not ready to let him go. So this confusion and fight between Azaro and his sibling spirits divided them in two groups, two categories between us vs. them. Division and categorization at the next level was between Azaro, his family, Madam Koto and the society and spirits. Azaro though, was very much loved by his parents, but his father used to get angry with him quite often as he was a nagging presence in the family. No doubt, they had longed for him and suffered for him very much, but to keep him alive in this life with them was becoming very expensive. They had to perform many religious ceremonies and rituals to fight spirits and to keep him alive with them, not just once but many times. They were not earning much, to earn money father used to carry loads and to support family, Azaro's mother used to hawk provisions in the streets of the Lagos. But their

child was making them spend their meagre income, which troubled his father a lot. They had to spend endless nights with empty stomachs. Another person who was there with them in their category was Madam Koto.

Madam Koto was a bar owner. To solve the issue of Azaro's handling and to support the family financially, Madam Koto offered the job of waiter to Azaro at her bar. Actually Madam Koto had somehow seen and realized the magical powers of Azaro and she believed his mere presence in the bar would bring her good luck in the form of customers. Madam Koto knew how poor they were. At Madam Koto's offer, Azaro's parents were more than happy to send him to her in the bar. People in the neighbourhood of Azaro, their landlord and other people in the society did not like Azaro and his family members. They wanted them to evacuate the house because they were also going to face some problems while being in their proximity. Landlord wanted them to leave his place and go which eventually they couldn't do.

Madam Koto's support to the family proved to be emotionally important other than the finances. Her involvement made everybody shut their mouths. No one could speak against the family openly, when they saw, Madam Koto's association with them. But the other way round it was Azaro, who was supposed to pay for this and he paid too. So in this way, we have seen the division and gulf between the neighbourhood and society people at one side and Azaro, his family, Madam Koto favouring them, on the other side. All these people are divided in two groups, between two categories between us vs. them, because of Azaro being a spirit child. Azaro being an Abiku, not only himself but put many others almost all, whoever comes into his contact in trouble. Be it his parents, people in the neighbourhood, Madam Koto or anybody else. Categorization, gap and division in the society happens in the society at a wider level. To great extent Azaro contributes in this divide.

This categorization and division, is between the rich and poor people. On one side it's the rich people who are exploiting the poor people on the other side it is the poor who are fighting against the atrocities of the rich and more powerful. The situation becomes worse when it is the time of election in the area, Politicians belonging to the party of the rich and party at the poor are regularly coming and giving enticing offers

to the common people. This division in the society has been there since ages and is universal. Struggle and fight between the rich and the poor has been from the very beginning. In *'The Famished Road'* this gap is widened with political activity. Political activists of opposite parties are coming to woo poor souls. All are coming and making false promises to the poor people. Poor people are also very much aware of hollow promises, which are never kept.

Things took a turn for the worse. People of party of the rich distributed spoiled and poisoned milk to the poor people to tempt them to vote, which made people sick at the stomach. In avenger poor people looted and destroyed their vans, which angered the rich and their thugs beat the poor people. Madam Koto, in order to increase her clientele in her bar decided to support the party of the rich. She made Azaro sit and serve in her bar, she was of the opinion that Azaro's presence in the bar, was increasing her customers mysteriously. Azaro soon realized that it was not the customers but spirits which were coming in various forms to the bar as customers. Now Azaro had understood why there was an increase in customers because of his presence.

Another great turn took place when Azaro's father who actually used to carry loads decided to leave his work and launch his own political party against rich and become a boxer. In this case also, he announced himself to be a pugilist and gave him a name of Black Tyger. Because of Azaro only, he had to fight a boxer whose name was Green Leopard. Green Leopard was actually a spirit who had come there when was attracted with the presence of Azaro. Another spirit which Azaro's father fought was Yellow Jaguar. He had to face these spirits because of Azaro. Incidents related to the area, like political disturbance were being highlighted by Jeremiah who was a local newspaper reporter. He also took shelter in the home of Azaro, when he was attacked by the people of the rich party. He became friends with Azaro. So in this whole novel, though categorization happens at various levels, but Azaro's mysterious powers and his being Abiku contributes a lot at all levels. His sibling spirits which started calling him since his birth, kept disturbing him throughout, in one way or the other. So we

can say Azaro contributes a lot in all levels of categorizations, and at all levels it is Azaro vs. his sibling spirits.

The Freedom Artist

The last and the latest novel is “*The Freedom Artist*” published in 2019. “*The Freedom Artist*” is a story of a boy Karnak and his search for his beloved Amalantis. Karnak, who is the protagonist in the novel searches for his beloved, who is taken, arrested by the authorities in front of him. Initially he was not intense and curious in his search but later he became restless not to find his beloved. He takes the happenings around him very casually, keeping quiet like everybody in the society. He doesn't speak openly of the things and words which they are not allowed to speak like others. He does not attempt to understand the things which his beloved has understood. He even does not react much when his beloved is arrested and taken away from him in front of his eyes. He takes this incident for granted; it seems that he has witnessed such things often. Disappearance of his beloved Amalantis coincides with the banishments of many others in the areas. More than fright and fear, her going away from him, has puzzled him. He starts becoming restless when she does not return after end no. of days. Here is the time, when after experiencing some odd incidents like, people disappearing, flying and pasting of bills with words like Books, upwake on the walls and trees and parks, Karnak realised that society and the world is divided into two categories. One category of the people are the ones who somehow know and speak of the true values, true myths and original books. They are keepers of those old values and systems. They time and again keep sending and spreading secret messages to other people who should join them one day.

“Nobody knew where the question-askers came from. The most advanced forms of surveillance had failed to reveal them spraying their questions everywhere. It seemed incredible to the authorities that no one knew anything about the question-askers (P-40).”

On the other side, in second category, there are people who are hushed by the authorities and system who are not allowed to speak if they wish to avoid the

oppression of police and the system. It is the job of the system and police not to let them reach and get mixed with the people who are protestors, rebels and an obstacle for the system in its functioning. But the no. of rebels is swelling as they are somehow succeeding to spread their message to other people. Main people in this category are Mirababa who is being trained by his grandfather, Karnak's beloved Amalantis who has understood the functioning of the system, Ruslana and her father who has a great knowledge of old and original myths, books and values.

In the other category, it is Karnak and the common people in the society, who are said to be asleep while they are awake. In the rebels' category, people are called rebels because they are not taking the system as it is. Very secretly and peacefully they are spreading their message among common people. They are being caught, arrested and imprisoned by the authorities and police. They are peaceful in their actions and in their submissions too. They are throwing and pasting bills with the words like 'Upwake, Books' written on them, and are being nabbed by the police. Their imprisonment by police does not discourage them and they keep on sending messages. That's why they are called rebels or protestors. In the second category people are frightened, dominated and submissive by nature. They have become so habitual of such happenings that it does not bother them anymore. They notice and ignore the incidents happening around them.

They have knowingly become ignorant as they want to avoid being noticed by authorities and don't want to be punished by them. They have become submissive, they walk like machines, and don't respond to any body's queries, and they speak like they are asleep while they are awake. They walk like they are in dreams and are being controlled like machines. They are facing psychological problems by remaining so silent, quiet and unresponsive due to fear of police. They want to live their lives safely under the umbrella of the authorities, but they are paying for being quiet. They are facing the emotional outbursts when they are asleep and are in dreams; they start shouting in their dreams early in the morning or some other time.

“Sometimes in the middle of the day, someone would break down and begin screaming. It could be on a busy street or in a crowded market. A man in his car with his wife and children had burst into tears while he was driving (P-131).”

Karnak who is the representative of this category does not understand the happenings around him and keeps quiet as he fears the system. He searches for his girlfriend and soon realises that she is in the prison. He keeps on looking for the prison and asks the people in his search about the prison. When he does not find the prison then he realises that everybody is keeping quiet and is imprisoned in their bodies. The prison which is maintained and kept by the authorities is nowhere to be found. The actual prison is his body itself. A person is a prisoner in his own body, in which he is not allowed to think and act freely. People, since the time they are born, are imprisoned in their bodies. They are made the slaves of the system. But Karnak, after several futile searches, realised how people are made slaves. He kept on looking for the clues and finally became successful in his search. Thus we can see how some people when they refused to succumb to pressure of authorities are labelled as rebels and are tagged in one category.

And people, who are dominated and are fearful of authority, are considered to be in the other category. Based on the qualities of people, they are put in two different groups and different categories as us vs. them. So we have analysed four novels of Ben Okri and we have seen how categorization, which is an integral part of social identity theory, is done. It becomes evident at this point that if there is no group or no category then there is no society and social system. These categories and the process of categorization is significant to view and analyse things separately. This quality of segregation helps us to see things more clearly. This element of categorization is present in all novels of Ben Okri.

Based on the character traits and natures, people are segregated and divided into different categories, whether it was Okri's first novel *'Flowers and shadows'*, his Booker Prize winning novel *'The Famished Road'* or his latest novel *'The Freedom Artist'*, categorization and processes of categorization are found in all of them, which

has made writer and readers to view and perceive the happenings and facts in novels in a better way.

In the theory of Henri Tajfel 'social identity theory' the first component is categorization which takes place cognitively. We cognitively think and perceive things which helps us to categorize them; second component of this theory is Social Identification. This Identification helps us to view and understand our role in the category and the group. We connect ourselves with the group and analyse how important is the group and category for us.

Social Identification

In a given social situation, every individual assesses himself/herself and his/her role in the group. The connection or the belongingness a person has with a group solely depends upon the satisfaction a person is getting being member of that group.

When a person is connected, associated and belonged to a certain group, he sees himself as a member of that group and tries to adopt the identity of that group. Suppose a person joins the profession of teaching and becomes a teacher, automatically he is supposed to be polite, sober and good natured to other people, which are the qualities and identities of a teacher. Being a teacher, a person has to be exemplary in behaviour and set standards which are the pre requisites of a person to be a teacher. That is why a person identifies himself with a group and feels himself a member of that group. Another example is, that a boy when becomes a student, is expected to be obedient and respectful to his teachers and elders, he has to set standards of being a good student.

A person, after becoming members of a particular group is bound to enjoy certain privileges, which he gets being a member of that group or profession. As he identifies himself with the group, he enjoys the identity of that group. A person, if becomes a judge will be respected by everyone in the society, that regard and respect is given to that person for his profession and work which he does being a judge as judges are considered to be the symbols of unbiasedness and fair justice. Well, it is not only the member who enjoys that identity, the very group demands that person to be very

careful in his dealings with the common people in outer world, lest he spoil and tarnish his own image which is ultimately the identity of the group. Spoiling his own image will lead to a grave damage to the identity of that group. So in this case it can be said that member supplements and complements the identity of the group and vice versa. Members not only enjoy the rights of a group but are responsible to maintain the identity and sanctity of the group.

In a group mechanism, members are connected and associated at three different levels. Group membership and identity must satisfy people at these different levels. These are cognitive, evaluative and emotional level. At cognitive level a person sees himself/herself as a member of a particular group. He makes the distinction and differentiates between different people and things. Based on these distinctions and differences only, he categorises the things into various groups or classes as us vs. them. Next level is evaluative level or assessment level. At this level a person assesses his connection with the group, he judges the various values which are connected and are considered qualities or identities of that group. At this level, the process of evaluation or assessment does take place. This evaluation and assessment process only, helps a person decide whether he has to connect and stay in the group or not. If a person feels a strong connection with the group, he will attach himself with the group, come what may. If not, then he will go for other available options.

The third level is the emotional level. At this level a group identity must provide an emotional support to its members. Members of a group must be emotionally satisfied so that they can do their best to save the image of the group in any given situation. Emotional connection of members with a group is viewed significantly as in case of a nation's army, in which people feel deeply attached with their country and are able to sacrifice their lives to save its recognition and uniqueness from enemies. That's why, at the third level, a group must provide an identity to its members which makes them emotionally strong and satisfied. The concept of secure and insecure identities is also viewed and analysed in case of groups and its members. Members always feel connected with a group, when it provides them with a secure identity, and they leave when it is not.

Being a member of a particular group, people are always seen as representative of that very group and tend to work and deal with others, wearing the identity or image of the very group. This process is called identity or personal identity to social identity, in which a person's self-image is kept at bay as soon as he moves and talks with the common people in the society. This process does happen with help of interpersonal to intergroup continuum. Being a member of a group, people have their self-concepts and they deal with the members of in-group at interpersonal level.

Dealing with the in-group members, people move away from their personal images and work as a team at a common platform, this common platform is provided to them or they are entitled to it, due to their membership with the group. At this level their self-images, self-concepts and personal identities are of no importance, nevertheless as per their strengths and abilities they are/can be given separate roles to be performed in the group. They may have personal differences with one another, but working as a team, they ignore these differences. Individual members can meet the members of other groups who may have similarities between them at personal level, but they can never be one as they perceive and view each other as the representatives of the other groups. So members, as per the need can move and meet others in the process of interpersonal, intergroup continuum.

Flowers and Shadows

After categorization, it is identification component which will be analysed in the selected novels of Ben Okri. The first one in this chain is the first novel of 'Flowers and shadows' in this novel, categorization is done between Jonan Okwe at one side and his son Jeffia Okwe, Jeffia's mother, Cynthia, Sowho and many others on the opposite side.

Jeffia Okwe is categorized as a gullible, who has a simple approach for life and who wants to be a teacher. His simplicity in life, gives him relief and satisfaction. He is a considerate fellow and tries to remain so, come what may. He is sensitive and loves the company of his mother. Though not much, but he has idea about his father's malpractices at his paint factory which he dislikes very much, and for which he thinks,

he has to pay one day. Jeffia was against the wishes of his father, who wants him to be clever and tough in life, he feels emotionally satisfied and attached with his mother. He is a wonderful student, who is expecting excellent grades in his results. He is in love and is very much close to Cynthia, who set an example in front of him by taking care of her father.

“He noticed that she was a bit taller than she was. She was slim. Her face under the dim street light was fresh and beautiful. He noticed further that her breasts cut a nice round shape under her white dress (P-57).”

It is his goodness only, which makes him stop his car at night, when he finds, young Cynthia trying to help a man whose name is Gbenga, who was stabbed and bleeding near a hospital. Being careful by nature he gets worried about his mother when she was unwell and fell down from stairs. The qualities of goodness are associated with young Jeffia and he is the true carrier of those qualities in his character. He is polite, respectful, careful, studious, loving towards his mother, helpful to Cynthia and others. He loves to be in company of such people who are having these qualities. He knew and he was very much aware that he had to compensate for all the sins that his father had done in the paint factory. Jeffia’s mother, who was a teacher, was another member in this category. She resembled qualities of her son or her son Jeffia was her true reflection. She favoured Jeffia whenever he craved for his father's presence. She was of the opinion that her husband’s excessive involvement and occupation in the business had destroyed their family life. They were given all comforts of life by her husband, but he was a failure when it came to be an ideal husband and ideal father. She thought Jonan had failed his wife and son.

“She had endured and adjusted. Being uncompromising never made things easier, and she had her son to think of. Besides, where had she to go? Her whole life had been built around Jonan. She had learned to live with him, and had to understand him. She couldn’t express her fear, but it was always there (P-39).”

Not too much, but she knew enough of her husband Jonan’s dealing and malpractices in his factory, due to which, he himself was in hot waters. She wanted to educate people, that’s why she took to teaching as her profession and was very much happy to

see Jeffia's inclination for the same. Cynthia was another person in this category. She was a symbol of purity and tenderness at heart and determination in the mind. Completely unaware of how her family's fortunes were ruined, how her father turned to excessive drinking, she was always positive and never showed her back to her adversaries in life. She took to the job of nursing and started working in night shifts in a hospital risking her life to be in the company of unfaithful doctors. She confronted these challenges bravely and never let her dignity dive deep down. It is her goodness when she saw some unknown people stabbing a person to death. Being pure at heart, she sympathised with Jeffia to be son of Jonan, the person who was the cause of suffering in the family which she had come to know later. Gbenga was another part in this chain who was stabbed to death by the men of Jonan, who only wanted to hurt and teach him a lesson. Gbenga had resigned from his post in the factory and wanted to set up his own, owing to Jonan's unfair handling of affairs in the factory.

Sowho, half-brother of Jonan was another victim of Jonan's ruthlessness. He had disappeared, when he was freed after the interference of his relatives who had requested Jonan to take back charges. He had come back to take revenge on Jonan. He confronted Jonan and they engaged physically hitting each other at Jonan's place.

Jonan was the only member in the opposite category. He was the person who worked against the likes of everybody and was responsible for ruining everybody's life, even his son's and wife. He was against the whole society and was fighting with everybody alone. Working with a single and the most significant motto of earning money, he worked very hard and set up paint factory with the name of 'Afioso Paints'. This single motive in life and the burning desire to earn money is attained with his experience with his father at his death bed. It was the time when Jonan was young; his father was very poor and was dying of a mysterious plague. The well-off people of the village had fled the place and saved themselves, which Jonan and his father, being poor, could not. His father's last words, 'My son, poverty is a curse' had a deep impact on his mind and Jonan made money primary, and everything and everyone else secondary in his life. In the blind motive of earning money, he has kept the human

values of love, respect, politeness, ethics and sympathy at bay and dealt with everybody ruthlessly.

“Jonan got angry. When there is a thorn in the flesh, he used to say, just remove it. Jonan knew a couple of police officers. It was easy. He framed Sowho for theft and got the judge, who belonged to the same secret society, to bend a bit. The fool should be taught a lesson (P-169).”

He even, it seems, has sacrificed his family also for the sake of money and factory. His careless, cruel and brutish attitude towards others has made him enemy of everyone, for which he pays by sacrificing his life at last. So we can see categorization between one person and the whole society in this novel. People of both categories, as per their natures and identity are working and contributing in the image of category which itself has provided them with an identity. No member in any category, be it Jeffia in one, or Jonan in the other, is ready to leave the group, albeit they have risked and subsequently sacrificed their lives for the image and identity of their categories and groups.

Dangerous Love

Second novel, in which component of social identification is being discussed is *'Dangerous Love'*. In this novel categorization is between the protagonist Omovo, his beloved Ifeyiwa and Omovo's father, his step mother Blackie and Ifeyiwa's husband Takpo. They all identify themselves with two categories. Categorization happens, here also between family members and neighbours. Central character Omovo is alienated and feels victim of his father's atrocities, not to him, but to his mother. He feels the absence of his mother and her motherly love for him. Omovo and his beloved, who is a young beautiful lady living next door, fall in the category of good people. For the sake of their goodness and love, and the identity of a true artist, Omovo paints a picture. This portrait is showing the pathetic living conditions of people of his area. He does not bother a little about the reaction of people for his painting, which is banned later by authorities for being too revealing. With his simple and honest

approach he finds it difficult to work in a paint factory; when he finally finds a job of clerk, in the height of unemployment.

He is ready to bear the brunt for being honest. His identity of being honest does not let him bother for his job and succumb to the pressure of clients to take bribe. His suspension and elimination from his job, does not shock him at all, as he was already aware of consequences of being truthful, right and honest. Next he is identified in the category of a lover. He is a considerate boy, feels pity and sympathy for Ifeyiwa, who is married to a middle age drunkard Takpo, at a very tender young age. The sprouts of love emerge out of his concern for her, who is victim of fate, and her husband's violent behaviour and habit of excessive drinking.

“They were silent when they crossed the road. Cars whistled past close to them. Omovo brushed his hand close to hers. She half turned to him, her mouth opened as if to speak. But she decided against it and slipped her fingers into his (P-21).”

He loves her very much but does not show and confess openly. Completely aware of the fact that she is married, and her husband is a bully, and disclosure of his love for her would put them in problems, he loves her and loves her very much. He met her in their community washroom and after that in market, beyond the sight of suspicious eyes. He risked her life, to be in a room with her, assisted by a lady who was mistress of many in the area. He bears the anger of his father when rumours are out and everybody in the area came to know about his secret meeting with Ifeyiwa in the room of that stranger lady. He was ready to leave his house, which he knew he would have to, when one day his father made him do so. For the sake of love he sacrificed his home and went from there. Ifeyiwa was Omovo's beloved and his companion in this category. She was married to a middle aged man, Takpo who tempted her mother and relatives with his money.

In spite of being a bright student, becoming fatherless at a very young age proved her fatal, as she was made to marry a person who was not of her choice. She succumbed to the pressure of family and accepted her fate dejectedly. At her husband's house, she bore his beatings but did not relent upon his requests for sexual pleasures. She felt

oppressed and exploited but soon felt happy to find a lover living next door. She did not show much, but was happy to see sympathy and love in the eyes of Omovo. A sensitive heart was meeting another sensitive heart. A sufferer was happy to find and meet another sufferer in the proximity. She had seen so much suffering in her life that at any cost she did not want to lose love of Omovo, who was of her age. Beyond the wildest dreams of everyone, she made plans and arrangements to meet Omovo secretly in a room.

“They went up the street and came to another intersection. He stopped. She went on and stopped further up when she became aware of his absence. He ran up to her. For a moment they stood close together. Then he drew up to her until her breasts were touching his chest (P- 164).”

She wanted to be with him and was not bothered about what others were going to say to her. Like Omovo, she also bore the brunt of her husband’s anger when he came to know about her secret meetings with Omovo. She knew this would happen and being a lover of Omovo, she was ready to face any challenge and adversity. This is how she identified herself with the category as lover or can be categorized as lover by the readers and justly sacrificed herself for this identity. Her emotional attachment with Omovo was supporting and satisfying her emotionally, that’s why she could go to any extent to be with him. Moreover, her identity as wife of Takpo was not giving her an emotional appeal and she always felt her future insecure with this insecure identity. On the other hand she felt secure and complete in the company of Omovo. For the sake of this secure identity with Omovo she did whatever she could to be with him.

Against the category of these lovers, there is Omovo’s father, his second wife Blackie who is step mother of Omovo and Ifeyiwa's husband Takpo. Omovo’s father was the reason of Omovo's suffering, making him mother less. Omovo's father and Ifeyiwa's husband resemble each other in nature and character traits. Though, Takpo has got more money than Omovo’s father has. They are reasons of their family’s sufferings. Omovo's father has beaten his wife brutally many times that took her life eventually. This made Omovo motherless, which he feels too much. It brought agony in the life of Omovo, too. Though father was not violent with his son, he got married again and this

widened the gap between father and the son. Takpo on the other hand contributed a lot in the image of a drunkard.

He felt the need of another lady to satisfy him sexually and the one who could give him company in old age. Unlike Omovo's father he had sufficient money to lure and get any lady of his choice. That happening took place when he laid his eyes on Ifeyiwa who was young and beautiful in a poor family. With the power of his wealth and the mediation of his relatives, he married her and brought her in his home but could not win over her. He felt insulted whenever he was denied the sexual pleasures by Ifeyiwa. At least, in case of Takpo, it was satisfying that he did not rape her and dominate her physically, though he used to hit her badly in a fit of anger.

Both, Omovo's father and Takpo married other women but could not enjoy physical proximity with them, for obvious reasons. Another person in this category was Blackie, who is second wife of Omovo's father. She avoided encounter with young Omovo initially. Omovo also did not feel comfortable in her company and tried to avoid her as much as he could. Blackie was the reason of Omovo's father's unhappiness, agony, and anger in the family. She had her eyes on the little wealth of Omovo's father. She was not satisfying him and was cheating on him by spending time with other men in his absence. So in this novel, we have seen how people identify themselves with the groups and categories, they are labelled with. They, not only have the images of their groups but try their level best to complement these images and identities with their actions. "*Dangerous Love*" as the title says is a poignant account of lovers, how true lovers fight the circumstances and the people involved in their families, how they are ready to leave their insecure identities to find the secure ones, how emotionally they feel they are attached with their categories and try to justify their roles being members of those categories.

The Famished Road

Third novel to discuss social identification, is "*The Famished Road*". Categorisation in this novel takes place at two or three different levels. It is one family vs. people of

neighbourhood and society. It is categorisation between rich and the poor. But the dominating classification does take place between one boy and his companions from the world of spirits. This categorization is evident and has an overbearing impact on every incident in the novel. It is a part of categorization of people at family and social level and the division of people between poor and rich. The boy in first category in this categorization is an Abiku child Azaro. The other creatures in the other category are not humans against him but his sibling spirits with whom he spends time, whenever he does not take birth. Sibling spirits always want to be in each other's company and do not let anybody live and stay long in the world of mortals.

The simple classifications in this novel, is between spirits as spirits and a boy whose name is Azaro. Azaro was living with his sibling spirits for many years and roaming places with them. But lately he has to take birth to his parents where he has taken birth and died many times. He takes birth out of pity for his parents who have longed for him for a long time. They wish to have a child and his mother's pains and tears make him love them, so this time he decides to stay in mortal world for a long time. Spirits did not feel pleased with this decision of Azaro. Abiku child has finally decided to live with his poor parents and requested his companions not to disturb and let him stay longer this time. His requests made no impact on spirits and they started harassing Azaro to come back into their world of spirits. The novel is the story of struggle and tension between these two classes, in which on one side it is Azaro, on the side it is spirits. Rest all happenings in the novel, are secondary and are part of the spirits' continuous harassment of Azaro and Azaro's denial and struggle with the spirits.

“The spirits were all over the place. They gave every tree a voice. I saw a rusted machete on the ground and picked it up. The man with the bloated eye pounced on me and I smashed his arm with the machete and he did not utter a sound, nor did he bleed (P-163).”

Azaro feels pity at his mother especially, who has become like a corpse as she has lost her health and vitality due to conceiving and bearing child many times. For last many years, she has given birth to Azaro but Azaro dies immediately and leaves this world to meet spirits in the spirit world. Finally he makes his mind to stay, which disturbs

his spirit friends. They, through many signs, keep calling him to return to their world, which he keeps denying. Spirits, through many people disturb him. Once they attracted and took him away with them but Azaro's parents saved him with the help of a sorcerer. Another time they put Azaro's house on fire, immediately Azaro came to know and ran out of the house. Hearing his voice, his parents also followed him and ran outside and the house was on fire. Azaro with his understanding was able to save himself and his parents.

In another incident, when one day Azaro's father was very angry with him, he ran to beat him. In order to avoid father's beatings, he ran away from home and was captured by spirits. Somehow he got freed from spirits and found himself in the home of a police officer. Police officer and his wife took proper care of him, which made him very doubtful of them. Later, he understood the reason of that affection, which was the death of their own son. He was scared when they were not letting him go. Azaro's mother with the help of a magician, found out the location of Azaro and was able to rescue him from that house, where he was going to become a soft target for the spirits. Azaro's identity as Abiku and his decision to stay with his parents led to all these incidents in his family, due to which his mother and father also were very much disturbed.

The next level of categorization is between Azaro, his family supported by a bar owner, Madam Koto and the people of neighbourhood and society. Azaro's identity of an Abiku child is not hidden from the neighbours and other villagers also. Azaro's house caught fire, when he was young. So it was difficult for the family to find a new shelter. Once they found a poor shelter, but their landlord was constantly nagging them to leave the room. The people in the neighbourhood also, were not so cooperative with them. The Family was facing a lot of issues because of Azaro being an Abiku child. They were very poor and had to spend their savings to rescue Azaro from evil spirits two or three times. They got financial and emotional support from Madam Koto, who was a bar owner. Madam Koto's offer of a waiter's job to Azaro brought some respite to the family, which was short lived. There also it was the identity of Azaro which was playing a major role.

Madam Koto was aware of Azaro's magical and mysterious powers and she thought to use those powers to attract customers in her bar, by simply making Azaro sit there. Azaro's identity helped him to get a job and he indirectly helped his family. This was the only benefit Azaro and his family was making from Azaro as an Abiku child. But this also led to a lot of problems to him and his family. Madam Koto earned a lot by employing Azaro in her bar, she thought that Azaro's presence worked miracles by attracting customers. But Azaro with his deep sight had recognized all customers as spirits. Those were his fellow spirits, who in various forms were coming to disturb and pursue him to come back in their world. Azaro knew it from the very beginning, and did not want to work in bar but had to work for the sake of his parents.

Categorization of the rich and the poor is also evident in the novel. Rich people after bribing people with the spoiled milk were trying to win their votes. The major categorization is between Azaro alone and his companion spirits. All happenings in the novel took place around Azaro and his sibling spirits. It was a constant fight between Azaro and the spirits. Azaro's decision to stay with his parents made him a villain against spirits. Spirits, who had stayed along with each other, could not let him stay like this, and the struggle was going on continuously. Azaro's parents' longing for him and his being Abiku has developed all problems around them and the novel is full of tensions and struggle between Azaro and the spirits. Like this we have seen that both kinds of people in opposite categories are working as per their nature and identity.

The Freedom Artist

The last novel in which social identification is being discussed is "*The Freedom Artist*". This novel presents people in two categories. First category is there, in which people are watchful of all actions around them, they are noticing all the strange happenings around them and are resisting those happening, though the style of their resistance is very peaceful. They are aware of the old knowledge, books, myths and values. They are trying to wake up people who are becoming the machines and slaves of the system. They are disappearing as they are being captured by the authorities. People like Amalantis, who is Karnak's beloved and Mirababa, Mirababa's

grandfather, Ruslana and her father are the people of this category. They are trying to show the difference between new knowledge, books being developed by the authorities, and the old values. They themselves are watchful and are making sure others also should be more watchful like them. They are aware of the fact that they would be targeted and imprisoned by authorities. As per their doubts, they are being captured so that their efforts of making others alert and aware are ceased.

“Before he was taken away, the philosopher had been working on a new idea. He had been nourishing the theme of his great tome for most of his life. The book which he had been working on, written in longhand in black notebooks, deep into the night, was called: The Universe is my Dream and Misrepresentation (P-64).”

The question printed on the cover of the novel is printed on the mind of the readers also, through Karnak who is our protagonist in the novel. That question is ‘who is the prisoner’. Karnak’s girlfriend Amalantis is captured in front of his eyes. For him, it seemed like it was a dream. He could not make sure where she was gone. In his meetings with her, he found her talking about being aware and old books and library and values, which is not liked by her lover Karnak. This system, which he is a part of, does not allow him or anyone else talk about such things which are taken to be hazardous. He does not react and respond upon her arrest by the authorities in front of his eyes.

Later, when he felt her absence then he became restless and started looking for her. Karnak’s passive response upon his girlfriend’s arrest shows the identity of other category of which he is a member. The people of the other category are identified as sleepwalkers. They are asleep while they are walking because they never respond to any happening around them. They never pay attention and take things for granted like Karnak does. They fear authorities and never question any new practice or law being enforced. They never responded to the questions of Karnak. As Karnak’s girlfriend was arrested before him. He only knew that she was imprisoned somewhere. He started his search for her, and the prison. Then he realised the people of this category who were walking like machines. It seems that they are scared and never respond to

anything. The question is posed for readers also. Karnak noticed the difference between both categories and was successful to move from one category to the other, which the people of other category wanted. So in this novel also we have seen how people of different categories identify themselves with their categories.

Ben Okri's novels present ample examples of the fact that if there is no group then there is no society. In a social structure people see each other in different groups and categories and work accordingly. In all four novels of Okri, component of social identification is analysed after social categorization. People identify themselves with different categories and feel privileged to be a part of those categories. They become integral part of their groups and tend to act as the identity of the group which actually is their own identity. Their evaluative and emotional analysis and assessment, makes them judge the groups' identity if it enhances their personal identity or not. If not, then either they try to leave their groups or try to work to improve the image of group and improve their own image with group's image and identity.

Social Comparison

The Last and most important component of social identity theory is social comparison. After Categorization people, as members of a particular group identify themselves and others with their groups. They try to judge and ensure whether being associated with the group is adding value and weight in their identity or not, whether their group is able to justify their position in a given social structure as not. They make these judgements as they are categorized in various groups. In a simple social structure in a city or in a village, people are divided in various groups. Various divisions of society are done on the basis on their interests, nature and capabilities. Now, all members feel proud to be associated with a particular given social system. They don't feel good, in case a group is not adding value to their identity or social stature.

They compare each other because they want to see themselves better than others. This comparison gives them a sense to judge whether they are better than others or vice versa. They compare because they want to see their self-image and identity which has a positive value in society. Having positive value attached to the identity or having a

positive identity gives members of a group an edge over others. It satisfies them in many aspects. It happens because people are divided into groups. And groups have a sense of competition among them. That competition is there because people, when divided into various groups want to see themselves better than others. This sense of competition and jealousy is always present among groups because of this spirit of competition. The spirit of competition leads to creativity and newness among groups in a social structure.

This competition and creativity helps the members of a category to establish a positive identity of the group or helps to enhance the already established positive identity. That's why social comparison takes place among members of various groups, as they want to see themselves on better position than their counterparts. This comparison occurs among all types of groups at all types of levels. In a society, if there is no category or group then there won't be any categorization, identification and comparison. Among all countries at wider levels, among all different states, among various political outfits, among various professionals, religions, languages, castes, communities and human beings, comparison or social comparison is always there.

Next key point to be discussed is, what happens, when a group is not helping an individual gain and have positive identity. What happens when members of a particular group don't feel satisfied to be attached with a group? Members of a group, when dissatisfied with their association with a group, feel degraded and demoralised and opt for various ways to compensate that loss. First of all, all members see the contribution of their groups in their identities. If they don't feel satisfied then they may leave their own groups to join other groups to satisfy their expectations and needs. They will leave their own groups, unless leaving their group does not become a major issue for them or does not hinder their identities. For example for a player leaving his team, which is not winning; won't be so difficult, after his contract with team is over. But for a soldier, leaving his side would be extremely painful, irrespective of win or loss.

Flowers and Shadows

The first novel, in which the most significant component of social identity theory is, being discussed is, "*Flowers and Shadows*". Categorisation, social identification and social comparison in this novel, is done between Jeffia, his mother and Cynthia as good, polite natured people and Jeffia Okwe's father alone as villain, who is responsible for everybody's suffering in the novel. Jeffia Okwe is a considerate boy, who is said to be his mother's reflection in goodness and character. He loves to be in the company of his mother. He is a morally sound boy who knows the difference between being good and bad. He is good and loves to remain good, come what may. He is associated with the category of good people and it is hard for him to change himself as per the wishes of his father who wants him to be intelligent, clever and tough boy to take the reins of his paint factory in his hands. Jeffia finds it difficult, as he is completely aware of his father's malpractices in his factory and he is aware of the fact that one day he has to compensate for the bad actions and misdeeds of his father.

He gets into the best school and privileged to have luxurious things in life but feels the absence of his father; he finds it difficult to change his group and category. He does not go for the option of mobility or exit, though, he has the option to go for it. He believes in the identity and image of his own people, his own category. He takes certain actions, through which he adds value of his group. Against the name of his father who is infamous for ruining the life of others, he loves to strive for the refurbishment of the identity of his family. He is pained to see the expressions of shock on the faces of people, whomever he tells his name Jeffia Okwe. People immediately understand that he is the son of Jonan Okwe, who is a rich man in the town and who has set up his paint factory after ruining many people's life.

He treats all people perfectly and gently, against the nature of his father who was ruthless in his dealings with the people. To work for the identity of the family he, though, unknowingly helps Gbenga and takes him to hospital, who was met with an accident, planned by his father. He takes him in his car and gets him hospitalized at night. He does not go and opt for a position as his father's heir in the paint factory. He

was in love with Cynthia naturally, whose father's life also, was ruined by his father. He takes her in his car and helps her, reach her home. These all actions, he does as he finds it difficult to leave his image of a good boy.

“But Jeffia was different. He was gentle and intelligent. Tall and bright for his nineteen years, he had developed a sense of maturity that never failed to amaze his mother (P-19).”

As a member of Okwe family and son of Jonan Okwe, he tries to refurbish the tarnished image of the family. For Jeffia, it seems, life has taken a full circle. His grandfather was a poor man and wanted his son to earn money. Jonan earned money and became rich but now Jonan's son Jeffia was not at all bothered about money but for human values. So in case of Jeffia we can see that by his good actions he is able to satisfy himself emotionally at personal level. He is thought to be good and carries that image that identity, in fact he enhances his identity. And at the family and social level he does his best to improve identity of Okwes, for that even he goes an extra mile by going against his father.

Next in this category, who identifies herself with the category of sensitive and good people is; Jeffia's mother. Jeffia's mother is a teacher, who is worried about her husband and his deteriorating health. But she, being aware of his business practices, his excessive involvement in the business, criticizes him and wants him to give time to his family and his son-specially who is feeling the absence of his father. She does not like Jonan's ignorant approach and attitude for his family. She is against his views of giving excessive importance to money more than his family.

“You don't want me to help you, mum?”

No. ‘Don't worry, thanks my son’. She said the last bit with a smile. Jeffia smiled too, and looked towards the flowers. She smiled and shook her head. He is such a tall, nice son, she thought (P-18).”

By favouring her own son Jeffia, his mother is contributing in his efforts of saving the identity of the family, feeling emotional satisfaction at personal level. She has seen the level of Jonan's engagement and involvement in his business. She gives importance to

values which are required to live a happy life. She does not want her son to become like her husband and feels happy to find Jeffia as a tender and soft hearted boy. She proves to be a great assistance to Jeffia in his efforts to be good and doing well for others. Third person in the category, who loves to be very friendly and helpful to Jeffia is, Cynthia. Irrespective of her gender, she proved to be a stone hearted girl in her actions when the need arises, but tender hearted when it comes to Jeffia, the boy she loves. She helps Gbenga reach hospital even at night. She loves Jeffia, even when she comes to know that Jeffia's father was responsible for ruining her father's career and family. She was a true resolute who took care of her father in adverse conditions. She looked after him when he took to drinking and was not earning at all. She made sure she was able to earn money and, support her father when it was a tough time. In this way we can see that Cynthia also was a hope for goodness even during tough times.

“Cynthia saw herself through. In standing alone she learnt to be self-reliant. She found a way to adjust to her life. All along, deep within her, she knew that somewhere in the future was a brighter day. It was this belief which made the painful days promises of things yet to come (P-79).”

Jonan is the only person and member in the other category. Jonan is said to be responsible to ruin everybody's life. Be it Sowho, Gbenga, Cynthia's father or his own son Jeffia and his wife, whose life he is ruining by his ignorant attitude and due to his excessive involvement in his business. For many reasons, it is very clear to the readers, from the very beginning that money has great importance for Jonan in his life. It is discussed earlier also that earning money is the single motto of Jonan's life. It seems that his family and his paint factory are parts of his mission and vision of earning money. And Jonan cannot be considered responsible for this kind of approach in life. His father's last moments with him, are responsible for this. His approach and mission to earn money makes him to be known as a money minded person, and Jonan does his best to justify his identity as the same.

“Jonan was iron-handed with his workers and had kept a strict rein over annual increments. He believed that workers were only entitled to increments if profits

had toppled themselves, and those who didn't like it, could well leave the company (P-94).”

Though financially, he makes sure his family should not experience those obstacles which he himself has faced as a child. So he provides them with all luxuries. He is constantly cautioned by his wife to be more frequent at home to give time to family but he is busy to handle his factory matters. He does his best for his identity by dealing with everyone ruthlessly. He is setting examples by moving people out of his way, his factory and his money. He has almost sacrificed his family and his own life for the sake of his factory and his money, because this is what has been on his mind throughout his life. So we can see how people of both groups and categories find it difficult to leave their groups. They don't go for mobility and exit options rather they go for voice and social change options, available with them. Like this they are not only working for establishment of their group's identity but strive for enhancement of that category's identity which is their own identity also.

Dangerous Love

Second novel in which analysis of the component of comparison is being done is, “*Dangerous Love*”. Categorisation in this novel, takes place at two levels. Omovo is the protagonist of this novel, who along with his mother a victim of her husband's violence, and his beloved Ifeyiwa, are placed in one category of sufferers or victims of violence. In the other category, Omovo's father, his second wife Blackie and Ifeyiwa's husband Takpo, are the ones who are ruthless, violent and brutish in their dealings. In the second level of categorization, Omovo is there, who is the sole member in the category as a true artist and an honest man, and it is the authorities and the society on the other side. Omovo has lost his mother at a very young age, owing to his father's home violence. He feels the absence of his mother, misses her very much as he does not get any emotional support from Blackie who is his step mother, the lady his father married to, after the death of his mother.

This deprived him of school and education and his practice as a budding artist. His stepmother's interference in their life has fuelled the fire. There is always a great

tension whenever Omovo and his step mother are at home at the same time. Though Omovo is not beaten by his father, he does not get any support from him. He considers Blackie the reason of problems in his life, and his father's habit of excessive drinking. Very soon, he became aware of his step mother's intension of deceiving and looting his father. He is said to be sufferer and all actions are proving his identity as the same. Next, he can be categorised as lover and he identifies himself as the one. He himself is the victim of violence of his father and finds another exploited soul in his neighbourhood, who is Ifeyiwa. Ifeyiwa is his neighbour Takpo's young and beautiful wife. Takpo beats his wife very badly whenever she does not relent to his sexual pleasures.

An ignored heart recognises the other ignored heart. As the houses were in neighbourhood, people of the families knew each other's happening. Ifeyiwa was very much known to problems Omovo was facing, same was case of Omovo with Ifeyiwa. Both were sufferers and young, looking for comfort and solace, which they found in each other's company. They became lovers and did their best to justify their identity as the ones. Being very watchful at the initial stage, they had enough courage to meet each other away from the market place, beyond everybody's eyes. Very much aware of the problems he was going to face, Omovo had the courage to meet her.

At the other level of category he is an artist who loves to make and paint portraits. He believes in the fact the readers and viewers should not only see the world how they experience but how a writer, poet or painter feels and experiences. Being very much observant about the pathetic living conditions in his area, he makes a portrait and paints it. He draws the scenery of scum and calls his painting a scum-scape. His painting, which according to the authorities shows a poor picture and image of system, is banned. He is asked not to make such paintings again.

“Then Omovo began to notice a dangerous silence in the area of his painting. A man in plain clothes, obviously a soldier, obviously powerful, stood glaring. His gestures were imperious. He was surrounded by his aides. Suddenly, something happened in a blur (P-49).”

His creation of that painting denotes his readiness to face challenges, in his attempt to show truth to the people and society. He has an identity of an honest boy also, who, in the high time of unemployment, is lucky enough to get the job of a clerk in a paint factory. His identity of being utterly honest leads him into troubles at his work place. As a clerk, he is approached and bribed by the company clients, for getting the things done before time in their favour, which he did not accept. His reluctance and audacity to accept money and his fair approach to let things happen naturally made him a villain in the factory. He did not bother for his job and the repercussions he was going to face due to his adamant honest attitude. Finally, one day when he did not relent, he was asked to leave his job. At his place a new boy, manager's nephew, best suited for this job was appointed.

Omovo, for the sake of identity of an honest boy, did not care for the consequences of his adamant approach and worked as per his will, determination and nature. So we have seen Omovo, as lover of Ifeyiwa as well as an honest boy at his job, who did not opt for the options of mobility or exit rather he voiced his feelings as a lover by meeting her secretly and acted as a true professional at paint factory. So he not only tried to establish his identity, but thought to enhance it also, irrespective of the results. The people, who are on his side, are his mother who lost her life due to her husband's violence and atrocities and his beloved Ifeyiwa.

Ifeyiwa was the one, who in spite of her being a brilliant student, was the victims of the fate. She was a father less child, who was thought to be a burden on her mother. Due to uncompromising circumstances and helplessness in the family, along with the pressure of relatives, she had to marry a person Takpo, who was more than double of her age. The only thing which her parents saw and felt about Takpo, was his wealth with that, he tempted her mother and relatives. Takpo only married her for his own sexual pleasures and social company. She had to live in a completely depressed atmosphere in the company of Takpo, who used to beat her and force her to sleep with him. She was a sufferer of home violence and beloved of Omovo. She was not very much open for her love to Omovo, initially. Though love for him was not hidden in the area. She was already fed up and upset with Takpo's rudeness. Presence, company

and love of Omovo gave her, a completely new horizon. She did not want to lose this chance to be with Omovo as she was aware of her future with Takpo. Justifying her identity as a true beloved, risking her life to death, she met with Omovo beyond suspicious eyes and planned to meet him at a secret place. We can see Ifeyiwa too, like her lover, did her best to establish, enhance and strengthen her identity as a lover. She along with Omovo defied all odds and decided to meet him to make their love memorable and complete. Against Omovo and his beloved Ifeyiwa, people who were the members of the other category were Omovo's father and Ifeyiwa's husband Takpo. Both of them used to drink excessively and had married second time for their sexual desires, which both of them were not able to enjoy. They are falling into the category of drunkards, who have become violent to their family members. Omovo's father was not violent to his son but used to beat Omovo's mother a lot, due to which she died. With her death, difficult times for Omovo started. Omovo's father was not able to give him proper schooling and education which had adverse impact of his knowledge, skills and Art. He used to spend his money on his second wife Blackie to please her, unaware of the fact that she was deceiving him and had only married him for his money which was getting over.

Takpo on the other hand was comparatively richer than Omovo's father. He had married Ifeyiwa to seek sexual pleasures and to have a company in old age. Though, in the beginning politely and with love, he tried to win over her, be close to her, but was unsuccessful, which led him to beat Ifeyiwa quite often. So we have seen Omovo's father and Ifeyiwa's husband were justifying their identities of drunkards and violent people. As per all the stereotypes related to drunkards, they were acting and justifying their role. Novel "*Dangerous Love*" as per the title, presented characters in two opposite categories in which protagonist Omovo and his beloved Ifeyiwa, in spite of love being dangerous go for it, as true lovers always do. This novel too contained and presented all three components of social identity theory in which characters after categorization and identification; compare themselves as they want to see themselves in better positions. With their actions and approach, they justified their categorization and comparison in two groups.

The Famished Road

"The Famished Road" is next novel which is being discussed. In this novel, comparison takes place between Azaro, who is an Abiku child and his fellow spirits. Categorization between Azaro and the spirits is the dominant one, all other groups at different levels, are part of this categorization only. In the first category, Azaro is the only member, who is an Abiku. Abiku children are the ones who time and again take birth to a woman and die as they have to go back to their world of spirits to meet them. So Azaro's identity in the novel, is of Abiku, who this time has decided to stay with his parents. Signs and marks of pain, on the face of his mother has made Azaro stay with them this time. In this novel, Azaro is not satisfied with his going and coming back movement in the world of mortals. If we apply the processes of a category on Azaro, then cognitively he recognises himself as Abiku, which is clear to him, his fellow spirits and the readers. He was a part of spirit's group and was bound to be with them, always moving from place to place.

But for the third level of emotional attachment with the category, Azaro is not satisfied emotionally to be with his group of fellow spirits, owing to his new and sudden feeling of love, affection and respect for his parents, specially his mother who is almost half dead, due to her infirm health state. His mother, in order to support family income, sells provisions on a hand pulled cart and his father does carry loads to earn money. Family is going through severe poverty and many nights they spend with empty stomachs. It has been a long time after marriage that they don't have any child. Azaro, every time takes birth and dies but this time he has decided to stay against the wishes of his fellow spirits. His decision to stay in mortal world and denial to return into the world of spirits and spirits' harassment of Azaro, is the base of the novel, along with all happenings being just a part of this fight, tension and harassment.

Azaro's decision to stay with them, pleased his parents but that is the beginning of new troubles for them. Azaro has decided to go for the options of mobility and exit from his identity. But that is full of problems and tensions for him. Azaro's death gave no relief to his parents, his birth and life has also come with a lot of issues. His parents were aware of his magical powers and abilities to see the supernatural happenings

around him and his family. They were completely aware of the fact that he was a troubled fellow and his spirits were regularly disturbing him. Their want for the child and son made them ready to face the challenges posed in front of them by the spirits. The nagging and most significant fact was that they were already poor and they had to spend their little saving to save and rescue Azaro from the spirits. Azaro's determination to stay at any cost, irrespective of all the repercussions, was a halt in his identity of being an Abiku child. This was the reason of all problems, not only for Azaro but for everyone who was in association with him. His parents were not happy when he was not born, nor were they happy when he was born. His presence as disappearance from their life was full of problems. Azaro, in order to stay, altered his identity, not only risked his life several times but that of his parents also. He did not leave spirits to seek revenge from them or it was not that he was unhappy with them. It was only for his mother's love and longing for him and vice versa, which made him stay with them for this life.

“It may have also been that I wanted to have taste of this world, to feel it, suffer it, know it, to love it, to make a valuable contribution to it. But I sometimes think it was a face that made me want to stay. I wanted to make happy the bruised face of the woman who would become my mother (P-6).”

His parents lost their home because of him, even their own life was at risk in that incident. It was only the quick response of Azaro that he came to know about plan of his sibling spirits and ran out of the house. His parents too, unaware of actual happening ran after him and the whole house was on fire. His fellow spirits had planned to kill Azaro in that fire, as they wanted him to come back. Azaro came to know of this and to save himself and his parents, he ran outside, though the house was sacrificed in this incident.

The other category in this classification is of spirits. Spirits as they are called fellow spirits and sibling spirits, always move from place to place and enjoy being with each other. They enjoy being together and are very much aware that Azaro is an Abiku child, who has taken birth and has died many times. Sibling spirits cannot let any fellow stay away from them for a long time. They know that Azaro has gone and

come back many times. They as per this identity, start calling Azaro back to their world. They are attached to their identity and as per their nature, identity and abilities are calling back Azaro. They started calling him, disturbing, harassing him and finally planned to kill him to get him back into their world. It is difficult for them to break barriers of their identity, and let him stay away for a long time, as being together and united only is their strength and identity. They were quite aware of the difficulties, they were going to face, had they decided to go for the option of exit and change. Rather they planned to voice their concern and worries that's why they started calling back Azaro into their world. So they planned to kill him, when he knowingly decided to stay with his parents and did not return. Their attempts to trouble and kill him were going in waste as Azaro's parents were able to save him with the help of a sorcerer. They planned to kill him in a fire but he escaped eventually. In another incident, they tried to capture him but Azaro escaped with the intervention of 'King of Spirits' and took shelter in a policeman's house. His mother that time had to spend a great deal of money to save him from spirits as well as from policeman's family, who were taking him as their own son who was dead. Spirits tried to harass him in his new rented room also, where their new landlords was disturbing Azaro and his parents.

Not only his landlord but the people in neighbourhood and society also started looking at them with suspicious eyes. It was almost difficult for the family to stay there, unless Madam Koto interrupted in the situation. Madam Koto, an opportunist by nature, was a bar owner, who worked to take benefit of Azaro's mysterious magical powers. Azaro's family was more than happy to receive an offer given by Madam Koto. She had offered waiter's job to Azaro in her bar. Azaro was reluctant initially but went to the bar to please his parents, who were in dire need of money. When Azaro went and sat in the bar, mysterious creatures started coming into bar, and Madam Koto became happy to see number of her customers swelling. After some time, Azaro saw an amulet tied on bar's door, which was attracting sibling spirits.

Madam Koto's offer to Azaro, helped spirits to gain access to Azaro there, as they started coming in bar in various deformed figures. When they were unable to take Azaro from bar, they started disturbing his parents. They started disturbing Azaro's

mother and were not letting any utensil be sold, and forced his father quit his job and become a boxer, an underground fighter. In the appearance of Green Leopard and Yellow Jaguar, fought his father but could not defeat him. They tried their best but could not take Azaro with them. We have seen in this novel, how Azaro decided to leave his group of spirits and identity of an Abiku. Irrespective of the results, he decided to go against the identity of spirit. At one end, we can see how Azaro is trying to move and exit his group. Keeping his identity at stake, risking his own and the life of his parents, he decided to stay with them, for the sake of their happiness. On the other hand, spirits decided to stick to their identity and kept calling and harassing him to come back. They did not go for the options of mobility, rather opted for voice and change. This is how comparison between two categories takes place in this novel.

The Freedom Artist

The latest novel of Ben Okri "*The Freedom Artist*" is the last one, in which I am going to discuss the third component of social identity theory i.e. social comparison. Comparison in this novel happens between two categories of people who are quite opposite to each other. First category includes people who are knowledgeable, who are more alert and watchful, and who have knowledge of old customs, values, books and myths. They are the ones who used to live in a kind of freedom, which was freedom of expression. They were allowed to be creative and expressive of their thoughts, were receptive to the variety of thoughts. They had inclusive approach as they were diverse natured people. They are the ones who have experienced freedom in actual sense which they are deprived of recently.

The other type of people is the ones who do not have any knowledge of old books, literature, myths and values. And if they have, they are forced to keep mum, which they have accepted. They have fear of authorities in their mind and because of that fear, they do not express but work and act like machines. The difference and distinction between these two categories is, the people in one category are becoming rebels against the system and authorities, not in actions but in approach. The other type of people have become patients and have developed the skills of tolerance. They do not opine for any happening around them, as they have fear of system and

authorities. It seems that they are put in the prison. Prison is not the prison where criminals and convicts are kept in, but a symbolic one. They are imprisoned in their own bodies. They are made slaves of system in their own bodies which they do not understand in the beginning. Before readers, novel itself poses a question, which is to be answered. That question is 'who is the prisoner'. The representatives of first category are many, like Amalantis, who is beloved of our protagonist Karnak, Mirababa and his grandfather, Ruslana and her father and many more are others. In the second category, the representative is the central character of novel, Karnak. In spite of being Amalantis' lover, Karnak is opposite to her in nature. He identifies himself with the category of sleepwalkers, they are considered people who are working like machines and don't react and respond to any happening around them openly.

“Karnak had watched helplessly from the door while that flower of the land was taken away. Like a sacrificial lamb, she had gone without a sound of protest. At the door of the van, she had turned her head to look back at him (P-28).”

Karnak's beloved Amalantis is a soft hearted girl, who is watchful and notices everything in her surrounding curiously. She never asked Karnak to be like her, instead she used to talk to him about books and libraries, and all efforts of her group to make people alert. She never spoke to him openly about her group rather she kept on giving him hints by talking about all pasting and flying of single words like upwake and prison and true beauty of knowledge.

“Karnak watched her talking to the old lady for a long time. The after a while the old lady and Amalantis went into the home....because I kept thinking how beautiful you looked, I wanted to show you what beauty was and didn't quite know how (P-25).”

All the words were beyond the knowledge of Karnak, who used to hush her for using these words, which everybody was prohibited to use and speak. She wanted Karnak to realise all happenings gradually, which was actually happening. She was very soft and sweet in her interaction with him. She was very much attached to her category and was working as per the identity of the group, which was to make people aware of all

happenings and criticize system's policies secretly. She was aware of the repercussions she was going to face being a member of her category, but never hesitated to play her part in the system. She knew that she was going to be arrested and taken away from Karnak by authorities, which they did one day and she did not resist her protest and disappeared.

Mirababa was a young boy who was being trained by his grandfather to be more watchful and not to be ignorant of the happenings around him. He was being prepared by reading books and was trained to read books himself. Ruslana and her father were also the members of same category of rebels. As per the identity of their group, they were organising secret meetings and were making public aware by distributing the leaflets with the words like upwake, library, and values etc. which were banned by authorities. Ruslana's father was the last one who had knowledge of various writers and had rescued them by giving them temporary shelter in his home. Ruslana was regularly keeping a close watch on Karnak after Amalantis was gone. Amalantis' disappearance puzzled Karnak very badly. He was the true representative of sleepwalkers who had not reacted even little, when his beloved Amalantis was taken away from him, in front of his eyes. Later, gradually he started feeling her absence. He had never resisted against any happening and had never let Amalantis use the words which were banned. But he was puzzled and became restless when she was taken away from him. In the initial efforts, he started looking for her.

Karnak, who never worked against his identity, for the sake of love of his life, he was on search and the search was for his beloved Amalantis. He was emotionally shattered in the absence of Amalantis and was not feeling any solace, being a member of his own category. In this case, he decided to go for the option of exit and join the other category. It was not like joining any opposite football team but working against the system, which you were part of since your birth. The system was running into your veins as blood. This all happened, due to his love for Amalantis. He decided to leave his group, irrespective of the consequences he was going to face.

He started moving from place to place in search of Amalantis. No doubt she was gone in front of his eyes but; that time his soul was not awakened. Moving against the

identity of his own category, as an awakened soul he was pained; not to find her around him. He even tried to seek the help of the Artists, painters and intellectuals, who as per their identity, guided him. His attitude about people was changing when he found them walking like machines, not responding to any questions of him. He realised that they were the lazy souls who had given up due to pressure of the system. Slowly, he started looking for the prison where his beloved Amalantis and other people were taken. He was getting no replies from anyone and kept moving in vain. Slowly he realised that they all were imprisoned in their bodies as they were not allowed to speak and express themselves openly. They were scared of the speaking against system. Whoever spoke and went against system was taken away by authorities. Later, with the help of Ruslana and her father, Karnak was able to find the place where all people, were kept.

In the leadership of Ruslana, he along with others, made the common people protest against the system and search for the prison. They were opposed by the police and caretakers of law, who could not stand against the multitude upon finding prison. Karnak and all realised that the prison was symbolic; it was their body in which they were imprisoned. They were imprisoned as they were not allowed to speak and express themselves. We have seen Amalantis and Ruslana, who; while working as per identity of their category, did their best to strengthen their image and the image of their group, by making Karnak and the common people more alert and watchful. On the other hand, against the identity of his group, Karnak had decided to join the other category as he was not emotionally satisfied with his group.

Analytical Outcome

Social Identity Theory given by Henri Tajfel is used and analysed in the novels of Ben Okri. It is true that if there is no group then there is no society and there is no social system. This groupism and categorisation makes humans understand and analyse the things and facts in a better way. After categorisation, people's identification with their category is done to evaluate and assess and compare between them and others.

Identification and further comparison, helps people understand them, as us vs. them. Every member of every category wants a positive self-image, for which categorisation, identification and comparison is must. With groups and categories, there emerges competition. Competition is because groups, and group members' assessment of themselves. Players of two football teams want to win the game.

At the initial level, if choice is there, every players want to join the team which has a high record of wins. After being a part of a particular team, players of each team identify and assess themselves. This identification tells them whether they are happy and satisfied being part of that team or it is not enhancing their self-image. A group or team must provide a secure identity to its members and players. If this does not happen, players would tend to leave the group or the team. This is what we have seen in case of Azaro, who himself does not feel satisfied with his association with the spirits. For the love of parents he decides to leave the group, and plans to stay with his parents. Like him, Karnak too, moves against the identity of his group. He decides to go in search of his beloved and against the established system.

They both do not feel any kind of emotional attachment with their groups and the identity of the groups. Rather they are feeling satisfied to be part of the other groups, irrespective of repercussions they are going to face for this. In the other categories, the concept of stereotype is attached with characters like Jonan, Takpo and Omovo's father. They are the people who are considered villains in the novels. The set opinions about them are justified by them. They are the ones who are responsible for ruining lives of others. They are not ready to leave the identity of villains, and are working as per expectations of the readers. They are the ones who for their own benefits are exploiting others and depriving them of the basic human values, which in case of Jonan is, a father's love for his son and family. In case of Takpo and Omovo's father, it is basic schooling and education, and proper living standards.

So we have seen in the novels of Okri, beginning with his first novel 'Flowers and Shadows' to his last novel "*The Freedom Artist*", the theory of social identity and its components are evident and analysed. Characters once put in categories of us vs. them, identify and view themselves as integral parts of the categories, and endeavour

to enhance the images of their images and groups positively, which is going to enhance their self-images in return. In attempts to view themselves members of elite groups placed in better positions, they tend to see themselves patronizingly over others after doing comparisons in all aspects as an individual as well as a member of the group. After identity, the next theory which researcher is going to discuss in the next chapter is gender identity, propounded by John Money in which researcher shall throw light on process and various components of gender socialization.

Chapter III- Gender Issues: Inequitable Measures

Third chapter of my thesis titled as 'Gender Issues: Inequitable Measures' throws light on the gender related issues, raised in selected four novels of Ben Okri. Before gender issues are discussed, elements of gender in general, are to be discussed briefly.

Gender

Gender of a person, is his or her idea about himself/herself being male or female, masculine or feminine. Gender of a person is viewed and described on two separate bases and level, which are biological and social level. At biological level, a person is considered male or female based on his biology as sex, which is determined at the time of his birth. Other than the biological levels, people are considered male female on the social level. According to this level, gender of the person is formed, viewed and described based on his/her social interaction with various people. These people can be his/her family members, members in the neighbourhood, teachers and school mates at school and others. Even media too, has a great role to play in the formation of gender. It is not only the biology or sex of a person, but the society and social processes which determine the gender of a person.

This idea is related to the theory of nature vs. nurture, it is not nature but how a child nurtured in a family. It is not natural to frame gender and gender identity, but it is transmitted from generation to generation through various values and value related systems. These values and value systems have become so smooth in day-to-day routine of human beings that due to adaptation of human beings, it seems quite natural. Biologically, humans have separate roles to play but socialisation and process of socialisation of genders have displayed that it is formed and viewed socially. In a family, parents of children play an important role in their gender identity formation. Parents' own interests and hobbies also get reflected in the nature and identity of their children. Children of army men, for instance, are very much disciplined in behaviour and are bound to choose defence as their profession. Same is the case, in case of doctors and teachers, whose children become doctors and teachers in future. This all happens due to the impact of environment which children receive at homes. This is

how, society helps in formation of gender identity of a child in a family. Against genetics, it is environment which proves of paramount importance in upbringing of children. Due to socialisation only, it is viewed that girls too, can take up-to tough jobs in defence and boys can become doctors, or can go for even for midwifery and baby-sitting. This opinion supports the dominance of environment over genes and nurture over nature.

John William Money

The person who is said to have coined the term gender, who supported the idea of nurture over nature is, John William Money. John William Money was born in Morrisville, New Zealand on 8 July 1921. His parents were with English and Welsh backgrounds. He received his early education from Hutt Valley High School, before he joined Victoria University of Wellington in 1944, and graduated in Psychology and Education consecutively. After graduation he started teaching Psychology in University of Otago in Dunedin. He went to the United States and joined University of Pittsburgh to study psychiatry in 1952. After leaving university of Pittsburgh he joined Harvard University and completed his doctorate, working on evolution and development of various gender related theories. Dr John William Money became a specialist in gender, gender identity and gender roles. He took the job of professor of Paediatrics and Medical Psychology in John Hopkins University where he served till he died on 7 July 2006, due to Parkinson disease, which he was suffering from, for a long time. He defined the gender as an opinion and identity which is socially constructed not biologically. With his publication of articles and books 'Transsexualism and sex Reassignment' and 'Man and Woman, Boy and Girl' he strongly advocated his theory of nurture vs. nature.

Expressing his views on sex reassignment, John Money was of the opinion that biological base or sex of a child can be reassigned, with the fruitful assistance of parents of a child, provided they give child favourable family environment, which is supportive of his new sex identity. John Money differentiated between sex role and gender role. A person performs sex roles in his/her sex oriented reproductive activities. This sex role of a person can be reversed or changed, if he is given

favourable environment to support new sex identity. John Money supported his idea with the reference of John/Joan case which he published in his seminal work *'Man and Woman, Boy and Girl'*.

This book brings into light the case of reassignment of sex through John/Joan or Brian /Brenda Reimer. Brian and Brenda, who were fictitiously known as John/Joan, were twin sons of Ron and Janet Reimer. Parents were young and happy to have twin boys as their offspring, but their happiness was transient as one of their sons, met with a mechanical accident while having a surgery for Phimosis. This botched circumcision due to mechanical glitch left the boy without penis and parents in utter gloom. Luckily, the other boy Brian was left untouched whose problem of Phimosis got corrected on its own, with the passage of time. For seventeen months after the birth of boys, parents had nowhere to go with the babies. A ray of hope came to them with the appearance of John Money on the TV screen, where he had appeared in a program for an interview. Dr John William Money, professing his skills on TV screen, was advocating the achievement of John Hopkins institute in sex reassignment surgeries, throwing light on the success rate of cases which were brought into institute for the needful.

John Money was claiming high success rates in sex reassignment with the support of parents. Parents of Brian and Bruce (who later became Brenda), were much relieved to see advancements and updates in sexology on TV through Dr John, whom they planned to meet soon. Upon Ron and Janet's visit, Dr John immediately suggested them sex assignment for Bruce as girl. Unhappy and desperate parents were in haste to accept Dr Money's offer and suggestion and got Bruce's testes removal surgery done, when he was twenty two months old. Dr John Money's claims of sex reassignment were based on the studies of hermaphrodites.

Hermaphrodites are living beings with both sexes. These animals can use their either sex organ with the corresponding sex organ of the other animal in a sexual activity. Based on this kind of studies, Dr Money claimed to have operated on human beings who were born with ambiguous sex organs and identities in their childhood only. Dr Money is said to have operated on various children successfully changing and

reassigning their sexes, with a plan to give them androgen or estrogen in adolescence later in life. A significant point, which analytics noted later is, that the case of Brian and Bruce was the case of simple children born with all genitalia perfectly at the time of birth, which eventually attracted and tempted Dr Money to be a perfect example of sex reassignment from a boy to a girl. Dr Money took full emotional advantage of Brian and Bruce's parents who got easily convinced by him. With his exemplary professional articulation, he got rid of their initial hesitation and doubts and started their counselling to provide proper and favourable environment for proper treatment of their son Bruce who was to be changed into a girl to be renamed as Brenda.

Parents were counselled to change the home environment of child who was merely twenty two months old. Brenda was given girl's clothes to wear and her boy's toys were changed into that of girls'. Family was asked to visit John Hopkins Institute annually, where Dr Money used to see and analyse the progress made throughout the year. With the passage of time, Reimer family found Brenda very much disturbed about her identity who was finding it difficult to act and adjust like a girl. Between two siblings, she was more aggressive who dominated Brian at times. Her mother was very observant of her daughter's tomboyish behaviour and attitude. At the time of adolescence Dr Money's plan was to give estrogen hormones to Brenda and to operate her with a vagina, which her parents did not agree, owing to revolting attitude of Brenda, who was even not ready to visit Institute for annual check-ups. Brenda faced a lot of psychological problems due to her disturbed sex identity. Dr Money reported case in his articles and print media as successful which was actually not the reality. Parents were forced to disclose reality to Brenda one day, when they saw her, emotionally shattered. It was the emergence of Brian and David, themselves who made their case into public. Their life was brought to the fore with their biography written by John Colapinto titled as 'As Nature Made Him: the Boy who was raised as a Girl'. The brothers were so much depressed that they finished themselves considering their lives a failure. Brian committed suicide with excessive antidepressant pills, and David killed himself with a shotgun. Dr Money rejected blames on him and held the press and parents responsible for not following his instructions in letter and spirits. This incident made the case and theory of sex

reassignment urgent for re-evaluation. This is how Dr John William Money was using his theory of nurture vs. nature.

Gender Identity and Gender Roles

Gender identity is the identity which a person acquires after socialisation of his gender. Socialisation of gender is the process by which a person develops, learns and analyses his gender identity and plays the role accordingly after his interaction with the various socialisation agents like his family, neighbours, peers, teachers and school classmates. These social agents help an individual determine his/her gender identity and act according to the same, following certain norms, in a given scenario. Interpretation and understanding of gender identity and its socialisation agents and processes is very important to find out the reasons of gender inequality in a social structure. If we are able to find out reasons, then, certainly we will be able to find out solutions for such inequality. This will enable the members of underprivileged gender to gain access to available resources equally. This will help in reduction of inequality and will lead people in society to the growth which will be comprehensive and sustainable. This will assist stakeholders recognise the social agents which have contributed in inequality of gender.

In the process of socialisation, individuals in a given social structure learn the behavioural patterns, customs, skills, standards and values in a society, which are mandatory for him/her to learn, develop, retain, analyse and refine. With the help of this process of socialisation and these values it becomes easier for individuals to be successful member of a particular community and society. All kinds of communities and social structures have this kind of value systems for their members to learn and live their lives successfully. The people as the members, who remain passive to learn and accept the values, remain unaccepted in social systems and are considered as outcasts.

The process of socialisation is the process through which cultural values and ethics are transferred from one generation to next. Members of a community understand the importance of such life styles, behaviours and beliefs which are an integral part of the

system, and which is important for them to accept and integrate in their lives. Societies not only transfer these values from generation to generation, but they modify and regenerate these values accordingly. Setting standards and values and the process of socialization help the outsiders and readers to understand how people of a certain nation and community will behave in particular social structure. It is said that process of socialisation occurs in early childhood, though it is lifelong.

We have discussed how various social agents contribute in the socialisation of gender. Undoubtedly, first and foremost, the most important one is family only, which is further supported by school system, peers and media. These all social agents make children understand their own genders, gender identities and gender roles which enable them to live a healthy and successful life in society. These agents help them define their role (what others expect from them and what they should expect from others). Therefore it's important to understand and know about these social agents and the process of socialisation.

Flowers and Shadows

"Flowers and Shadows" is the first novel in which we are going to discuss gender socialisation. This novel is the story of a man who was owner of a paint factory, and his ruthless dealing with the officials of his paint factory, ignoring his own family members at the same time. This man is Jonan Okwe, the head of the family, who, in his pursuit of earning money, becomes ignorant to the values and time that, he as a good father and an ideal husband, has to give to his family members. The character that I am going to throw light on, before Jonan Okwe, is his son Jeffia Okwe who is equally important and need to be discussed about how his gender is socialised through various social agents.

Jeffia Okwe is a well behaved boy of Jonan Okwe, who loves to study and is expecting excellent grades in the exams he has appeared recently in. He is the boy who is away from all the worldly things, doesn't mean that he is living a very poor life, but is not craving for the same. For Jeffia Okwe, it is his family, which has become the biggest social agent to determine his gender identity and roles.

In his family he, like his mother is ignored by her husband, is ignored by his father. His father doesn't pay much attention to his family members, which Jeffia feels very much. But the biggest strength for Jeffia is his mother, who with a good academic background chooses to be a teacher and inspires Jeffia also become the same. This is the impression of his mother that Jeffia Okwe gains strength and has deep interests in academics. He has earned a positive approach towards life due to his mother. His mother has contributed a lot in shaping his interest and nature. He appears to be a soft-hearted, soft-spoken, studious, and well-behaved honest boy who is capable to notice the difference between good and bad in life.

His family atmosphere, mainly his mother's influence on him has made him interested towards teaching as a career option. He is completely aware of contribution of both parents in the upbringing of a child that is why he feels the absence of his father. He seems not to be a boy who will go with the flow, accepting the situations as it is. He is aware of the malpractices, which his fathers is engaged in, and knows the repercussions that he is going to bear in consequences and, that he has to compensate for his father. Being a brilliant child, he doesn't like his father's idea about him, to be strong enough and worldly wise. His father's ignorance might be the reason for Jeffia's goodness and excellence in studies. Jonan doesn't stay at home for a long time and doesn't give company to his son, which makes Jeffia spend time with his mother who is a teacher.

Being in the company of mother who is a teacher has shaped Jeffia's personality which is quite opposite to that of his father's. As far as Jeffia's career is concerned, against the wishes of his father, who wants to him to be ready to managing factory, Jeffia chooses to be a teacher. Both professions are in contradiction to each other. His father is the owner of the factory, whereas his mother is a teacher. Jeffia's clear cut choice is to be a teacher as he has a strong bonding and closeness with his mother. He feels naturally, very close to his mother because she is the one who gives him company all the time at home. One should not wonder how Jeffia feels attached to his mother more than to his father.

“She loved Jeffia not just as her only son, but also because she was proud of the kind of person he was turning into. She attributed it partly to the sheltered upbringing they had given him. He had attended the best schools, and had done well all along (P-18).”

Both professions are opposite to each other. Both parents of Jeffia are different, if not opposite to each other. In family environment it is his mother who devotes much time with Jeffia, which he craves a lot in case of his father, who is too busy in factory matters to give time to his son. Jeffia’s mother is an educated lady who is well behaved, well cultured, polite, sober and well mannered. In her association, her son gains access to all these qualities, which become inherent in his character also. In the company of such an educated and well behaved lady who above that, happens to be his mother, it is very natural for Jeffia to feel attached to her, more than his father. This is the education and influence of Jeffia’s mother on him that he has a dislike for his father's wish for him to manage factory one day. Though he is fully aware of his father's indulgence in some bad deeds, Jeffia does not dislike his father, but feels his absence and wants to be in his company. The only thing that disturbs Jeffia very much is, his father's ignorant attitude towards family.

Jeffia does not understand his father's idea to be too busy to earn money ignoring his family. Jeffia is perplexed with Jonan's desire to earn money which is primary for Jonan, against his family which is secondary. That is what disturbs him the most and that is the reason for Jeffia’s anger for his father and a grudge for his father's ambition and plan for him to lead factory. Jonan’s schemes and craftiness to entrap his factory officials, along with his over-indulgence in factory matters, is not hidden in his family also which irritates Jeffia even more. Jeffia notices how people react and startle whenever he tells them his full name Jeffia Okwe. Not initially but later, he got an idea how infamous his father is in the city, where everybody knows him.

His school and peers also contributed a lot in the formation of what kind of person he is. As his mother is a teacher, he goes to school with her who has great influence over him. The level of influence, Jeffia is having of his school, can be estimated. Jeffia’s peers and his company also had deep impact on him. All his friends were very good at

academics that had good plans to go abroad and take up good jobs. Jeffia's display of humility, sobriety and helpful nature at odd situations, is due to his education at school and his mother who is teacher there who work in compatibility to develop his character and his perception towards opposite sex. Jeffia's courage to stop his car to help a needy person at night at an unfamiliar place is attributed to his education and the contribution of his school.

It is the values that the school, in collaboration with the family, has imparted to him which makes him help a girl pick-up an injured man and take to the hospital. It is his good nature to plan to love and marry Cynthia who belonged to poor family. Jeffia, in the beginning as the novel, displays his genuineness when he saves a puppy from two boys who were haunting and disturbing it to death. He not only saved puppy but helped the kids with some money, who out of desperation to have some kind of fun, were hurting the puppy. He not only looks after the little dog but finds out the address of its owner and gives it to her so that it can be reunited. All these qualities show how social agents have helped him identify his identity and his role in a system where, his family members are of two opposite natures.

Other than Jeffia Okwe, in the family the person who is well behaved, organised, polite and sober, who has a deep impression on Jeffia, is none other than his mother. Jeffia's mother is the sole source for Jeffia's inspiration in his life. She is the one who has left a deep imprint on her son, always accompanying him trying to compensate her husband's absence. One wonders how come both parents after spending their whole life, after marriage, under one roof are quite opposite to each other. To know the reasons for more analysis, it is imperative to study the gender socialisation of both of them separately. In case of Jeffia's mother, it is her deep insight to understand life better than her husband. She is more than happy to marry Jonan Okwe, She is the one who herself is studious, has deep knowledge of academic subjects and has chosen teaching as her profession. Her own choice of her profession of teaching has carved her son Jeffia's way, to choose same as his career.

“Great idea. Mum said the same thing too. She said when a vacancy comes up at the school where she teaches, she would help me get it (P-3).”

Along with son, Jeffia's mother also knows very well about her husband's over-indulgence in his factory matters. Though she is fully aware of her husband's struggle to keep the reins of factory in his hands, she is critical of him for not giving time to the family, especially their son Jeffia, who is at the growing stage. She is aware of the fact how badly Jeffia misses and feels his father's absence. She is irritated with Jonan's approach to his work and family who has failed to make a balance between work and home, his personal and professional life. She is a very considerate lady and loves her husband very much that is why she doesn't feel good but worried, when Jonan started ignoring his health and was not paying any attention even after having heart problems. Though she is angry with her husband's approach towards life, and supports her son in his studies and other matters, she doesn't let her son go against his father so openly.

She counsels her son for not to be critical of his father as she is the one who is complementing the absence of her husband. She makes him quiet, when in a restaurant, Jeffia was very angry with his father and started talking loudly, criticizing him. She is the one who knows how to live an ideal life, how to have a proper balance in life, and how much freedom she needs to give to all members of the family. It is her deep insight about life which enables her to talk to her husband about what is needed and how much his son is missing him in the home. She being a teacher knows the difference between good and bad and ascertains that her son should not move on the path of his father. All these qualities, which she displays in her character, are attributed to her own upbringing in her family and the career which she has chosen after marriage.

Jeffia's father, Jonan Okwe is the one who has become the reason and source of everybody's suffering and misery in novel. Jonan has made sure that he provides his family members with all kinds of facilities, which are essential to live a life luxuriously. He makes ample arrangements to send his son in good school so that he gets good education. At home he has bought everything of luxury to have a comfortable life. He is a materialistic kind of person. For him money matters a lot and he makes sure that he keeps on earning in an unrestricted way. In his pursuit of earning money, he has tried his best to keep company's decision making powers and

matters in his hands. He has sensed how his company officials were cheating on him recently, which actually was not the reality. Even he has not spared his half-brother Sowho who was instrumental and helpful to him in setting up of the factory. He trapped him and alleged him with false charges and got him imprisoned.

In the same way, he decided to teach Gbenga a lesson, when he comes to know, that he has resigned from his company and is planning to set up his own paint factory. He hires men to beat him at night near a hospital in which Gbenga died eventually. Cynthia's father was another person who had become victim of Jonan's ruthlessness. Jonan was almost perfect to deal with the people diplomatically. He beats Juliet, who was his mistress once, very badly when he comes to know about his pics with her. He bribed the police officer and used his name and influence, when he came to know that his son Jeffia was arrested. Other than all these bad qualities, Jonan was very ignorant towards his family which makes him villain before them. So his greed to earn money and his attitude has destroyed almost everybody, not only at his work but at his home also. In the same degree of ignorance he has forgotten his own health also. One wonders what makes Jonan so greedy for money that even he has risked his health. What makes him shape this kind of perception of earning money? What enables him to think so? What sets him on this kind of path? What has contributed in his, this kind of attitude? The answer is his family and family members. It is his family and his father that have contributed in shaping his perception. It is the words of Jonan's father, 'My son, poverty is a curse', which make him take money so seriously and earn it amply, come what may.

“A plague had attacked the village and people died like poisoned flies. Those who were healthy got their people out, the ordinary folk died miserably. When his father was dying, his father spoke to him six words, and didn't finish the sentence (P-9).”

These words of his father left Jonan with deep impression as he had said these words, when he was dying. How can a child take earning money for granted, when he has seen his father dying due to lack of money? Jonan knew, he could have saved his father from unknown plague if he had had enough money. A boy who understood the

importance of money, at a very tender age, at a very crucial time, is bound to earn money by hook or crook, and would not leave any stone unturned to earn it while running from pillar to post. It is quite obvious that Jonan was prone to indulge in wrong practices and ignored his family, own health in this blind race of earning money.

A character who needs to be highlighted, other than Jonan is Cynthia. Cynthia is the girl who later becomes wife of Jeffia. Cynthia's mother died when she was young. Her father's profession and life was ruined by Jonan Okwe. Cynthia, in absence of her mother, took care of her father who has become drunkard after the loss of his job due to Jonan's greed of money and mismanagement at his factory. Despite all odds, to look after her father and to earn money to support family in fulfilling all needs, Cynthia decides to take up the job of a nurse and works in the hospital, without getting scared of the night shifts where she was soft target to be molested by the senior doctors. She doesn't hesitate to help and take Gbenga, who was beaten and very badly injured. She doesn't bother when she was dropped on the half-way by Jeffia, when one day he was taking her home in his car.

She doesn't shy away to support her father, to help him go home and reach bed, in the presence of Jeffia. She had the abilities to accept and embrace challenges in her life. She did not hate Jeffia upon learning that it was his father who was responsible for all kinds of miseries in their lives. She acknowledged Jeffia's request to visit his home after the death of his father. She had all the courage to stand tall and firm to face the unprecedented problems in life. It is her family, education and her ability to understand the exigencies in life to be brave enough to face challenges. So this is how we have seen, social agents like family, society, school and peers, all have a great role to play in socialization of genders of all characters. In all agents, family emerges as the most influential agent which has a deep impact of characters of novel.

The Famished Road

The next novel, in which I am going to discuss gender issues and socialization of gender, is "*The Famished Road*", a novel for which Ben Okri has won Man Booker

Prize in 1991. "*The Famished Road*", is the story of an Abiku child and his struggle to stay with his family and parents. In the indelible background of the novel, it is the struggle of this Abiku child whose name is Azaro with his sibling spirits, who do not allow him to stay with his parents for a long time in the world of mortals. Identity of Azaro is of an Abiku child, which means a spirited child who has a long and deep association with the spirits. Azaro is one of his sibling spirits, who has spent time while roaming with them, being a part as one of them.

As per the nature and identity of spirits, they cannot stay away from others and do not let others stay away from them. Working as the per the identity of spirits, Azaro has taken birth many times to his mother but has to return to the world of spirits because that is what the nature of spirits is. He is bound to return to the world of spirits irrespective of no. of times he has taken birth to his parents, attributed to his being a spirit child. His arrival and leaving, or taking birth and dying, has left his parents in much pain and longing for a child for a long time. All of a sudden, in a bent of abrupt decision Azaro recently has decided to remain with the parents for a longer time in world. He does not die and return immediately to spirits which has annoyed them, who subsequently try to call him back. They harass and even try to kill Azaro when he does not respond and acknowledge their calls. This is how struggle between Azaro and his sibling spirits began which remains throughout the end of novel.

The novel is all about spirits attempts' to call and bring Azaro back and Azaro's ignorance and denial to the call of spirits. Azaro's decision to stay in the world has put everybody's life at risk including his parents' and the people's nearby. He has to move on a long way to stay with parents. Parents, who have always longed for him, were happy with Azaro but had to spend a lot of money to rescue him from the spirits. They had to sacrifice their own home, their little saving and even, were ready to sacrifice their own lives also, in order to keep their son with them. His parents' struggle to save him, his decision to stay and work at the bar of Madam Koto was the consecutive outcomes of his first decision to stay with parents. Azaro bore the insult to be a waiter at the bar of Madam Koto for the sake of his parents, who faced a lot of troubles, had lost their money and home to have him in their lives. This was, as he was thinking, his

way to compensate and pay back for all the pains and struggles they had endured. Azaro was trying to help and benefit his parents while working over there in bar, though, indirectly he was inviting spirits in various forms to attack him. Bar had become a favourite haunt for all spirits, where they found Azaro was an easy target for them.

Unable to bring Azaro back and frustrated with his reluctance to join them, spirits in various forms targeted and harassed Azaro's parents also, who (what they believe) were the reason for Azaro's staying away from them. Azaro's mother who was a poor old lady, was a hawker selling provisions on a hand pulled cart. She, out of courtesy saw the poverty in the family and decided to support her husband in earning money by selling provisions, which always brought a meagre or no amount of money. She faced a lot of problems, felt harassed walking and hawking in streets unsuccessfully coming back empty handed sleeping with empty stomachs. Azaro's father who was carrying loads to earn money, was not able to earn much due to which family was facing problems. After some time he decided to be a pugilist which gave spirits most awaited propitious moments making him an easy target.

Spirits were aware that it was his parents who were responsible for his stay in the world. Azaro had to return if his parents were killed. So they, in form of Green Leopard and Yellow Jaguar came and challenged Black Tygar to fight. Black Tygar was the name; Azaro's father had given to himself. So this is how we have seen the problems Azaro and whole family was facing with his decision to stay with them. So, at one hand, we have noticed that Azaro earlier was leaving his parents immediately after taking birth to return to the world of spirits to meet them. As a consequence, he is hardly alert to notice the pain and agony of his parents who always cried at his death. The obvious reason for his return and ignorant approach to his parents were his identity of an Abiku child who had to come and go back. He was working as per his identity ignoring all obvious or hidden impacts.

One wonders, what will be the reason for Azaro to go against spirits. What makes him go against his own identity of a spirit child? What enables him stay long in the world of mortals? What makes him bear the wrath of these spirits who were his companions?

What determines his shift from spirit world to mortal world, which proved fatal, putting everybody involved at risk? What makes him embrace a new life which was full of challenges beyond his imagination? What factors contributed in change of his perception, shedding old identity wearing new one which is full of problems? This transformation in him took place due to his family and people, who had been becoming his parents for a long-long time, but for a short period of time.

They were becoming his parents for a long-long-time means many times he has taken birth to the same parents in the same family, he had to return as he was an Abiku. Every time they were becoming parents but for a short while, as he had to return to meet companion spirits. Whenever he returned he left his parents full of tears, the parents who had been longing for a son for a long time. His mother has conceived him many times; bore labour pain several times just to have a child. She was on the verge of her death, with her ill health, but with one desire and longing to have a child. Her pain and agony was unbearable for Azaro to see her longing for a child. Azaro could not bear the thought of him as the reason of tears in eyes of his mother. He has seen the intensity of their longing to have a child and experienced their love for him during his short stays with them. Their tears were the proof of their love for him.

“But sometimes I think it was a face that made me want to stay. I wanted to make happy the bruised face of the woman who would become my mother (P-6).”

Somehow Azaro’s heart melted to see his parents’ love and longing for him which further made him stay with them. But his decision to stay with them was against his very nature. His parents’ love made him go against the spirits which were part of his identity, which were his fellows and companions, with whom he had stayed throughout. His family and love of parents for him altered and reshaped his perception and idea of spirits and parents. So in this case, we have seen Azaro’s family has turned out to be the social agent which has contributed in socialisation of his identity. It is his parents and their love for him which has enabled him go against the set system and identity unaware of forthcoming challenges and the problems he was going to face in the offing. It is his family and their longing and love, which has made him embrace a

new life, consequences of which were beyond his wildest dreams. We have seen contribution of his family in shaping new identity.

Unconventionally his family has made him go against his peers. Generally, in the life of an individual contribution of a family and peers, go hand-in-hand in proper compatibility. But this has not been the case with Azaro. In his case his companion's influence on him is dominated by love, affection and longing of his parents for him. His companions' and parents' influence on him stands in contradiction with each other, which further makes very difficult for him to adjust and move with them. It is that very struggle, rift and contradiction which lasts long, till the end of the novel. All other struggles, challenges and incidents become secondary and are the consequences of this struggle of sibling spirits to call back Azaro and his parents' attempts to let him stay and rescue him from spirits. Azaro's parents' characters also need to be highlighted to discuss the socialization process.

Azaro's father is a person, who, along with his wife, has longed for a child. He carries loads to earn money. He is a very strong man physically, but earns a little in his wages as the work is scarce and gets paid very little. He feels over cloud nine to see his son alive, even hours after his birth. He feels inspired and motivated and works energetically. He decides and plans to do whatever can be done to save his son from spirits. He sacrifices his little saving, which he offers to a sorcerer to rescue and revive Azaro, when he was caught by the spirits. He has to work more as he finds his family members sleeping with empty stomachs. For work he leaves early in the morning and comes back in the evening very late sometimes empty handed sometimes with very less money. At times he appears to be fickle minded when he plans to drop his work as a load carrier and become a pugilist giving himself name of Black Tygar.

“I had no idea what he was talking about. Instead of training at the house front, he now took to jogging down the street. ‘Black Tyger!’ people would call (P-441).”

He takes the challenges of Green Leopard and Yellow Jaguar which were actually spirits, who had come to trouble and kill him. He has very high ideals in his life, as he does not go with the philosophy of rich party. In fact he announces to have his own

party. He spends a lot of time in bar of madam Koto, drinking excessively. One major fact which should be noticed and analysed here is that Azaro's parents were agonised to see him dying soon after he was born. They faced a lot of problems in their attempts to save him from spirits. They were neither happy with his death, nor with his birth and his stay with them. They happily sacrificed their home, little saving and were ready to get to any extent to save him. Obvious reason for that was their longing and love for him.

It is the dream of every parent to have children as young ones. They were deprived of this happiness for a long-long time. How could they let go any chance which they were getting to save the child. It was his love for Azaro and his wife which makes him work till night. Family has played a great role in shaping his perception about life and work. He felt very much disturbed when Azaro disappeared for a while. For the sake of earning money and family only, he has fought with Green Leopard and Yellow Jaguar expecting earning huge amount of money in bet. Without caring too much for his life he fought those fights. He indeed wanted to do something for his family and people of area that's why he announced to launch a new political party. This way we have seen family becomes a source for him to face challenges in life. His character and strength of character is shaped with his association with his family. In family, his son worked as a driving force, and it is his love, affection and longing for him which enabled and prepared him to face the atrocities the life has to offer.

In this novel, two females' characters seem to be quite significant to be discussed. One of them is Azaro's mother. This is the lady who is said to be the one who makes everything fall into place in this novel. She, like other mothers, wants a child in her life for which she was trying for a long-long-time unsuccessfully. It is natural for a lady to have a child for which she was bearing all the pain throughout her life. It was not she wasn't able to conceive, but the death of her son always left her in tears. She is the one, for whom, it seems, Azaro has decided to go against his fellow spirits. It is for the love of his mother that Azaro decided to stay in the world. It is her longing and love for Azaro, which has made him let go of his identity of an Abiku child. She is the only one, who seems to work as a source of inspiration for Azaro to move against the

set standards, of an Abiku to return to his sibling spirits. She is the lady who is completely aware of how poor her family is, who has not taken life as it is. She has also decided to contribute in the family income.

Having a son, so many years after the marriage, makes her feel over the moon. In order to give a better life to her son and husband she also decided to work. She has made arrangements to be a hawker. She used to sell provisions on a hand-pulled cart. At times, it has happened that she along with her son and husband has slept with empty stomachs. For the sake of her child Azaro, she is ready to bear the challenges in her life. She has lost her home and little saving in order to save Azaro from his sibling spirits.

“When I recovered, however my parents had already spent too much money on me. They were in debt. And my father, who was rather fed up with all the trouble I brought, had grown somewhat sceptical of the pronouncements and certitudes of the herbalist (P-10).”

She is the one, who, for the sake of her son’s life, has gone to save him singlehandedly in the house of police officer. She waited outside his house for the right and favourable moments as conveyed by the sorcerer. She bore the wrath of nature there, by remaining outside the house of police officer, when it was raining dogs and cats. She has the courage to go and bring her son back, alone without her husband. She tries to maintain a balance between her husband and her son Azaro. At times when Azaro’s father, used to get angry on Azaro for his unexpected disappearance and his strange activities, she was the one who used to pacify him and counsel Azaro at same time. She was very well aware of the fact that Azaro was a troubled child and was to be rescued from his spirit friends at any cost. Azaro’s death always troubled her his life also gave her no respite.

To the questions, that why she was taking so much pain to keep her son safe and alive and helping family in income, the answers are quite obvious. She was the mother and it was her natural maternal instincts to long for a child and to save him from any kind of threat. It was for her son only that she along with her husband was ready to face the dangers posed by the spirits, lost their home, faced with a lot of problems at their new

house and bore the anger of residents of new area who wanted to get rid of them as Azaro's presence was troubling them also. So in case of Azaro's mother, her own family and maternal instincts were instrumental to help her face any challenge. These qualities, she must have learnt in a family. Family was the main social agent to determine such qualities in her character.

The most powerful character in the novel is Madam Koto, who runs a bar to earn money. Breaking the barriers of gender stereotypes, she is the one who moves against all odds and has opened a bar which turns out to be a place of profit for her. Madam Koto does not have any family to look after and is very brave, bold and violent in her approach towards others. She becomes a source of support for Azaro and his family. When everyone was turning against them, her involvement and support to the family silenced everyone in the neighbourhood of Azaro. Madam Koto was very much aware of Azaro's strange power and association with the spirits. To take advantage of his mysterious powers, she offers him the job of a waiter which was happily accepted by Azaro's parents as they were in dire need of money. Initially Azaro was hesitant but complied later as he has seen the tough time, the family was passing through.

“Dad thanked her for coming. Mum thanked her for the prayers and the wine. She looked at me and said, ‘you have a strange son, I like him.’ Come and visit me one of these days (P-57).”

As per her belief, Madam Koto took Azaro as good luck sign to attract customers. She was well-to-do and wanted to earn more money. She used a special kind of thread to attract customers. But Azaro noticed that thread was attracting strange kind of customers who were trying to target him in the bar. Later he recognised those were actually his sibling spirits coming to disturb him in various deformed figures. When it was election time in the area, Madam Koto decided to support the party of the rich, which was against the wishes of people of area. She decided to earn more money with this decision. In one way she tried to help Azaro and his family by offering him job of a waiter, in other way she was disturbing Azaro and put his life on risk by letting spirits come into her bar as customers. She was a pure business woman who calculated her profit she was going to make while employing Azaro in the bar.

One should not wonder if one calls her a greedy woman for whom money comes first in her dealing with the people. No doubt she offers job of waiter to Azaro, she doesn't employ him out of pity, but to take advantage of his powers to attract people to earn money. Party of the rich had bribed people with the spoiled milk, due to which people had become sick. Madam Koto did not bother for the reaction and anger of people of the area and announced to support the rich party. Against the wishes of people, she planned to earn money and take profit from her association with rich party. Due to her association with that party, movement in the area increased and she earned a lot, which was actually in vain.

To find out reasons of her this kind of dealing with the people, readers find the contribution of her own family and role of family in the process of socialisation which has shaped her characters and perception to deal with the people in such manner. The instincts she showed are actually the natural qualities of business people, who do not see any kind of emotions and sentiments but business only. She has applied her perception of a true business woman while employing Azaro and supported party of the rich in election. The bases of her this kind of dealing are ethics and qualities, which she has inherited while she was young. In this novel, we have seen almost in all characters it is the family which contributes mainly in socialisation of their genders and identity. Factors and agents other than the family have not contributed as much as the family has. Very less gender issues were evident in this novel, it was based on the struggle between Azaro and spirits.

Dangerous Love

Next novel, in which I am going to discuss and analyse socialization of gender is "*Dangerous Love*". This novel, '*Dangerous love*' is the refined version of Ben Okri's novel "*The Landscapes Within*" written earlier. This novel gives us glimpses of gender inequality and gender discrimination. The women who suffered this gender discrimination are Omovo's mother who is very badly beaten by his father and Ifeyiwa, who is married to an aged man and is victim of his violence at home. The story revolves around the central character Omovo who lives with his father and step mother Blackie. His real mother has died due to his father's violent behaviour at

home. His father is a drunkard, who, owing to his habit of excessive drinking, has hit his wife very badly and has killed her. A lady who was subjected to home violence, found it very difficult to survive and succumbed to her injuries. Omovo's father does not hit his son but Omovo has to pay a lot due to his father's beatings.

Now, he is left without his mother, the only person at home he was close to. Omovo felt very much shattered emotionally, when his mother died. There was nobody who could console Omovo in the family and among relatives; there was nobody who could provide any help in his studies and career. Father was habitual of excessive drinking habits and was of no use, when it comes to Omovo's studies, career and job. Above that Omovo's father had married to a lady who was younger than him, in age. Her name is Blackie. She is step mother of Omovo who has married Omovo's father with an eye on his little wealth. Omovo's father had married her to get company in old age and for sexual needs which he found very difficult to fulfil. As per Omovo's observation Blackie was simply consuming her husband's wealth while trying to cheat on him every time.

Omovo's interest was in painting and there was nobody who could guide him in that area. Exhibiting the poor living conditions of his local area, he made one painting 'scum-scape' only to discover that his painting was confiscated by the authorities as soon as they came to know about it, alleging Omovo for displaying the pathetic situation of the area. Omovo, who was a budding artist, lost his enthusiasm in painting after receiving such a cold response and allegations from the authorities. He could not gather this strength to make another painting, and eventually decided to leave painting as a career option. He was back in a state of dilemma and helplessness when it came to the question of his career.

The time of death of his mother was shocking to him, he felt distressed second time, when he was criticized and threatened not to make such paintings again. Not direct, but Omovo was indirect receiver of his father's violent behaviour to his mother. He had nobody to discuss the ups and downs which were happening in his life. Omovo was lucky to get the job of a clerk in a paint factory in town, during high time of unemployment. He felt gratitude in his heart, for this job was going to support him

financially. Though, it was rejuvenating for him to get a new job, it was becoming difficult for him to settle at his new workplace where people and his factory clients were seeking favours from him. It was going to be very easy to deal with somebody who would have been worldly wise to deal with the people at work place diplomatically. Omovo found it very difficult, to manage and deal with the people who were trying to bribe him and seeking unofficial favours, as he considered himself man of values and honesty.

As it was predictable from his honest and truthful approach at his workplace, Omovo was trapped by the fellow workers. They found him very difficult to be associated with at the job. Everybody at his workplace found Omovo unsuitable for the job, due to his extreme honesty. At his place, after he was terminated, a new boy was appointed who was manager's own nephew perfectly suitable guy for that kind of job, who was capable enough to deal with the people diplomatically, coming up-to the expectations of everyone, including his co-workers and factory clients. Omovo was kind of unsuccessful at his workplace, as he had to leave his job which was not up-to his own expectations. The only solace Omovo was getting was, with his sightings of Ifeyiwa. Ifeyiwa was a young beautiful wife of Takpo, another drunkard living in the neighbourhood of Omovo. Omovo was naturally attracted towards her as she was like Omovo' mother, who too, was victim of home violence of her husband. Soon after they had seen each other, they became lovers.

Ifeyiwa was very much aware of happenings at Omovo's house. She was aware of Omovo's loneliness after the death of his mother. She was aware how helpless Omovo was feeling without company of a suitable person in the proximity. Omovo was aware of Ifeyiwa's helplessness at home, they had become lovers instantly as both of them suffered a loss in their lives and wanted somebody else to comfort them in their sufferings. Quite obvious it was for them, not to expect any solace from their family members. They though, had not met anywhere in the beginning, but were happy to see each other in the neighbourhood. It was like both of them were looking for a supportive person whom, they could share their feelings with.

The whole of Omovo's life was full of grieves and miseries. First he lost his mother, second when his painting was confiscated, and third when he had to leave his job of clerk. There was nobody in his family with whom he could share his feelings and be close to. The only person, who gave him a happiness and satisfaction to be associated with, is Ifeyiwa, who is also a sufferer. How could he manage to love a lady who is married and has her husband, living next door, one wonders. How could Omovo get ready to leave his job at the paint factory at a time when there was unemployment in excess? What makes him move against all odds? It was quite obvious that in case of his mother's death Omovo was helpless.

Omovo was helpless in case of his painting, when it was confiscated and he was threatened not to make such portraits again. But in case of his job as a clerk, he could have compromised as he was penniless. He was not getting any kind of support from his father, who was a drunkard. He naturally but firmly decided to love Ifeyiwa, despite the fact that she was married and living in the neighbourhood. What makes him beat all odds and face the challenges bravely and go for something, consequences of which were out of his reach? Why was he ready to face the anger of Ifeyiwa's husband and his own father, who could have thrown him out of home, on revelations of his affair with Ifeyiwa? What made him change his perception and prepare him to face the worst? The answer lies in his own association with his mother, and the values given by her which became the base of his character.

In the process of socialisation it is his family and mother whose love and values had shaped his personality. It is the impression of his mother that enabled him to embrace criticism at his work place, moving on his principles not to compromise with the professional ethics, even at the cost of his job. This is the impression of his mother on him that in such a high time of unemployment, he bore the consequences of his honest approach happily. In case of Ifeyiwa, he had seen the miseries of his own mother who was subjected to home violence and who succumbed to the injuries due to his father's beatings. His value and education gave him enough courage not to let any other lady become victim of home violence, who eventually happens to be his beloved. So all,

we can say, in character formation and socialization of gender, it is his mother and family which contributed to great extent as a main social agent.

Other than Omovo, the character to be highlighted is of Ifeyiwa. Ifeyiwa is the girl who is sailing in the same boat of Omovo. Like Omovo's mother, she is also subjected to home violence by her husband Takpo, who is a drunkard and a wealthy man without wife. He is much older than her, almost double in age. In background of Ifeyiwa, she is a very intelligent girl, whose father died at a very young age. Becoming fatherless child, at a very young age, made her life in the family very difficult. They were very poor and their poverty became a curse for them. She was very good at studies but had to abandon her studies as her relatives in collaboration with her mother, were planning for her marriage. She was a brilliant student who wanted to pursue her studies. But her father's death and her being poor had other plans in the kitty for her. Her mother was pressurised by her relatives for her marriage and her mother too felt compelled for the same who thought Ifeyiwa a burden on her.

The match, who was selected and searched for Ifeyiwa, was double of her age. It was Takpo, a short man with a heavy purse under his belt who appeared on screen as her would be husband. The question of choice for Ifeyiwa was over as she herself was not ready but was being forced to get married that too, to a person who was older than her age. The only quality which he had for everyone was that he was a wealthy person who had allured Ifeyiwa's mother and other relatives with his money. Ifeyiwa's life was completely shattered into pieces when she married Takpo and came to his home to live with him. It was altogether a new experience and transformation for her to leave her parental home at a very young age and come to live with a person who was actually a drunkard, a quality or habit of Takpo, which she came to know later.

It was difficult for Ifeyiwa to adjust and survive in a different kind of suffocating world. At times she thought of committing suicide. She could not let a person touch her who was double of her age and had married her only for sexual pleasures, as his first wife had died. Her rejection and denial did not please Takpo, who loved and was respectful to her is the beginning. Her continuous denial led him to beat her very

badly. Takpo moved into habit of excessive drinking knowing that he had failed to win over her. This worsened the situation for Ifeyiwa in return. She was being targeted more frequently than before, by her husband who was feeling insulted in his unsuccessful attempts to touch and enjoy her beauty, youth and body. This made him bad tempered not only towards her for others also. Her life, in the house of Takpo was almost impossible and difficult. For Ifeyiwa it was Omovo who brought respite in her life, like she was reason for Omovo's happiness in his life. Ifeyiwa was aware how badly Omovo was being treated in his family. Her own life and heart was broken with the violence of her husband. Omovo was also a sufferer of his father's beatings. Presence of Omovo has brought a new hope in the life of Ifeyiwa. She was trying to find the lost comfort in Omovo. She loved Omovo but could not reveal her feelings for him in the beginning as she was very watchful of other's presence. She was aware of anger of her husband who was going to kill her, if her association with Omovo was going to be disclosed. She was not aware of Omovo's reciprocal feelings for her in the beginning. But felt quite happy and over the moon to find the same.

Everybody was so watchful that she could not afford to meet Omovo in busy market. But one day when she found the favourable opportunity, she got some arrangements done and planned to meet Omovo in an empty house of a lady. She had a lovely meeting with Omovo where they made love to each other, enjoying each other's company, beauty and youth as well. Though later on when her husband and others came to know of their secret meeting, they escaped with great difficulty. She knew she was going to face her angry husband at home. Readers here, wonder about the courage Ifeyiwa showed to see, love and meet Omovo at a secret place. She has shown commendable boldness to make arrangements with the help at the lady who was unknown to many in the area. How could she manage to have such guts to meet Omovo?

What makes her so courageous to take such bold steps against the wishes of her husband? What leads her to face the anger and beatings of her husband? Beating all kinds of odds, beyond everybody's eyes, how did she manage to arrange a special room to meet Omovo? What alters and contributes in the shift of her perception about

life? Who and what was responsible for such shift? Answer of these entire questions lie in her own upbringing in the family, where everybody was well behaved and polite. She was a studious child who was exposed to niceties of life. Coming into the house of drunkard was beyond her dreams. This kind of life she had never imagined, which was equal to hell. She had almost given up to the pressure of family. She was aware of the fact that she was not going to get any kind of assistance from her parents who could save her from Takpo. Only one person, who could save her, was none other than Omovo.

Omovo gave her hope and sole purpose of her life was to win his love. Omovo himself wanted a shelter somewhere. Both of them proved to be perfect couple in perfect harmony. Her family and love for Omovo became an inspiration for Ifeyiwa to face anger of her husband. Somehow it was her education which helped her throughout difficult times and encouraged her to wait for the right moments. Waiting for the right person with right moments came with Omovo. Omovo's love for her gave her courage and strength in character to endure the beatings of Takpo. Takpo's violence in excess also made her bold and courageous to bear more and more. This is how we see that her family and education have contributed to great extent in socialisation of her gender and strength in character, which helped her bear obstacles bravely. Other than Omovo's mother and Ifeyiwa the character which remains in limelight is, Blackie.

She does not suffer any kind of gender discrimination or any gender related issues, unlike Ifeyiwa and Omovo's first mother. She seems to be in a better position, is married to Omovo's father and has some authority. What makes her choose Omovo's father, is his wealth. Omovo's father was not very wealthy but it was sufficient for him to attract any lady to give company in old age. Blackie, finding the right kind of moment, grabbed the opportunity and got married with Omovo's father. She was deceiving him, as he was physically incompetent to enjoy the youth and beauty of Blackie. It is due to inability of Omovo's father, which led her move away from him. Readers might take her as a cheat, but if it is so, then it is because of Omovo's father only.

The reason for miseries in the life of Omovo was none other than his own father. His father had become habitual of excessive drinking due to which he used to beat his wife who consequently succumbed to his beatings and died. Omovo's father neither hit Omovo nor supported helped him in any kind of activity. The reasons, for Omovo's father's such kind of violent behaviour towards his wife, are conventional, in which women are not given equal place to men and they are maltreated and subjected to humiliation and violence at homes. They are often subjected to gender discrimination. In process of gender socialisation of Omovo's father, the main social agent is, his family and the orthodox social structure which gives freedom to men and subject ladies to their atrocities, whether they are at work or at home. With the same kind of conventional and orthodox perceptions to deal with the women, Omovo's father becomes violent to his wife and beats her unrestrictedly.

Another male who exhibits same kind of qualities like Omovo's father is Takpo, who is drunkard and has married Ifeyiwa alluring her parents with his money. Takpo's first wife, like Omovo's mother has died but reasons of her death are not disclosed to readers. Takpo has become a widower as a middle aged man who finds it difficult to survive alone. Therefore he starts looking for a perfect match, which he soon is happy to find. He was not a violent person initially but was not expecting such a rough response from Ifeyiwa when he tried to approach her to enjoy her youth and beauty, on their first night. Her constant rejection of him made him furious and violent. He felt too much insulted and humiliated and was considering himself unsuccessful as he was unable to win over her, either with love or with force. He took it as a challenge to his manliness, as he was unable to control her. So in case of Takpo, the obvious reasons of his becoming violent towards her are her approach towards him.

No doubt it was difficult for Ifeyiwa to adjust and survive with Takpo but he had married her with the proper agreement with her parents, that's why he could not tolerate his inability to penetrate into her.

Reasons for him to become violent are obviously as orthodox and conventional perceptions of men for women. He, like any orthodox male, considered Ifeyiwa simply an object, who, he maltreated owing to her refusal of him. He did not bother to

respect her and her opinion. He felt betrayed and defeated from his wife. So we have seen the socialisation of genders in this novel and major social agents which impacted the lives of characters, are family and orthodox thinking of the people, who, according to historical perceptions feel insulted and become violent to avenge and compensate that insult and exploit the women to satisfy themselves personally.

The Freedom Artist

“*The Freedom Artist*” is the last novel, in which I am going to discuss the socialization of gender. Ben Okri has written this novel in 2019 which is his latest novel. “*The Freedom Artist*” as the title says is the story of a boy who is in search of freedom, makes one, when he does not find it. Protagonist of the novel is Karnak, who loves a girl Amalantis. Among all characters, other than Karnak and Amalantis, two characters are important. Out of them one is Mirababa a young boy, and Ruslana who is connected to a movement. There is one question in this novel, which is a kind of puzzle to the readers and the protagonist of novel Karnak. That question is, ‘who is the prisoner’. Karnak tries to solve this puzzle and unearths the mystery at the end.

Karnak loves his girlfriend Amalantis very much, who is taken away from him, in front of his eyes like a dream. His passive response at that time is of significance as he accepted it very naturally. She is gone in front of his eyes, though he doesn’t know, where. This kind of response shows passive approach not only of Karnak but of other people in the society also. Many strange things are happening in front of his eyes and in his surroundings. But his response remains cold and passive. Unique and noticeable thing is that very soon Karnak starts feeling the absence of his beloved Amalantis. Not in the beginning, but sooner than later, he almost becomes restless for what has happened in front of his eyes and where she has gone. Now he is in search of his beloved, searching and looking for her in whatever way he can. Now he becomes observant and alert to all happenings around him, like people screaming in the streets, worlds like Books, Upwake, and Revolt written on bills, flying in the streets overhead.

“Karnak made the finding of the question-askers one of the chief missions of his life. After catching glimpses of them in the field at night, he often returned there

with the hope of seeing them again. But he saw only the increasing presence of the police (P-49).”

Histories are being changed by the people in power accordingly. Karnak is shocked and pained to see people’s response to his questions, during his search for his girlfriend Amalantis. Though one should know and wonder, he too, has shown such kind of pathetic response at the time of his girlfriend’s arrest. It is during his search, he comes to know about Ruslana and a different kind of movement and activity, which is going on secretly. In his search, Karnak meets painters who were influential people of their time and the book shops. It is during one of such kind of visits, he comes into contact of Ruslana. He finds two types of people in society. First kinds of people were not expressing their opinions openly. They were moving like machines and were not allowed to speak openly which is banned. They at times, start shouting in the streets.

They burst into tears and laughter, all of a sudden, almost in a fit of excitement, in buses at shopping malls, giving very less or no response to happenings around them. Karnak was one of them at the time of his girlfriend’s arrest. Karnak speaks very little that too in company of Amalantis. He remains quiet and keeps Amalantis also silent. He hushes her whereas she speaks of books, library, being alert and remains awake. According to Karnak, these are kinds of prohibited words which people are not allowed to utter openly. He only speaks of love and wants her to speak sweetly to him, which irritates Amalantis. She responds silently with a smile but still responds and was very well aware that Karnak too, one day would realise the meaning of that secret smile and would become alert and respond.

Now time has come for him to realise, become alert and become responsive. And the first response he gives is of wonder. He wonders how mechanically people respond to his queries about her and others. Now he becomes part of the other group, the group in which people are not afraid to utter the words and do the activities, which are prohibited by the authorities. Karnak becomes the artist of freedom when eventually; he joins the people in the other group. Readers wonder, what makes him go from one group to the other. How does he learn to respond to something which, as per his

intellect and perception, is correct? How does he learn and what makes him switch over his nature and identity? What has contributed in his shift, in which he listens to his own conscience?

Answer lies in his transformation which happens to him in absence of his beloved. The social agents, that have contributed in his shift, are not his family but his company his peers. In his case, he doesn't have any company or peers at the time of shift. He is alone but has the influence of his company which he had in past. This company is of his girlfriend Amalantis. It is his love for Amalantis which makes him do what he encouraged Amalantis to avoid. His love for her has made him leave one group to join the other. This shift and transformation does happen so smoothly that he unknowingly moves from one to the other group. His love for her, her absence and pain of separation for her, all these factors combined to bring the required changes in him. He is able to become the freedom artist and unearths the mystery of question and answers it as 'everyone is a prisoner', who is to be freed and has been freed at last.

Another character of prominence is his beloved Amalantis. Amalantis is the girl who loves Karnak very much and reacts very sweetly but effectively whenever Karnak tries to quieten her. She doesn't feel embarrassed to see Karnak's passive response at the time of her arrest. She did not want him to react abruptly but was aware that he would wake-up one day and react and respond accordingly. Amalantis is one of the members of group, which is engaged in activities which are banned by the authorities. She is arrested and she knew it like all others, who were partaking in activity of distributing flyers, pasting bills etc. Amalantis was a girl who had ample courage to think differently, go against her boyfriend and the authorities. She knew one day she was going to be imprisoned, aftermaths of which she was not aware. She was happy to be part of the rebels' group and was happier to continue with the same, despite Karnak's sweet scolding time to time. She knew there was possibility of threat of her life walking on this dangerous path, nevertheless she kept on walking.

“Amalantis had wanted to be a teacher, but she refused to teach because she said that everything they were made to teach was designed to kill the souls of the

children, designed to render them stupid before they had begun to live. She would say, 'I would like to un-teach' (P-102)."

In her case, readers must find answer in her right, honest and justified approach to life and her own conscience. She was the girl who did not have any kind of doubt about utterance of words and performance of prohibited actions. She has a bold approach towards life. And she has acquired this approach due to the company she is having. In her company all are like-minded people who are working for creation of society, where all should be equal and one should not fear anybody on any ground. She is in the company of people who are determined to wipe out fear from the minds of people by organising certain activities secretly. Her peers and might be her family, are main social agents in socialisation of her gender.

Ruslana and Mirababa are the people who are part of the group of rebels like Amalantis. They are the ones who are instrumental to give a new hope and shape to the society. Mirababa is a young boy, who is being trained to read by reading and his trainer is none other than his grandfather, who, with a lot of riddles and questions tries to keep Mirababa energetic, alert and creative. Mirababa is considered the last hope. He is very young and his grandfather doesn't want to him to become like other people who are like machines, non-responsive to any happening around them. He is being trained to read out as people have almost lost this ability and skill. He is being trained to read the old books of history, systems and values. Books, old books which are destroyed (only few are saved as tokens) and modified by the authority accordingly. He is being trained by his grandfather to be a beacon for the people.

People who are asleep at the moment, people who need to be awoken, people who don't respond and are to be taught to be alert and responsive, people; who, when awoken, are to be shown the way, are to be led in search of freedom, freedom of expression, freedom to remain free. He is being trained by his grandfather to train people to read, think and analyse and decide what is wrong and what is right. Mirababa's grandfather is responsible for his upbringing. It is Mirababa's family which is main social agent, which is instrumental to bring him and choose this path of risks. It is his family which is socialising his character and gender in this way.

Mirababa's approach is the result of sacrifice and teachings which his grandfather has given to him.

Ruslana is a beautiful mature girl, who runs a book shop. For readers may think that her sole purpose of running a bookshop is to find out people of her group. The strategies and methods she adopts, are very simple. She is supporting the group of rebels in her own unique way. She contacted Karnak. Karnak contacted her and came to know the kind of person he was and found out, what actually he was looking for. She provided every kind of support to him and helped him in his search for Amalantis who, she was sure; was arrested by the authorities. In Ruslana's case it was her family and her father who contributed in her socialisation and upbringing. It is her father who was the caretakers of last writers and who showed her the way to listen to her conscience, even during adverse times.

Analytical Outcome

It can be concluded through the novels of Ben Okri that gender and gender identity of a person is slowly and smoothly but manually formed by the agents of the society. It is true that these social agents, through the process of socialisation, equip individuals with all values and beliefs. Owing to these values, systems and standards they live in, they are able to form their genders and gender identities and as per their identities they become aware of the roles they have to play according to the situation. In the socialization process of gender we have justifiably noticed the role and importance of family of a person, his peers and friends, his school teachers and school mates and the active role played by media in his life and formation of his/her gender. It is thus proved that it is not only the body and sex of the person which alone contributes in the formation of gender identity but all these social agents are also of equal importance. In my Next chapter, I am going to view works of Ben Okri through the lens of performativity, a theory given by Judith Butler.

Chapter IV- Performativity: Subversion and Evolution of Identities

The researcher in this chapter will throw light on theory of performativity propounded by famous feminist theorist Judith Pamela Butler, in order to challenge the genesis of established notion of identity to further locate ways to reformulate the same. People in a societal structure, are led to exhibit and showcase the very beliefs and values of the groups and communities which they think, they are members of. They become the representatives of the very groups and are bound to follow the certain rules and regulations pertaining to that group. They perform certain actions which are/should be in sync with the identity, value systems and principles of that group. They are in the centre and become source of identity of that group by conforming to the code and conducts of the group. In this kind of system, doer of an action is in the centre who becomes a performer. Performer performs as per the set structure in a system from whom emanates the very identity. Judith Butler disagrees with this school of thought. For her, it is not the actor or performer but action or the performance, which is in centre and a source from which identity of the group emanates. Social structures culturally produce identities through the doer at the centre, in contradiction to this, Butler says, not the doer but deed is in centre. She opines that it is not the performer but performance and series of performances which leads to performativity. Butler's focus is on the category of men and women, who act in a sexual binary, legitimating all those who fell in this structure, invalidating others. Butler challenges this system of determining identity and categories of women. She further goes on to point out the stability of notion of women, analysing works of many other theorists. Given below is analysis of Ben Okri's novels through the angle of performativity.

Flowers and Shadows

With poverty and corruption prevailing in post-colonial Nigerian society, this novel presents the malpractices of a businessman to keep the reins of his paint factory in his hands, his ignorance of his family and his son's hatred for him. Keeping too much busy in factory matters hinders not only this person Jonan Okwe's personal ties with his family but his health also. Jonan's ill ways to deal with people professionally has landed him into troubles. People in his profession include his partners in the factory

and his half-brother Sowho. He has manipulated to imprison Sowho, and is after his partners now.

His son Jeffia, who is a studious child, is completely aware of his father's mishandling of his factory affairs and opposes him, initially silently later openly. He feels the absence of his father and has an intuition that one day he has to compensate all the misdeeds of his father. Jeffia who is opposed to his father, is very close to his mother. His mother who is a kind hearted lady, teaches in a school and supports her son to criticize his father (her husband). This is her impact and impression on Jeffia that he has great inclination for teaching. Cynthia is a beautiful girl who is also a victim of Jeffia's father's ill practices in the factory. She is a brave girl who takes care of her father after the death of her mother and happens to fall in love with Jeffia and become his wife subsequently.

Though the main character of the novel is Jeffia Okwe, Judith Butler in her theory of performativity has focused on the category and gender of women. Researcher too primarily has focused on female characters, then male ones. Two female characters of the novel, who contributed a lot in life of the protagonist and in storyline, are of Jeffia's mother, and his beloved Cynthia. Jeffia's mother has deep impression on her son Jeffia. She is a soft spoken lady and is a teacher by profession. She has a great mastery over her subject and is very much respected in her school by Principal, and by her colleagues, equally. She is instrumental in the development of her son's great interest in academics. Jeffia is a studious child and is expecting wonderful grades in forthcoming results. It is her impact on her on him that he is a compassionate, animals loving boy, and has decided to become a teacher in her school only.

“Anyway, I will speak to the headmaster of the junior section to see what he can do. Take it easy, Jeff. There was a glint of fondness in her eyes. She went on with her washing. It made her happy to talk to Jeffia about his plans (P-47).”

Jeffia loves his mother very much and loves to spend time with her, helping her in the family chores, which eventually strengthened the bond between them.

“Let me help you, mum, Jeffia said, taking the basin from her. He helped her change the water from the tap near the kitchen that was used to water plants (P-17).”

Jeffia’s mother was very happy to see Jeffia becoming good natured and helpful and felt a different kind of contentment. She loved Jeffia not just her only son but also because she was proud of the kind of person he was turning into. It always made her happy to see how her son was progressing well on the path of goodness. Though it always gave her a contradictory feeling whenever she thought of her husband.

Her husband Jonan Okwe has a different style of living, which has become a point of worry for her. Jeffia’s mother knew about Jonan’s engagement in his factory affairs. She was living a satisfied life which Jonan had provided to them in their home. Jeffia was sent to a good school to receive quality education. There was no lack of comforts at their home. They were provided with all things of luxury which they had never thought of and which was merely a dream for many others. But she was aware how ignorant Jonan had become for his family. He used to move out in the morning and come late night from the office. He rarely met with his son at home. His son Jeffia could feel his absence and missed his fatherly love. Jeffia’s mother knew it and considered her husband at fault for not giving time to the family. To run business successfully, Jonan had ignored his health also and his wife was too much worried about him and the family equally.

“Jonan. Every night for the past few says, he had been coming home late. He was sullen and withdrawn and his face wrapped in deep business worries. She seldom spoke to her over dinner and as soon as he had finished eating would go upstairs to his room. Business was doing badly. It showed (P-39).”

She was becoming anxious of Jeffia’s impulsive reaction to Jonan’s ignorance. She had seen a change in Jonan which was subsequently affecting and transforming Jeffia into a rebellion.

“Now things seemed to be coming out from the shadows. Hazily at first, then more definitely. Jeffia’s becoming rebellious Jonan’s heart attack; her nightmares (P-39).”

She had become silent as she was awestruck to see the imbalance in life of Jonan which was further unbalancing everybody in the family. Though she was critical of Jonan for ignoring his family, she always tried to justify whenever Jeffia inquired about his father.

Though she was aware that things were going from bad to worse, she had a kind of hope in her heart. She never let her son Jeffia go against his father so openly. She quietened him, when in a restaurant; he questioned his mother about his father, and found her avoiding any discussion about his father. She always took Jeffia as a well civilized son, and too young to understand company matters. Though she knew Jeffia was right to criticize his father.

She was trying to fill the void which was created by the ignorance of Jonan to his family. In character of Jeffia's mother, we can see how her actions determine what kind of person she is and what kind of identity she has acquired and carries. In any normal view, a woman could have avoided such situation and given up so easily. But Jeffia's mother has stood on her ground so firmly and resisted her husband's over engagement in his business.

She tries to go against the set standards of the system in which women are made victim of the circumstance. She somehow tries to fight that discrimination which women normally face. In such kind of suppressing system, women are not allowed to speak and are dominated and beaten to death. But very strongly Jeffia's mother tries to fight for the sake of family. She regularly questions and warns her husband about all the wrong happenings which she hears about in their company. She attempted to make, with her observance and warnings, Jonan mend his ways. 'Eventually after many similar quarrels, Jonan promised to be more careful... (P-25)'. It was the education that helped Jeffia's mother to control and rectify the situations. In a male dominating world, though at last, she lost her husband, but to some extent she was successful by not letting her son follow his father's paths. Thus we can see that these are her actions, which shaped and established her identity in the society breaking all barriers.

After Jeffia's Mother the character which researcher is going to discuss is that of Cynthia. Cynthia's father was once a worker in the factory of Jonan. Her father was one of those people whose life was ruined by Jonan, to take full control of factory matters. Cynthia's mother had died for the reasons unknown to the readers. After losing his job in the factory, Cynthia's father had started drinking too much and had now become a drunkard. He had become old. The onus to take care of her father, was on her shoulders now. She was a soft-hearted, down to earth girl. Though her poverty had humbled her, she had the dignity to take care of her father, supporting and moving him to bed, when she found him drunk in the streets.

The perpetuation of poverty had forced her to take up the Job of a nurse, agreeing upon working at night shift, when she was easy victim of her senior doctors. She was very kind and helpful by nature. She supported and helped Gbenga reach hospital when she saw him being attacked and bleeding. She was pure at heart and it is the purity of her heart which enabled her to help a stranger in the mid of night at a deserted place. She was an epitome of grace and dignity, did not feel embarrassed when she was left alone in car by Jeffia. She was a resolute, a firm believer in goodness, and a symbol of courage, strength and boldness. She firmly objected and reacted to the misbehaviour of one of her senior doctors, who during one of his nightly visits, tried to take advantage of the situation by molesting and seducing her. She was a true lover of Jeffia, was quite aware of his tender hearted approach. She did not hesitate to ask him, who was stranger for her that time, to help her take Gbenga to hospital.

“I don't think so. The man there, she indicated pointing was beaten up by a couple of crooks and he is badly injured. I need help to carry him to our clinic not far away. I decided to walk a bit. Then I saw them beating him up. Then they ran away. He is badly wounded and needs help. Believe me! (P-56).”

This instance shows the purity of her heart that is always ready to help others irrespective of the prevailing odd circumstances. She was not the girl who would run away from the adversities of life and had courage to face such odd situations in

presence of others. She did not mind supporting her father to reach home, while he was in the streets lying drunk.

“That night Cynthia had to carry her father to his bed, change his drink sodden clothes, and clean up his vomit which gave off a stench that would have embarrassed a pig (P-77).”

In another instance she was the girl who accepted the practical life with courage and did not succumb to pressures of life.

“From experience she had discovered that the doctors were used to making passes at the nurses. The last time one attempted it on her, she walked out and managed to get a lift home... she was picked on to do the nasty jobs (P-51).”

At very young age she had lost her mother, subsequently it was she along with her father whose life was ruined by Jonan. Life had thrown her into pangs of pain. She was almost always ready to face the unexpected courageously.

“The events of her life had taught her to leave a little mental gap for the unpleasant and unexpected. She had experienced more downs than ups, the downs only succeeding in pulling her lower than the ups could raise her. But she had fashioned an attitude of quiet courage and resilience. She had learned to live with herself and with life as she found it (P-53).”

Cynthia had developed full acceptance to life. It is one of braves only who accepted life to its fullest even during the most adverse circumstances. She was able to maintain a balance when truth dawned onto her after reading diary of her father.

“Today we were arrested. They say it was because 1000 cans of paint are missing which we were supposed to have taken to Acomo. My wife and a few friends arranged my bail, I know I am innocent but nobody believes me. Even my wife. Our Oga did it to me ... I know ... the man hates me so much ... (P-80).”

Having a right kind of approach only, made her believe that Jeffia is a pure soul, who has a grudge for his father. For the sins of the father child cannot be punished. After

seeing the love in the eyes of Jeffia, even after knowing the fact that his father was the reason of miseries in their lives, she decided to love Jeffia to complete their life.

“It’s all happened already, Jeff. Nothing you will do change things. You can’t go on like this forever, regardless of what has happened you must go on living, you must face life what it is, man. Reality is outside door, you must stretch out and reach for it and adjust to it (P-186).”

Thus we can see a girl who is very young and becomes motherless at a very young age, finds her father, a hardworking man - turned - drunkard, could have succumbed to the challenges of life. But Cynthia showed the signs of bravery, breaking all odds of life, irrespective of the situation of perpetual poverty she faced in her life. Researcher has highlighted all her actions which have laid the foundation of identity of a strong girl against all odds of life. The characters traits, Cynthia have shown in her personality are truly heroics.

One would have taken advantages of Cynthia for her being a girl. The instance which she faced in the hospital where a doctor tried to put his hands on her indeed indicates the mentality of maximum males, where they think they are the speaking subjects. They have subjective approach towards women and think them as objects, to be enjoyed. According to the idea of power and sex being coextensive, she is thought to be regulated, used and molested by somebody who seems to be more powerful than her, and justifying his actions during that time of the day. Cynthia seems to be suffering from the loss of a family member. She might be missing her mother so much, finds it very difficult to internalise that loss initially. Later, circumstances helped her to come out of that loss which she expresses in the form of mourning. She finds it easier to accept the reality of her life and face challenges more bravely.

In a male dominating heteronormative social structure, one would associate all attributes Cynthia has shown with the boys but she acted unexpectedly to all readers’ expectations as a true warrior in life. She helped Gbenga without any expectations from him. Understanding the sensitivity and gravity of situation she sought assistance from Jeffia during night. She realized and fulfilled her duties of a responsible daughter to look after her father at a very young age without the help of her mother. She bore

the loss of her mother. She faced life courageously and warned doctor to resign. Being loving and helpful, she consoled Jeffia after the death of his father. Applying the theory of performativity, we can see it is her actions which determine her identity, subverting the notion of a weak and timid girl, transforming and evolving her into a strong one breaking all barriers in her life.

Jeffia Okwe is one of the four main characters of the novel. He is a studious boy who has right approach towards life. Jeffia goes against the wishes of his father who wants him to be worldly wise and practical boy but for Jeffia there is much knowledge in books, and power to discriminate and understand what is right and wrong.

“But Jeffia was different. He was gentle and intelligent, tall and bright for his nineteen years, he had developed a sense of maturity that never failed to amaze his mother (P-19).”

Being educated and loving to his mother, Jeffia has sensitive attitude towards small children and even animals. He cares to get a puppy free from two boys, who were trying to hurt it out of fun and laughter. He even remains delicate to those two boys and gives them some money as he takes puppy from them.

“Why don't you leave that puppy alone? What do you get from punishing it? He said, moving towards them. They turned around startled. Expressions of surprise and resentment alternated on their faces (P-4).”

Jeffia was very close to his mother. It was her impression on him that he was able to develop an interest in books and wanted to be a teacher in the school where she was teaching, Very much watchful to the expressions and activities of his mother; he took care and always helped her. On his side too, closeness had developed with his mother. It seemed to Jeffia that she was always there that she had always been there. Though Jeffia and family were provided with all kinds of comforts in their lives, Jeffia always felt a void which puzzled him. That void was created by the absence of his father who was completely engaged in his business matters. ‘Father? He would say the same things. Besides, I hardly see him. It's as if he doesn't live here anymore (P-27).’

Jeffia becomes aware how and why his father was worried and engaged in his factory matters. He wasn't aware of why people were getting shocked to hear his surname. It was bit later when he started realising it that his father was the reason for ruining many people's life. He had noticed the first glimpse when he met Juliet, who was his father's mistress, to give her puppy. 'Jeffia, Jeffia Okwe. She nearly dropped the tray. But the slip was brief.... Are you Jonan Okwe's son? P-31.' Jeffia never liked his Father's criticism for him. Father always wanted his son be like him. Jeffia always felt choked whenever his father used to scold him and preach him on nice things in life. They hardly used to meet each other.

“But that paternal spark of affection, which went above a mere sense of duty was not always manifest. There was between them the forced and strained air of people who were thrown together (P- 69, 70).’ ‘It is months since I went out with dad. He always seems to be thinking deeply about something, he always looks serious and business like (P-20).”

Jeffia witnessed the miseries his father had created in the lives of others. His father was responsible to ruin everybody's life. He was eventually aware that it was he, who had to compensate for the sins of his father.

‘The sins of the father Then there was Cynthia. A horrible glimpse into the shadows my father had left behind. A dark past stretched forward through time. How could you possibly confront her again (P-179)?’

We can see how actions of Jeffia determine his identity in the novel. Readers might think the son of an uncivilized and cunning father will turn out to be cunning, crafty and manipulative but this does not happen in case of Jeffia. Actions of Jeffia have evolved him into a boy whose life can be taken as a perfect example in an ideal society,

‘My son, poverty is a curse ... (P-9)’. Jonan Okwe, who is said to have destroyed everybody's life in the novel, has a great influence of the quoted words. Jonan Okwe owns a paint factory in the novel which is not doing well lately, and he engaged himself to great extent to keep the reins of factory in his hands. Because, to let the

factory move out of his hands means to let the money too slip out of his hands. Readers must keep in mind that a person who has seen his father dying of poverty will not leave any stone unturned to grab it.

“A plague had attacked the village and people died like poisoned flies. Those who were wealthy got their people out, the ordinary folk died miserably. When his father was dying, his father spoke six words to him, and didn’t finish the sentence. They were the words behind his life, (P-9).”

These six words in one sentence became base in life of Jonan. He manipulated his half-brother Sowho into prison, who has worked with Jonan to establish that factory. He wanted to remain at the position of CEO of the factory and wanted overhauling as the factory was going in loss. He was of the opinion that people were trying to deceive him filling their coffers. He became suspicious of Gbenga when he resigned from his post. Gbenga was one of his faithful workers. Jonan thought Gbenga was going to start his own business, and wanted to teach him a lesson. Tensions of business were affecting their family ties.

“After the night when he told her of Gbenga’s resignation they had seen relatively little of each other... she was angry that he had allowed his business to affect a marriage that had endured for over twenty years (P-39).”

The problems Jonan was facing in the business, were affecting his personal life also. The person who was suffering very badly was his own son Jeffia. They used to see very less of each other. Though, Jonan had provided with his family with all things of luxury. There was a void as a kind of lacking, which all things of comfort could have never filled. That void was created by his own absence in the family, the time which he was not able to spend with his son. And the person who was at the receiving end was none other than his own son Jeffia.

‘Though his father had given Jeffia the best education and a good life, Jeffia was resentful that he put so much of himself into the business at the cast of his family (P-79)’.

Jonan could not spare even his wife from his harsh behaviour. It was not that he was rude to her from the beginning. They had spent lovely moments initially but now things were moving downhill for Jonan in business and in family too, consequently.

“He used to love telling her about his business experiences ... Now he greeted any question about the office with a sharp wave of the hand and a curt, I don’t want to talk now. Then he would lapse into his grim thoughts (P-39).”

Jonan was trying to resettle his business by reworking his office practices but was ignoring his life and health completely. Thus we can see in the character of Jonan, it is his actions which are giving us glimpses of what kind of person he is, his identity, his nature, his behaviour to deal with people and his aim in life. Jonan must have inherited the inspiration from the last words of his father. He has naturalised and internalised the words of his father and has made earning money the goal of his life, which he reflected through his actions. This is how Butler’s theory of performativity is justified in the novel *“Flowers and Shadows”*.

Dangerous Love

Next novel, which is in focus for the researcher to be analysed is, second novel of Ben Okri *“Dangerous Love”*. Published in 1996, this novel presents the struggle of a boy who gives the impression of an outsider (due to his strangely shaven head), to earn a living without support of anybody and to win love of his beloved, a young beautiful married girl living next door. This is story of his endeavours to be a successful painter, whose painting is confiscated by the authorities for making an attack on the system by portraying low living standards due to, too much poverty and filth. This is the story of his survival in a paint factory he was fired from, for being too much honest to be a clerk.

This is the story of a young girl, who after the sad demise of her father, was thought to be a burden and was forced to get married to a middle aged widower. This is story of a boy whose mother has died and who finds it difficult to put up with a drunkard father and step mother. This is the story of two middle aged men who get remarried and try to find solace in arms of their new wives, unsuccessfully. This is story of a post-

colonial society which is engulfed in the evils of poverty, corruption, illiteracy and unemployment. This is the story of two people's endeavours to fight all odds for the sake of their love. This is the story of new life and hopes sprouting in the hearts of lovers with a society full of all kinds of hindrances for common people, in the background. This is the story through which Ben Okri has tried to highlight the miseries of common people in a poverty and fear-stricken world. Researcher shall highlight the character of Ifeyiwa, who seems to hog limelight, and has impressed the readers.

Ifeyiwa is one of the main characters of the novel. She bears the brunt of being a female that too a young girl. Her gender of female has landed into trouble in a society which is an orthodox one, where only males are the ones who make decisions about others along with themselves. She has been sacrificed by her family under the '*Claudian notion of universal law of kinship*'.

“Without any choice in the matter, the marriage was forced on her. She ran away from home, but she was caught before she reached the village boundary and brought back. She made attempts at poisoning herself, but gave up each time at the last moment (P-103).”

She was the girl who wanted to study as much as she can, but could not. The evil befell on her with the death of her father, who died of uncertain reasons. It became difficult for her family to pay her fee and continue her studies. Subsequently she was withdrawn from the school and was expected to help family to earn money.

In a society, where males are the ones who work in a system of kinship, decided the fate of her life. She was victimised under this universal law and was forced to sacrifice her life as a requirement to establish and strengthen this system. She was thought to be an object to be used to regulate others. She was rendered helpless and was forced to marry a person who was more than double of her age. By objectifying her this law of kinship justified it, without taking any concern of what she thinks. She did not receive any support from her family members and relatives including her mother. In fact these very people only, were instrumental to get her married. One thinks, how a lady can sacrifice a child at such a young age. Answer to this, lies in a rigid regulatory frame of

heterosexual society in which practices of exchange of women are internalized with continual execution of women subjection.

With a heavy heart Ifeyiwa got married to Takpo who was a widower and well-to-do man. She succumbed to the pressure of her family, who emotionally blackmailed her to marry him. She thought her life was full of problems. She had become completely hopeless girl in her life. She felt herself like an animal which was sold from one owner to the other and who finds it difficult to survive in a strange filthy environment completely severed from its previous life.

“In spite of all her honesty, her energy, her dreams, this was where she had wound up. This was where her life had washed her up. Her mother had named her Ifeyiwa. It meant there’s nothing like a child. This was where that child had ended, with rats; with a man she hated (P-109).”

It was all a miserable life for her, which she had hated. Living in a society with all strangers who acted like hunters, it was as if she tried to end her life many times, but could not. There seemed no hope for a girl who was merely a child out of school, who was forced to leave her world of books. She had never thought, her life would turn upside down for her and would change from bad to worse. It was only after seeing Omovo in her neighbourhood, she found a boy in him who she could love and who seems to have given a new life to her. She fell in love with Omovo, very watchful; she did not disclose her feelings for him initially. Once she felt Omovo drawing towards her, she also started expressing her feelings. Having a lover next door, sprouted a new hope and life in her.

“And so their innocent conversation turned into an exploration. There was no strain. Each time they met, they always had something to talk about the swell of their feelings always provided some excuse or another for meeting in the backyard...Ifeyiwa began to go to his compound more than she needed. It became necessary for her to see him, and to know that he existed (P-109).”

Omovo gave her a new hope, she felt so much fascinated towards him. His was a natural love for her without any kind of particular intensity. It was her love for him,

which eventually increased all the miseries and distresses in her life, but which became a base for a strong relations. She was so much devastated previously that she could not afford to lose her love for him. Omovo's love was going to be the biggest strength and treasure trove for her, which she was not going to lose at any of cost. Making a clear contrast at one hand, her life was wrapped in darkness and gloom with Takpo, on the other hand, it was a pure love she was going to have with Omovo. Takpo was a drunkard who had lured and paid, her mother and relatives but was a middle aged who used to beat her. Omovo though was a poor boy, used to love her unconditionally.

“A moment later he saw her go into one of the sinister bungalows. The outer walls were blackened with smoke. There was a patch of mud in front of the disintegrating stairs. In an open kitchen at the side of the house... The room was bare. Ifeyiwa was sitting nervously on the edge of a bed (P-272,273).”

Transformation of Ifeyiwa, from a fear-stricken young delicate girl to a strong, courageous young lady, has shown readers to break off chains of conventionalism. One could have easily given up in such adverse circumstances. Ifeyiwa too would have succumbed to the challenges of life, had she not found a lover in Omovo, for whom she almost risked her life. It is the actions of Ifeyiwa, which on one hand are subverting her identity, establishing and evolving the other.

Omovo is the protagonist of the novel. He is a young boy who aspires to be a painter. Omovo is living a life full of miseries. To add to his miseries, he has had his hair trimmed from a barber who happened to be an untrained apprentice of the actual barber. He had his head shaven, which gave him a haunted look. The onlookers addressed him as an outsider to make fun of him.

‘After paying apprentice he.... and went home amidst taunts of Afaricorodo, shine-shine head from the children around (P-3)’.

At a very young age Omovo was exposed to harsh realities of life. At a very young age he became motherless, who had succumbed to his father's violence. Life becomes

irreparable for a child whose mother has died at a very young age whose father has become a drunkard, has remarried a lady who is always fighting with him.

“Omovo, feeling abandoned, tried not to think of anything. His mind whirled lightly. The bulb swung gently. The wind whistled through the compound. They had a ferocious argument about food and afterwards Omovo, fearing that she might take to poisoning him starting eating outside, Bits of these hanging tensions come together new and then ignited into a quarrel (P-79).”

In order to find relief from homely rifts, Omovo used to rush out of his home. Avoiding clashes with his step mother Blackie was a temporary refuge for him, he could not find a real solace anywhere. Yes at times he tried to divert his attention by working on his painting, which he had started long back and had not completed yet. He liked the idea when people used to talk to him about his painting, though; he hated to be addressed as a painter boy. He had spent the whole life in the slum which was always full of garbage, dirt, filth and stink. Through his painting Omovo wanted to display the reality of their lives and miseries that people of that area were facing.

Omovo was deeply saddened when he learnt about the confiscation of his painting by the authorities. His painting scum-scape was his idea to let the people know the world through his eyes. He did not like his painting be confiscated, but could not go against the authorities. Without reacting much, Omovo surrendered to the authorities and pledged not to paint again in such a way.

‘There were a few black painted chairs in the room. Omovo was made to stand with his back against the wall. The manager was nowhere around. Only unfamiliar faces.

‘Why did you do that painting?’

‘I just did it.’

‘You are a reactionary.’

‘I painted what I had to paint’.

‘You want to ridicule us, eh?’

‘I read a newspaper report. I heard an argument. I had an idea. I had to do it, so I did it. It is you who are reading hidden meanings into it’.

‘We are not in some stupid fight, in a bad artist imagination ... This work will be returned to you ... you can go, but be warned (P- 50, 51)’.

Having such a bitter reception for his art, which he thinks was his masterpiece, was beyond the wildest dreams of Omovo. He had not expected such a bitter fruit of his hard work which he did to paint the canvass. Omovo was almost clueless after he was reprimanded by the authorities. His painting was a successful medium for him to stay away from homely tension, and to give a way to his artistic talent. He again had to go back to his home where he found his father busy, making step-mother happy. Omovo had nowhere to go. His brothers had long back left his home, since they could not see another lady at home, after the death of their own mother.

Omovo was very happy as in a situation of high unemployment; he was able to get the job of a clerk in a paint company. Omovo was able to escape from the homely violence and tensions which he used to witness at his house, after he took the job of the clerk in that paint factory. But that respite for him was short lived, soon after that it became very difficult for him to survive in paint factory, due to his candid, unworldly and honest approach in life. That was the time of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria. People were dying of poverty and starvation. Rate of crime, looting and unrest was very high.

Getting a job was not less than a dream for Omovo which was going to help him in his survival. But he was being offered bribe to settle things quickly, which he was not accepting.

‘Mr Babakoko found what he was looking for and, running alongside Omovo, began to peel off notes from the bundle he had in his hand It seemed like a substantial sum. He attempted to pass it into Omovo’s hand. But Omovo rejected it (P-249)’.

It seems Omovo was a crass to act in worldly practical ways, he was showing completely honest approach at his working place, where almost everybody was corrupt. Soon, it was Omovo who faced consequences for being too much honest.

“Excellent you have spoken your mind. All is well taken. As I said, the department is accommodating. Put in your letter of resignation with immediate effect, claim you salary and allowances and go. Good luck to you. I have works to do, if you don’t mind (P-347).”

Everybody disliked Omovo at his work place, where he not only for himself, but for others too made it very difficult to work. And the reason of this difficulty was, honesty of Omovo. Omovo might be a failure as son at home, as a painter, and as a clerk in paint factory also, but he was a success for being original, authentic, honest and pure at heart. It was purity of his heart only which won him Ifeyiwa to his side. He was fortunate to win Ifeyiwa’s heart. And it was simplicity and honest approach of Omovo only which attracted Ifeyiwa towards him. In reality Omovo and Ifeyiwa were sailing in the same boat. Both had suffered home violence, both were victims of their fates. In case of Omovo, his mother was no more, in case of Ifeyiwa, she had lost her father. Loss of the loved ones had forced them to face new situations which were very difficult for them. So both of them found soul mates in each other.

“A light flashed through him, his senses came alive. The figure moved again it was her, it was her all right. He looked around no one was watching. He began walking slowly. He felt wonderful. The night was so beautiful (P-161).”

It was Omovo’s love, Ifeyiwa was ready to bear all consequences to be with him, and for Omovo it was for her love for him which gave him strength to face difficulties bravely. Thus we can notice that in all instances, Omovo would have behaved as a defeated boy but he did not. He could have easily succumbed to the challenges of life and would have given- up easily but he, through his actions have shown true and honest approach at factory, irrespective of the repercussions that he faced, for not being co-operative and worldly wise. Loving a married girl landed him into trouble but for the sake of his love for her, and her love for him, he loved her. It was their love for both of them which made their lives complete. So we can see how actions of

Omovo established his identity as a true and honest warrior, it is his actions only which became a source for others to know about him as a strong boy.

A low profile but an important character of the novel, is of Blackie. Blackie is step mother of Omovo. She is second wife of Omovo's father, like Ifeyiwa was second wife of Takpo. But there seems to be a great difference in both of their situations. Both of their husbands, (Omovo's father and Takpo) were drunkards. But Blackie had a great say in all matters related to home, she had good control over her husband. She never liked Omovo in the house and wanted to get rid of him by manipulating things. On the other hand, Ifeyiwa was a timid girl at heart, she was completely dominated by her husband, who used to beat her very badly and wanted her to love him forcibly. Blackie was not a violent woman in the beginning of her innings as a wife of Omovo's father. She was warm and careful towards all three sons of Omovo's father.

“When she first came to the house, she was warm, understanding and self-sacrificing. Omovo's brothers treated her with mild condescension. She tried hard to please them and sometimes made a fool of herself in the process. Then gradually she reveals herself (P-78).”

Blackie was not as submissive as Omovo's real mother. She was quiet to understand and know all the homely secrets of the family. Though very polite in the beginning, she was totally a different person later. Owing to her, both of Omovo's brothers had left home and wanted Omovo also leave at once. She made her husband depend on her even for small-small things. Omovo's father also noted the difference between his first wife and Blackie. At one hand, his first wife had died of his violent dealings with her at home; Blackie was at another level, she had controlled him completely.

“The man came to depend on her for those little necessary comforts. His father saw in her something that wasn't in Omovo's mother: a readiness to submit and agree with everything he said. A desire to worship him silently (P-78).”

Things become difficult for Blackie when she got pregnant soon after she came home; but miscarried. She was completely devastated for not having a child. She was disturbed and turned her point of anger, towards Omovo. Because Omovo was one of

the brothers, a soft target, who had not left and stayed at home. She several times tried to confront Omovo, pressing charges against him in an attempt to turn his father against him. She tried to talk to Omovo in abusive language in order to inflame him and was successful many times.

“Who are you setting your fists for?’ You can't do anything, you hear me, you can't do anything you want to fight me not so; you - want to fight me, eh? She wasted herself up and then she reached out and grabbed him by his shirt front. (P-80).”

Blackie was desperate to take control over everything in the family. She controlled and dominated Omovo's father completely, who as a consequence had turned to be a drunkard. She was using her husband's wealth but was enjoying spending time with others in the locality. We can see the difference in her situation and that of Ifeyiwa.

In a similar kind of situation, she also would have succumbed to pressures of life but proved to be a lady of mettle who fought all odds and established her identity in and opposite manner to that of Ifeyiwa. It is her actions, which we are the source of her different kind of identity. One wonders, how she can become so courageous in a system which is said to be the output of heterosexual matrix. How she could oppose the established norms to establish her identity in a different way. She has shown that she is not only meant to be a medium and part of reproductive system. If one who is said to dominate, is male and man, is she man here? Blackie, breaking all conventional approaches and rigid regulatory laws, has proved that identity is actually an act which can be produced, de-produced and reproduced.

Character of Omovo's father is a relevant example to discuss, Judith Butler's theory of performativity. Though Butler's focus in her theory was mainly on the identity of females only, the same premise of performativity can be utilised to discuss the male genders also, since their actions also become the source of subversion and evolution of their identity. Actions of Omovo's father showed the subversion of his identity of a violent, dominating man to evolution as a dominated, helpless and submissive man. On one hand he beat his wife to death, on the other he felt completely helpless against

a woman, who happened to be his second wife, eventually rose against all odds and presented her strongly. He used to be very strict with his sons and wife.

“They always take their mothers side when She was being beaten and badly treated by their father. Their detachment grew into something secretly frightening to Omovo (P-83).”

He, who used to abuse and beat his first wife; could not speak anything against his second one, and was feeling helpless and defeated. Omovo’s father was not as violent to his sons, before the death of wife, as he was, after the death. It seemed his helplessness had made him change his targets; he threw his two sons out of home and was angry at Omovo every now and then. It seemed that his father was simply a puppet in hands of his second wife. But again, how could he not say anything to his second wife? This lady had also come into his home as the outcome of universal law of kinship, then why is this person who is supposed to dominate, is dominated and defeated from her. In a system, where females are thought to be unrepresented and misrepresented, and males are thought to be the decision makers speaking subjects, a universal person, who establish and justify the heteronormative structure by manipulating language, how this person acted, enacted or reacted contradictorily! One wonders.

Against Omovo’s father, there is the example of Takpo who is also a widower, remarried with Ifeyiwa. His dealings with Ifeyiwa are quite different than that of Omovo’s father’s with Blackie. Takpo is the true representative and symbol of heteronormative structure. He is the one who seems to follow rigid regulatory norms. He offers dowry to marry Ifeyiwa at an age which is not appropriate for girls to be married. He has used the power of money and language to assert this dominance, in the system. He truly supports the statement that power and sex are co-extensive.

‘He wanted to marry a young girl who would take care of him in his old age ... He made his approach to the elders of Ifeyiwa’s family. The dowry was paid and almost all other arrangements had been finalised before Ifeyiwa knew what was happening (P-103)’.

Some more apt examples are as follow.

“He talked to her sweetly. He begged her even tried bribing her.... he grew angry, he beat her. He punished her; he starved her (P-103).”

Identity has many forms to take, depending on actions. Ifeyiwa first submitted then revolted strongly. Omovo acted against all odds despite being poor. Omovo’s father was a dominating turned dominated man. Blackie proved established notions of women entirely wrong. Takpo used all the means to get a chance to penetrate through Ifeyiwa lovingly first, then forcefully. Ifeyiwa is subjected to male dominated heterosexual system. The Theory of performativity is aptly justified in this novel.

What a person becomes is entirely what a person or how a person acts or made to act. Thus identity is an act, it’s a performance, and becomes performative with continuous repetition. This repetition of acts, establishes Blackie as a strong courageous woman whereas shows Ifeyiwa as a submissive, soft hearted, helpless girl. But if a gender or gender identity is an act, and these acts establish an identity, these very acts only, can be used to establish, de-establish, and re-establish identity or gender identity in a given social structure.

The Famished Road

The third text in which researcher is going to analyse theory of performativity is third novel written by Ben Okri. This landmark text was published in 1991 for which Ben Okri was awarded with Man Booker Prize. This novel is true example of Ben Okri’s craftsmanship. The setting of the novel is in the society where elections are nearing and leaders are thronging the areas to woo voters, with their tempting promises. Like other novels of Ben Okri, this novel too, has imposing theme of poverty in which people are dying of hunger due to scarcity of work. Novel presents a perfect narrative of magic realism.

Novel is about a child who happens to be an Abiku child. An Abiku child is the one who is said to be a spirit child, who takes birth to the parents many times and dies quickly, the one who keeps coming and going or keeps vacillating between two worlds i e mortal world and spirit world. This child’s name is Azaro, who takes birth

and dies many times to join his sibling spirits. This novel tells us the love of a mother for a child. Azaro's parents have been longing for a son for quite many years after their marriage. Many times the child is born but dies immediately as he is a spirit child. Parents do their best to save him every time, but could not. Finally mother was almost half dead, with the loss of her vitality and hope. Novel presents the struggle of Azaro with his companion spirits; once he makes up his mind to stay with his parents. It seems this struggle between Azaro and spirits has become main theme overlooking poverty, since all other events are outcome of this struggle only. This struggle, and longing of parents to save child from dying, has made an impact on everybody's life and is actually beginning of his parent's troubles in their lives. All characters in this novel are perfect examples to discuss Judith Butler's theory of performativity.

Azaro is the central character of this novel. Azaro is the name of a boy who is an Abiku. Being an Abiku, Azaro is one from a group of spirits, which always stay connected in a group in each other's company. They have their identity as spirits and always live in the world of spirits beyond the world of mortals. At times they have to take birth due to earnest longing of some parents but they die soon and are not able to connect to anybody emotionally from the world of mortals. All companion spirits or sibling spirits take birth and die, live in a group in the world of spirits. They hate every happening of mortal world and tend to return to their world for which they die as soon as they are born.

“We feasted much because of terrors of eternity. We played much because we were free, we could assume numerous forms, and many of us were birds. We knew no boundaries ... with our spirit companions, the ones with whom we had a special affinity, we were happy most of the time because we were floated on the aquamarine air of love (P-3).”

Being in the company of spirits, every spirit was working under a pact. This pact was mainly for those who used to take birth. This pact was final, unbreakable and binding. Companion breaking the pact would be hallucinated by others and would find solace with their return to their world of spirits only.

‘As we approached another incarnation we made pacts that we would return to the spirit world at the first opportunity. Those of us who made such vows were known among the living as Abiku, spirit children... we had the ability to will our deaths...those who broke ... would only find consolation when they returned to the world of the unborn, where their loved ones would be waiting for them silently (P-6)’.

We see how these spirits were connected and bound to each other, with the pacts. It is the identity of the spirits to stay together; they have such set rigid system which they have to follow. This very system generates their identity and becomes for many others as a source of knowledge about them. This pact has kept all spirits together.

One is surprised, how Azaro, who has made a vow to return to the world of spirits, has decided to stay in the world of mortals. It seems he is fed up with regularly vacillating between two worlds or he feels very sad to see his mother in gloom or might be out of adventure he has made up his mind to spend time as son in the world of human beings.

“But this time, somewhere interspace between the spirit world and the living, I chose to stay. This meant breaking my pact and out-witting my companions. It wasn’t because... or it may also have been that I wanted to taste of this world to feel it, suffer it, know it, to love it. I wanted to make happy the bruised face of the woman who would become my mother (P-6).”

Azaro’s decision to stay with his mother put his life and the lives of his parents in danger. Azaro knew that with his decision to stay with parents, he has broken the promise and the pact, that his decision would infuriate his sibling companions. They would fight and harass him continuously to make him return to their world and join them, which actually was happening. All sibling spirits first pleaded with him to return to their world, and when they saw Azaro’s denial and defiance to their request, they started harassing him.

“What are you doing there?’ One of them would ask, why don’t you know? Haven’t you seen what lies ahead of you? ‘Come back to us’, they said. ‘We

miss you by the river, you have deserted us'. If you don't come back, we will make your life unbearable (P-8,9).”

This is how Azaro inflames them by breaking the pact and by not paying heed to their requests. Azaro's parents were aware of Azaro's connection with spirits. They noticed him talking blankly to somebody in the air. Azaro's companions harassed and even tried to kill him. His parents who loved him very much, tried their best to save him. They used their money and savings to save him, they were many times exhausted and defeated in their endeavours to save him.

“Afterwards my companions took great delight getting me into troubles.... as I went over the voice a car almost ran me over, the day they enticed me with sweet songs into a gutter... when I woke up I found myself in the coffin.... I learnt afterwards that I had lingered between not dying and not living for two weeks. I learnt that I exhausted the energy and finances at my parents (P-9).”

Azaro for the sake of love of his parents decided to stay with them, putting himself and his parents' lives at risk, because later spirits were trying to take him back by killing him. Azaro even was ready to help his parents financially, by accepting Madame Koto's proposal to work in her bar. Azaro simply wanted to make his parents happy but he had never imagined the problems he was going to face later. At Madame Koto's bar also many spirits started coming to disturb and kill Azaro in different forms.

‘When I began to go to Madame Koto's place I understood why the spirits were, curious about her....I went to her bar in the afternoon after school. One afternoon I was sitting in my customary position when the earthenware pot began to rattle (P-9)’.

Azaro, out of love for his parents, made a decision to stay with little longer in this world. He broke the pact and ignored the requests and warnings of his sibling spirits. He started working as a bar boy. He noticed he was in danger, along with his parents. He tried to encounter the spirits in the bar. Words like broke, ignored, started working

as a waiter, noticed danger, are all actions which re-established the identity of Azaro as a rebel, and with that Judith Butler's theory of performativity also.

Like everybody's mother, Azaro's mother was also longing for a child. And this is for her longing only it seems, that Azaro who is a spirit child, feels forced to break and dishonour the pact which he has made with his sibling spirits. Her longing and expressions of defeat, gloominess and disappointment must have compelled Azaro to go against his identity, to stick and move together with other spirits.

“But I sometimes think it was a face that made me want to stay, I wanted to make happy the bruised face of the woman who would become my mother (P-6).”

This is the love of mother and father for Azaro, which made them not only spend their little saving but risk their lives also many times, to save him from death. Though, they were very happy to save Azaro, this happiness was the beginning of their struggles to save him, in which they lost their home and almost everything they had.

“When I recovered, however, my parents had already spent too much on me. They were in debt. And my father who was rather fed up with all the troubles I brought... I tugged mother across the streets and a few moments later an articulated lorry banged into the house we had been standing in front of and killed an entire family...I woke up and ran out of the room... My parents came after me. We discovered that the compound was burning. (P-10, 11).”

This is how we see that parents lost almost everything they had and tried to save Azaro from his companion spirits. In fact this is the beginning of their attempt to save Azaro and the hardships that followed. They were threatened to pay for all the slum sheds which were burnt in that incident of fire, which forced them leave place and search for a new one to live, which was difficult for them being poor with their savings gone to save their son from the spirits. There was time when Azaro's mother had to save him singlehandedly.

She wasn't aware of the location of her son when he once, fled and got lost in an attempt to save himself from the spirits. Parents once again arranged some money to

get the services of a sorcerer to find him out but the onus to save Azaro was lying on the shoulders of the mother singlehandedly as conveyed by the sorcerer. Motherly heart was ready to face all the challenges, life was throwing at her. This time the task was more difficult as Azaro was trapped in the house of a police officer and when the lady went to rescue him from there, the weather was not favourable with heavy rains falling, in which Azaro's mother had to move on bare foot.

“I moved closer. There was a woman standing in the doorway, her hair bedraggled and wet, her eyes distracted, her neck strung, her feet bare. The rain poured down on her mercilessly. These were dead cockroaches about her feet. I saw a rope round her neck connecting her to the sky. At first, she didn't move. She didn't seem to recognise me. She stared at me with empty eyes. After a short silence.... Then she lifted me up into the air and held me tightly to her warm, wet body (P- 32, 33).”

Azaro's mother was a strong lady in character. She was the lady of determination. She was a resolute. Her love for her son made them spend all they had, and made them homeless. They had to stay in a rented room in a new slum area where the landlord was a wretched man disturbing them every now and then for fare. She was not the lady who was going to give up in the face of adversities. She made-up her mind to help her husband earn money, to give her every bit and be a partner in the family to bear all the miseries equally. She was an infirm lady physically and could not do much, but became a hawker and pulled a cart full of daily life provisions, moving on the streets of the town without earning a single penny. She could not do much but she was doing what the best she could do, to give her contribution to make life easier.

“I learnt that dad had gone early to look for a job. Mum was exhausted from the search, the feast, all the walking, the worrying and the cooking. That morning she had brought out her little table of provisions, to the house front. She sat on a stool, with me beside her, and dispiritedly crooned out her wares...we didn't sell a single item. In the afternoon, that people the dad had borrowed from to buy drinks, came to collect their money they threatened to seize mums goods. They hung around... (P-61).”

It is not only Azaro's mother who was suffering due to perpetual poverty, Azaro's father also had lost his job of carrying loads; he used to carry loads as he was a muscular man but was helpless due to lack of work and employment in the area. Father was also facing the consequences equally for longing a child. He lost his work as they had shifted to a new place. There was no work at all as they were being paid very less as compared to amount of works they were doing. Other than the lack of work, mother father both were being troubled by spirits, besides Azaro. Mother was being hallucinated and was made to move into streets in vain, father had developed a notion to change his profession from a load carrier to a pugilist. As he was a strong man physically, he decided to be a boxer and launch his own political party. He was speaking ideally as in a surreal dream.

That was the idea of spirits, to make him lose track of his work. Eventually, he as Black Tygar, fought Yellow Jaguar and Green Leopard and won over them. These were nothing but the spirits only, which he fought, in his dreams. Many times, he was knocked down very badly and lost consciousness lay asleep for weeks, but it was his strength only which helped him to stand on his feet and go to work again or fight again. Mother and father, both experienced their atrocities, owing to their longing for a child.

“It was dark when mum returned. She looked haggard and the sun-blackened. She shuffled into the room, dropped her tray of provisions, fell on the bed, lay there unmoving, and was instantly asleep...she lay there grumbling in an ancient monotone about how hard life was, and I listened intently (P-177).”

Father's agony was no less than that of mother's. He was being abused by people at the workplace, which he used to tolerate for the sake of earning living. He started staying away for many nights, sometimes weeks also and slept many times with empty stomachs.

“But when I opened my eyes I saw the bags in the mud. One of them had rolled over the gutter. Dad stayed in the ground, covered in the mud, not moving as if dead, while his blood trickled from his back and mixed with the rubbish of the earth. And then the supervisor came running ... (P-176).”

Fighting with spirits was another kind of struggle for him. Spirits tried to control mind of father, making him stay on the bed for days after each fight. He was being tempted by spirits to have a fight with them. The only motive of the spirits was to kill family and Azaro to make him return into their world.

“They made a bet. Then the fever of betting caught everyone and the fat man who owned the betting shop up the street went round collecting odds on dad. Most people favoured Green Leopard. Green Leopard had limbered up and worked himself into a great sweat (P-453).”

Thus we see both mother and father toiled and worked to keep their body and soul together. We can see that it is their love for their child, which gave them immense strength and faith to face all odds in life. They fought all the challenges not only with mortal beings but with supernatural creatures also. They had never imagined that the challenges they were facing were all due to the presence of their son in their life. Their lives, before the birth of Azaro were miserable but more miserable and painful after the birth of Azaro.

One of the very important characters of the novel is, Madame Koto. Madame Koto runs a bar and is an overbearing lady who has very impressive aura to make others quiet with her dominating appearance and expressions. Madame Koto is a very important character for two reasons evident in the novel. She is without family but a very confident and strong lady. If we draw comparison, at one side Azaro’s mother is there who is very polite and submissive lady, Madame Koto on the other hand has a terrifying personality. Second reason is equally pertinent to Azaro’s family.

In the town where everyone was against and threatening Azaro’s parents for money, it was Madame Koto, who though had lent only Azaro’s parents, never pestered them for money and kept everybody at bay by showing her association with Azaro’s parents.

“Another of our creditors, as we learned lately was Madame Koto. She was the only one who did not come to drag for her money... they left and Madame Koto came with a bowl of food and another of pepper soup. Mum didn’t want to eat,

she was so weak, but we pressed her. I washed the plates and took them back to Madame Koto's bar P- (P-61).”

Madame Koto was a great help to Azaro and his parents. Nobody dared to speak aggressively long, after they came to know of her assistance and nearness with Azaro's family. She never hesitated to spend any amount to help parents of Azaro; she was carrying a character which was in contradiction to that of Azaro's mother. Later to be of more help and to further strengthen their ties, Madame Koto offered Azaro the job of a waiter in her bar, which was like a blessing in disguise for Azaro's parents. It was difficult for them to survive and they were unable to find work for themselves in the area with Azaro's work as a waiter at the bar, they were going to kill two birds with one stone. Other than the food, Madame Koto was going to give some money to Azaro which was going to supplement the family income.

But that offering of job to Azaro, was not in vain for Madame Koto. Somehow she had come to know of mysterious powers and attractions of Azaro and she was of the opinion that Azaro's presence would lead to increase number of customers in the bar.

“When I began to go to Madame Koto's bar I understood why the spirits were curious about her....sometimes when I came in from school she would be in the bushes in the backyard and as soon as she heard me she would shout: ‘Sit down, sit down and attract customers, draw them here. I would sit and swat flies (P-89).”

Azaro's visit at the bar gave him troubles more than the wages he was receiving, as he had to encounter and fight many spirits there, who were coming to trouble him in many forms. Madame Koto was a pure businesswoman who wanted to flourish her business with the help of Azaro, for which she succeeded to great extent. Later to earn more money and fame, in the elections, she decided to support the party of the rich. She was aware of the fact that her association with the party of the rich would shower her with fame and wealth as well equally.

“I don't have plans of my own, eh? You think, I don't want to build a house, to drive a car, you think I don't want servants, you think I don't want money and

power, eh? I want respect. I am not going to run a bar forever. Now I am here tomorrow I am gone (P-290).”

All this shows that she is a lady a business temperament. Her personality and identity can be attributed to all her doings. Like her, Azaro’s wishing and planning to stay with parents changed his identity from a pact follower to pact breaker which subsequently led to all other happenings in the novel. His taking of one decision, changed the course of not only his life but of others’ too. Azaro’s parents longing, becoming sad, making Azaro stay, attempting to save Azaro, losing all wealth and home and facing all challenges, make the base for their identities, which is unstable and can be built, unbuilt and rebuilt according to Judith Butler’s theory of performativity.

The Freedom Artist

The last text, which researcher is going to view through the lens of performativity is “*The Freedom Artist*”. This is the latest novel written and published by Ben Okri in 2019. This novel is referred to as the most significant work of Ben Okri after ‘*The Famished Road*’. Ben Okri seems to have portrayed picture of modern society in this novel. The title of the novel, “*The Freedom Artist*” gives us an idea of what the novel is about. Ben Okri has written about the freedom of the people in a society, which is being compromised and they are made to sleep-walk. A kind of system is being developed in which the commoners are ordained to accept what authorities or keepers of the law tell them. They are trained to view world from the perceptions of the authority.

‘At the heart of this world lies the prison. “*The Freedom Artist*” is a powerful examination of how freedom is threatened in a post-truth society and a wake-up call to the sleep-walking world (cover page)’. A powerful comment written on the cover page of the book better explains the theme of the novel.

Unlike all the previously mentioned three novels of Okri, which have poverty and corruption intertwined with day to day life of people, this novel shows the mental state of common people in the society. The depression and mental trauma which they are exposed to, is an outcome of a system in which authorities are imposing and

validating their rules, systems, and instructions through force. People are not able to speak and question whatever odd they find, is being executed by the law. The point of focus is/should be the legitimacy, validation and internalisation of this new system which people initially silently, are surprised and astounded to notice. But this prolonged silence and non-responsive approach of the citizens not only helps authorities to establish and naturalize their practices but endangers their own lives also, by accepting something which seems odd and anticipatory in the beginning.

The non-responsive approach of people lands them into a very horrible situation that later, when they find courage to respond and react, their reaction is encountered and suppressed with force by the authorities. They are made prisoners. This prison is not a room of cement and concrete but a symbolic one, a body, where the mind or soul of the person, is imprisoned. But, not all have accepted the imposed norms by choice. There are people who have reacted in time and are ready to face the consequences, come what may. Contradictorily, there are people who have accepted such rules and are feeling the pangs of trauma and depression; they are the sleep-walkers. These are people who have internalised such rigid laws but somehow noticed the difference and are now searching and returning to their true self, their actual self.

“The Freedom Artist” which Okri talks about here, is the person who seems to have accepted and internalised the rigid laws silently and passively. He is the protagonist of the novel whose name is Karnak. Karnak is a young boy who loves a girl Amalantis. They are living a happy and contented life being with each other, albeit superficially. At subtle level, both of them are drastically different from each other. Karnak is a boy who seems to have fear of authorities and has intimidated nature. He doesn't speak of things often, things which he is not supposed to speak openly. Not only him, but his girlfriend Amalantis too, he doesn't let her speak what is prohibited, lest it enrage authorities if they come to know and hear which would land them into prison. Nobody has ever made announcement about what is prohibited and what is allowed to speak. But facts and rules are conveyed indirectly and communicated through different ways. Somehow Karnak has understood and grasped what is communicated and expressed indirectly. That's why he doesn't speak, and doesn't let her too, speak openly.

“Beauty in the eye is blindness in the soul.’

‘Did you make that up?’

‘May be, or maybe I read it somewhere.’

‘Let’s not talk about books.’

‘Books books books.’

‘In that case, your beauty makes the air shine...

‘Every time you talk about my beauty, it makes me ill’.

Amalantis paused. She went into a deep thought for a while and never gave an answer (P-59).”

Silent and passive approach of people strengthened hierarchy’s new notion of freedom, with catching and hauling and arresting those who were speaking openly. Being the representative of sleep-walkers, Karnak could not react when his girlfriend Amalantis, for pronouncing prohibited words, was taken away from him like a dream. It shows the intensity of hierarchy’s force over the citizens and the level of recipients’ acceptance on the other end. Karnak and Amalantis were discussing about who is the prisoner when Amalantis was captured in front of his eyes.

“At that moment, they heard three knocks at the door, the young lover opened the door... they went over the girl and marched her out to the road, where a grey man was already waiting. Amalantis was silent as she was led away. Karnak found himself in the doorway, watching as if in a dream... Not one of them had spoken a single word (P-19).”

Fear of authorities have silenced many like Karnak so naturally that they think every wrong happening is a natural happening as long as people of law are involved in it. They become the passive recipients of the law as a body becomes a passive recipient of the culture and gender imposed on it.

“A strange silence spread... Those who were not arrested... went around in constant fear. People spoke less and less to each other. Their conversation became neutral. They stopped looking one another in the eye (P-20).”

The Power of love is of paramount importance, in context to incarnation or rebirth of a person. This rebirth does not necessarily happen in physical form, it can happen in mind, in subtle form, in a thinking process or in a kind of mind management. It can be referred to as psychological transformation. In such kind of transitional process, change/transformation does take place at mind level, which further gets enacted through actions and performances. Karnak felt inconveniently choked, distressed in the absence his beloved. The very person, who remained un-reactive while she was being taken away, became extremely restless when she was gone. It was the realisation time for Karnak. It was the realisation of difference between being sleep-walker and wakeful, realisation of hierarchy's atrocities and imposition of new values, new truths, new histories and new freedom on the common people.

It was time of realisation to feel the importance of discussion of prohibited terms, to seek the answer of the question, 'who is the prisoner'. So, it was the time of rebirth that followed the realisation. Rebirth which presented Karnak in a new form in which he started reacting, finding answers and looking for his beloved. He sought help from many people of repute and fame to find his answers and Amalantis. Many times, he was on the verge of loss of his life when he encountered many people who took him to be a stranger and a threat.

“Refreshed by his sleep, Karnak came to the conclusion that the priests would not be able to help him in his quest. He wandered the streets looking for clues of the identity of the mysterious people who appeared and disappeared, leaving words and leaflets of mayhem behind. (P-69).”

Character sketch of Karnak has proved that notion of identity is not stable and is subject to change with the change in actions. These actions at one side can subvert one identity and evolve the other. This subversion and evolution shows that it is a continual process.

Amalantis is beloved of Karnak. She is a rebel, a representative of all those people who are against the hierarchy. These people are same like other people but are different in nature and approach. They notice all the happenings in the society and are able to make a distinction of what is right and wrong.

“The second kind of people looked like the first, except for one thing. They were more alert. They did not sleep much at night. Their eyes had a constant wakefulness. They did not read the newspapers, treated television as a daily farce... and believed nothing of what they saw or heard. They seemed solitary, but were not lonely. (P-233).”

They were the kind of people who were very watchful of what was right and what was wrong. They were the ones who were not going to take things as imposed, they had the courage to think and react impulsively but secretly. They were organising rallies and meetings secretly spreading words and statements which were prohibited to be used. It doesn't mean that they were never faced with any challenges and problems for being so watchful and reactive. They were at times, got arrested, taken to unknown places away from others. ‘There were many such arrests throughout the land. They took place at all hours of the day and night. People were arrested while they slept in the middle of their dreams, or while they were at work. No body protested. Their presence was enough. Those arrested were taken to unknown places, never heard from again. These are the people who were acting silently, without making much appearance and without being noticed. They were the people who were using the prohibited words like Book, Courage, etc. They were attempting to make others, who were sleep-walkers, aware of what was happening around. They were aware of what was wrong/right and wanted others also see that clearly.

Amalantis was happy to be loved by Karnak but was pained to see how Karnak was behaving like other sleepwalkers. She was disappointed with him but was not impulsive to react, and treated him very softly. Karnak was meeting her to praise her beauty all the time, he hushed her for speaking openly, which she did not like. Her simple and peaceful response to questions of Karnak became the biggest tool for her, to inflame him later, once she was gone. Her serene and peaceful presence, and secret

smile on her face, made him restless. Her conversation with Karnak included the ways and words to awake him. It was an attempt to make him move from sleep-walking to wakefulness.

“One day they had an argument ... She didn’t raise her voice the whole time. They argued about the idea of books. Only absence can reveal... you have strange ideas. There must have been a good reason, why they vanished. Silence is not silence. Some silences scream, when she was most annoyed she sounded most gentle. Sometimes this irritated and puzzled him. Her quiet persistence wore him out. She questioned his assumptions (P-163).”

This is how Amalantis always attempted, fought to wake him up; and wake him up in time. She knew that her activities were being noticed by the authorities and any time they were going to come to arrest her. She knew Karnak was not strong enough to react and save her, so she always tried to engage him in conversation of matters which were banned to be discussed. She was doing the best she could do, in an intensely peaceful manner. With her constant attempts, her absence when she was taken away, made an impact on Karnak. He initially had taken the things as if, he were in dreams, and started finding and looking for her as she had gone somewhere, on her own; on purpose. But soon after certain realisation emerged in him, he was able to understand all happenings around and changed his ways to search her. His transformation was a great success for Amalantis. Amalantis was fighting at personal level to make Karnak aware of actual truth and freedom. In the groups she along with Ruslana and many others was organising secret meetings to plan against atrocities of hierarchy.

“They drank water, stared at the sky, paid attention to everything sky, listened to the wind, and they were generally silent. If addressed or asked a question, they shrugged, they spoke gently. They smiled mysteriously, incompletely, an inward smile made almost visible; they worked as little as possible and yet were immensely productive (P-23).”

These people were regularly being arrested to maintain silence and system by the hierarchy. Amalantis was the one who was also arrested the same way. After she was gone, Karnak started looking for her seriously, with the help of Ruslana and others.

Ruslana and her father were working to gather such people who were transforming and had turned from sleep-walking to wakefulness. Karnak would never have found Amalantis, had he not found Ruslana and her father. Ruslana, along with her father and other revolutionaries, was searching the places where the arrested people were taken and kept by the authorities, which they were able to locate later. Then their next step was to liberate them from authorities. Ruslana alone could not have accomplished this task.

“Find the tower! Find the tower! Crowds converged! Crowds swelled the roads filled-up, work was abandoned for the day. People simply stopped working and went outside and joined the long flowing stream of voices chanting and calling out and standing shouting. If ever there was a crowd in search of a reason, this was it. With one voice, they sought the tower of hierarchy (P-309).”

This way, we notice here rebels were going against the hierarchy to overthrow them and free the captured people. Their actions were telling the kind of people they were, what they were working for and all about them. This novel of Ben Okri, presents before us the broader perspective of Performativity with Michel Foucault’s notion of ‘Discipline and Punish’ as key element. Butler, in her theory of Performativity particularized her approach towards female and sex category.

In broader terms, this very idea of performativity can be utilised on both males and females or men/women equally. Foucault’s notion to police the behaviour of individuals with punishment makes relevance in this novel. In acceptable and refined terms, this policing and punishment can be referred to as discipline. Hierarchy; in order to extend their control over individuals, makes them disciplined. They adopt a no. of ways to legitimate and validate their actions over the bodies of individuals. Hierarchy recreates the values system, rewrites books of history and myths, and wants the citizens to view the world through their lens.

“New versions of the founding myth had been gaining the mysterious circulation. In some versions it wasn’t the earth that was the prison....The authorities tried to suppress those subversive ideas. The police confiscated large number of books. They imprisoned publishers and booksellers. They destroyed

all forms of printing. These versions of the founding myth were burnt in public squares. People were forbidden to read them, under punishment of death. (P-6).”

This is how we notice that to appropriate and justify the ways, authorities destroyed old books and values. With the destruction of the old, new ones have been written and shared. People are not allowed to question the certain practices and laws, and those who try to object and un-follow and go against authorities are suppressed and imprisoned.

Their suppressions and imprisonment makes many others to be quiet, and accept new values and ways as they are. This silent reception and acceptance is mandatory for authorities for internalization and naturalization of newly established practices, values, myths, knowledge and histories.

Analytical Outcome

The Theory of performativity is relevantly discussed in aforementioned four novels of Ben Okri. In all four texts, sufficient discussion and analysis is done to highlight performance and actions as source of generation and establishment of identities. For characters whatever circumstances led to wear and take a particular identity, it is not they, who are performing as per their identities but their actions, which establish and confirm their identities. In *“Flowers and shadows”*, it is Jeffia’s association and love for his mother, which played a significant role in his character formation. But it is his observing, noticing, silently watching, asking, attention seeking, criticizing and hating, which tells us what and how he feels about his father.

In *“Dangerous Love”*, Ifeyiwa who is objectified as an outcome of heteronormative societal structure is humiliated and exploited to the fullest. But it is her non-submitting and denying approach to her husband Takpo’s entreaties, and her love and determination to love her lover Omovo, which makes readers aware about the strength of her character and identity. It is Omovo’s not quitting, not giving up, denying to bribery and not succumbing to challenges of life and his sticking to honesty which tells us about what kind of person he is. Azaro’s character in *“The Famished Road”* is

established by his watching and noticing of pain on the face of his mother, wishing to stay with her, which further led to breaking the pact and ignoring the requests and threats of his companion spirits. His parents longing and wishing for a child which eventually led to forming and of all characters, attempting to rescue their son from all spirits and their struggling to keep the body and soul together, in perpetual poverty bring into light the identity which they were having.

Karnak's and Amalantis' characters in "*The Freedom Artist*" were established with their watching, doing, acting, reacting, loving and opposing and searching. Thus rightfully it can be claimed that in performativity it is not the doer but deeds or performances of the doer, which is primary, hence are considered the sources of identities. Since it is an act, this act can be used to establish, de-establish, and re-establish any identity, that these acts can be used as a medium to correct something that is incorrect or imperfect.

Chapter V - Conclusion

After application, detailed analysis and discussion of Identity, Gender and Performativity in texts of Ben Okri in previous three chapters, in the last chapter researcher will focus on summarization and concluding remarks of the application. For this purpose, researcher will highlight all the main characters of the selected texts of Ben Okri. Human beings are ordained to perceive and view people and things in their surroundings in a unique and distinct way. This watching and noticing further helps humans to categorise everyone and everything in their surroundings. Humans and other social animals develop this power of distinction due to their intelligence and knowledge. Human's constant and curious noticing accompanied with their watchful observance helps them acquire great understanding of life and nature and makes them intelligent which further helps them in categorization and classification. When it comes to categorisations and classification, two factors are very important.

Attributes and qualities of things and people, contribute a lot in their own categorization by other people. One's categorisation of the things around, which is based on his/her understanding, knowledge and his power of distinction may be different from that of others', based on their knowledge, intelligence and understanding of the same things. At one hand, it is the qualities, values and behavioural dealings of things and persons which have a great say in their own categorisation by others, on the other hand, viewers will do the categorisation, as per their understanding of those very qualities, values and behavioural dealings of the said people. In other words it is not only the seer but sights, objects and persons also that contribute equally in categorization and formation of one's identity. Categorization and identity formation is a two-way process. In a social context, as soon as one person takes birth, or even before the birth of the person, he/she is made to be a part of a category.

These categories are essentially integrated parts a social system. Categorization or putting things and people into different categories and groups, or groupism plays an important role in personal and professional development of an individual. Founder of social Identity Theory famous social psychologist, Henri Tajfel says that social

encounters and interaction is a key process in which people, as representative of various groups meet and interact with each other. Their interactions and encounters are solely based on their personal as well as social interests, as member individually and as members of groups. Common interests among the members of the groups bring them very close to each other making them complimentary to each other as parts, sub parts of another large group, whereas conflicting interests among members or the groups keep them away from one another in disagreement, making them part of other big groups which are distinct from the first group, not necessarily in its structure but in approach.

These groups with the conflicting interests are, in a social system, categorized as in-groups and out-groups. People with the common interests and motives organize themselves as the members of an in-group, people with the common interests, (which are conflicting for the others), will organize themselves into out-groups. People once divided into different in-groups and out-groups might become biased to each other, owing to their spirit of competition. Members of a particular group associate themselves with that group, or are made to associate, always look for self-importance at personal level and the positive identity of the group, as a unit. This positive and influential identity of a group, helps its members acquire an important place in a social system and a sense of satisfaction at personal level.

In a positive way, members who find the structure, system and values of their own group unsatisfactory have two options to go for. In first option, they will try to work for the positive image of the group by attempting to refine the system and revamping the functionalities for the refurbishment of the group. They will do their best to improve the image of the group, as their own identity being member of the group and group identity both are complementary to each other. In the second option, if members find it very difficult to change or improve the image of the group, they tend to leave the group, if possible, keeping in view the consequences that would follow. In a negative way, in case members of a particular group find it difficult to improve the image and leaving the group equally, they tend to be biased for the out-groups and members of the out-groups. In other words either they will work internally for the

positive image of the group or they will become biased to the members of the out-group. Eventually in such kind of approach, members of in-group will justify the ways of their biased dealings with the members of the out-group.

Matter would turn bad to worse in case members of in-group are large in number, which would mean misuse and misappropriation of all available resources for their own benefits and destruction and delimitation of others. Among all categories in a social context, the category of man woman, category of boy/girl, male/female or identity of gender will be the focus of researcher, in this part of the thesis. Gender identity of a person, has been a point of debate for many theorists, thinkers, psychologists and scholars. Traditionally sex of the person is said to determine the gender of a person. According to this, persons born with vagina are said to be the female or women whereas persons with penis have been referred to as boys, males or men.

Famous psychologist and sexologist John William Money, who founded the Gender Identity, is of the opinion that sex of a person is his/her physical or bodily attribute, (determination of which is debatable), whereas gender of a person is what is socially constructed through various social agents. Category or identity of men and women which basically starts from their physical level gets strengthened by various social factors at different levels. Categories of men and women can be seen as categories of in-group and out-group. Men appear as the members of in-group who have common interests and have categorised people with the other sex as members of the out-group, who are given the identity of women.

Appropriating the language which is the greatest medium of expression, in their own ways, men seemingly have gained great control over women. The world is made to view society or the social structure as a heteronormative social structure.

There are said to be only two kinds of sex in a system which is called sexual binary. A heterosexual matrix is generated and being maintained from the beginning of life. Anybody who fails to fall in this sexual binary, or does not stick to the rigid regulatory frame, is not legitimated and accepted by anybody in this manual ideal system. It seems in this kind of a life and system; one is not allowed to play his/her natural role.

They are made to play the roles which are given and imposed over them, and which they have played so many times that it seems natural for them to play those roles, those performances, those acts. It is at this juncture, Judith Butler appears with her theory of performativity and states that it is the very acts and performances which are strengthening and solidifying the identities, not the other way round. It is the performance which establishes, an identity, which can de-establish and re-establish an identity time and again.

Flowers and Shadows

Jeffia Okwe is the protagonist of the novel 'Flowers and Shadows'. The first novel "*Flowers and Shadows*", written by Ben Okri at the age of 21, is an example of poetic justice. Young boy Jeffia, who is very sensitive is placed opposite to the category of his father. The relationship between father and son would have been a congenial one, had they not been placed opposite to each other. Though it happens rarely, division of people in two or more contradictory categories in a family can lead to great chaos and disorder in relation. This is what happened in the family of Jonan Okwe, who is father of protagonist and owner of a paint factory. Jeffia is a tender hearted young boy who loves animals and feels pain for the underprivileged people of society. He does not like two boys harming a puppy out of having a kind of fun. Not only he saves the dog from boys but gives them some money also as a gesture of kindness. Though, he feels happy to have the puppy in his house but gets worried to search the owner of the puppy. He feels privileged to find the owner and takes the pain to give it back to Juliet, who happens to be his father's mistress. He is a studious boy and is expecting excellent grades in the result of the recent exams.

Unlike others, he has a simple approach in life. He wants to contribute in the education and wants to be a teacher in the school where his mother teaches. He is helpful by nature and does not hesitate to help others regardless of the time or the person. He stopped at midnight and helped a girl who was taking an injured man to her clinic. He did not know this girl (Cynthia) by that time, nor did he mind the odd timing of the day. He only knew and that he was required to help somebody in need,

so he did. He was living a life of luxury and comforts, provided by his father to him and the family. His was a simple but an Ideal kind of life for a young man to live

In such kind of ideal life, what is that which placed him opposite to his father in nature? What made him a critique of his father? In spite of living a life of comforts, there was something that was lacking. That lacking was on part of his father. He noticed that his father was too busy, in his business matters for reasons known to the readers to give time at his home. His ignorance of his son and family had created a vacuum in their home and life equally. He usually used to see his friends spending a quality time with their fathers. It was not that they never met at home but they saw very less of each other. Slowly and gradually when things started coming out of shadows, he came to know the reason of his father's hectic schedule and other facts too. His father's misdeeds and mishandling of factory matters and their disclosure to Jeffia made father a villain in the eyes of son, and responsible to ruin many people's lives, including Sowho, who was his half-brother, Gbenga who his right hand and Cynthia's father who was tricked by him. Jeffia's own observation, noticing and understanding of his father's actions made him stand opposite to him.

What made Jeffia acquire a different observation and understanding of people and life? In any given situation, a child could have easily been lured and tempted to all materialistic things. This simply happens because things of comfort and luxury can spoil any child. But Jeffia remains untouched from being spoiled even after tasting luxuries and being born with a silver spoon in his mouth. How was he able to make a distinction between right and wrong? How was he able to develop a right approach in life? How was he able to see things crystal clearly when it comes of his father? There is an observation that he has made. There are consequences which he seems to have noticed.

A realisation seems to have dawned on him that one day he has to compensate for his father's sins. How was he able to foresee the happenings the future? What made him have a broad vision in life? The answer of most of these questions is his mother and her influence on him. His mother played an important role in his upbringing and character formation. He has a very close association with her. She is the one who

helped him gain a deep understanding of life. Jeffia's education and family made him the kind of person he was. And both of these things were being taken care of by his mother. His education helped him know the difference between right and wrong. All good qualities which Jeffia has attained is due to his education, which is managed and supported by his mother, and her company which she gave to him in an attempt to complement the vacuum created by the absence of his father.

For Jeffia, his family becomes the source of worry and satisfaction equally. It is his father whose ignorance of his son and wife has irritated and disappointed Jeffia. On the other hand, his mother not only provided him with quality education but also try to fill the gap created by father. His mother becomes a powerful social agent in his overall growth and development. It is the education and value given by the mother, which makes Jeffia see facts and life clearly and understand the mysteries of life, due to which he was able to voice his concerns. He thought of speaking openly against his father, which his mother never allowed. Jeffia did not think of changing his identity of a good human being as being good was made an integral part of his upbringing. Moreover, for Jeffia leaving group was going to be like leaving his either mother or family. That is why he decided to go against his father. He knew about all the mishandling of business affairs by his father, subsequently for which he was supposed to pay.

If we analyse identity of Jeffia, through Judith Butler's theory of performativity, we notice that it is his birth in the category of male, boy or man, due to which he is expected by his father to be rough and tough and of dominating nature so that he could help him, manage his affairs in the near future. Has he been born a female, his father wouldn't have expected boyish attitude from him. It is that conventional, male dominating social structure in which, rules and norms, due to be followed by both males and females, are already available and are expected to be internalised and naturalized socially. In a system, where males are supposed to be aggressive, dominating and be an instrument to establish and strengthen the system, Jeffia appears contradictory in approach against the wishes of his father, who wants him to be cunning and worldly wise enough, he turns out to be a sober, well behaved,

considerate boy who is helpful by nature. He is academically sound and a sensitive boy.

Against the obvious expectations of his father and the readers, he turns out to be a Mama's boy. He seems to be suffering from loss of loved ones. In his case, loss is of his father. This loss is not a physical, as his father is alive but an emotional one as his father ignores him. He seems to display and express this loss in mourning. Jeffia seems to be away from all kinds of boyish attributes e g being tough, bossy, aggressive, lazy and disobedient. He is perceived differently owing to his kind and sensitive dealings with almost everyone in the novel except his father for whom he has grudge in his heart. Thus we can see, it is the actions of Jeffia which make us believe the kind of boy he is. These actions, hence, become the source of establishment, de-establishment and re-establishment of one's identity in a social structure.

Jonan Okwe's character is of equal importance to that of Jeffia Okwe, in the novel. Jonan seems to be the true representative of a male dominating society. In a given situation, where all people are connected to each-other, identity and decisions of one person affects all other people and their lives as an outcome. This happens to be the same case with Jonan. Jonan's identity, approach and decisions made a great impact on the lives of people around. Jonan is referred to be the person who is responsible for ruining everybody's life. He appears to be opposite in character not only to his son Jeffia, but to everybody in the novel. He seems to be a clever man who knows how to deal with disagreeing people at his workplace diplomatically. As a purely practical businessman for whom the sole motive of his life is nothing but to earn money, he adopts the ways to rid of all people, who he thinks will seize his opportunities to make profits.

In his endeavours to earn money, he has lost sight and power of making a distinction between what is right and wrong. For him business ethics are nothing but card statements and he loves to see everyone from the point of profit. His family, friends and relations depend on their utility in his business. He does his best to keep the reins of his paint factory in his hands. He forgets his relation with his half-brother Sowho with profit in his eyes, and tricks him in graft case to get him imprisoned. Sowho, who

was instrumental and of great assistance to him, lost his value in his eyes as soon as Jonan became suspicious of him. Another faithful worker who was his right hand, lost his life when he resigned from his post in his factory. Jonan planned and hired crooks to give him a beating, to teach him a lesson though he eventually died. He trapped Cynthia's father falsely, in a case of embezzlement. He fired him and got him imprisoned, who eventually turned out to be a drunkard.

It was the height of his selfish approach that he did not spare even his family. He did not harm his family the way he treated others, but he became so much engrossed in his business that he forgot his son and wife and ignored them completely. He stopped giving time to his wife, with whom he had spent some of the beautiful moments. He did not give and spend quality time with his son, who always craved for the same. He ignored the silent cravings of his son and made him feel his absence, due to which a vacuum was created subsequently, very hard to be filled. He always wished his son to be worldly practical and tough boy, which actually was not happening. He ignored the hate in the eyes of his son. His ignorance of his son made him a villain in his son's eyes. It was his acts and activities and ignorance, which made him stand opposite not only to his son but to everybody in the novel. His decisions, his approach, his dealings had a deep impact on everybody's life, whoever was associated with him directly, indirectly.

One wonders, if it was his decisions and attitude that was affecting every body's life. What was that, which affected his life? Who was the person, who was instrumental in shaping, his identity? Whose decision impacted his life? What led him into this kind of situation, where he was considered responsible to destroy everybody's life? Who was the one, who shaped his destiny? The answer is hidden in six worlds, which were uttered by his father, 'my son, poverty is a curse', at the time of his death. These last words were like a parting gift and advice from a dying father to his son, who could do all but nothing, being helpless and poor, at that time.

The gravity and loss of the situation was very intense for the sensitive mind of young Jonan. The most important lesson of life was learnt by Jonan, not a in a school classroom but in the rough field of life. Jonan found himself in such an odd and

helpless situation, in which he could do nothing to save his father who was dying of a mysterious plague in the village. Disappointment due to father's illness was intensified with his inability to do anything in a contrasting situation where all well-to-do people in the village were able to flee. Father must have realised his nearing death along with expressions of helplessness on Jonan's face, when finally he had uttered those words which not only shaped his identity into a tough and non-sentimental man, but also altered the lives of those who were associated with him.

In other words, it is the father in the family, who played an important role in Jonan's evolution as a man of hard and tough nature. Jeffia and his mother were exposed to the sweet kind of life, the life of luxuries which was even beyond the wildest dreams of many. They were not exposed to the kind of tough situation, Jonan had faced. It doesn't mean, Jeffia and his mother were wrong to point out Jonan for his mishandling of business affairs and ignorance of his family. Undoubtedly, Jonan should have applied and followed the justified steps to establish or re-establish his business, but we can obviously observe here the difference of situations and the impact of such situations on the sensitive minds of young children. Drawing a clear comparison, Jeffia acted and reacted in the situations, owing to his education and exposure to life. His is not a tough exposure like Jonan's. Jeffia is exposed to the better life full of luxuries and comforts and a quality education, supported by his educated mother, who too has experienced a luxurious life, whereas Jonan's experience with his father was at a different level without any assistance of his mother.

Seeing the character and identity formation of Jonan, readers and researcher equally, do not hold him completely responsible for destroying other's lives. Jonan seems to be the victim of the circumstances. His identity is the output or outcome of the words uttered by his dying father. It appears Jonan has been played like a puppet in the hands of the system, which assumes boys to be very rough and tough. Tough lesson of life is given to Jonan, not in school but in life itself. Jonan looks to be the product of the system in which one is thought to understand and realise the value of money and earn it by hook and crook. Jonan is made to use all ways to make his ends meet. So if it is

observed minutely, it is not the Jonan, whose decision is impacting lives of others in the novel, neither is he mishandling the people.

Jonan appears to be a medium, which is playing in the hands of the system and the social structure. It is the father of Jonan and his words, which are indirectly affecting the lives of people in factory and family. Norms and values have been so inherently naturalized, that one can never think these out of life. These values and norms, with repetition are made an integral part of life that one thinks it a life itself. In case of Jonan, his actions, which are by-product of the routinely social interactions, tell us what kind of person he is. Indirectly in the hindsight, it is not he, but the system and the values, imparted time to time, which are playing a major role in formation of identity. The point of focus is that these values get fructified, through the actions and performances by people who are coming on the stage to play roles and disappear. These performances and actions can be used to alter one's perceptions, not only about him/her but about others also. Jonan through his actions is establishing the system, whereas his son Jeffia is going against him.

In relation to two main characters of novel, Jeffia's mother plays her role that is opposite to that of Jonan and similar to that of her son Jeffia. Jeffia's mother is a kind hearted well-educated lady, who works as a teacher in a local school. She is so sober and polite that she is equally respected by her colleagues and the Principal of the school. She is the lady, who commanded respect. She has a deep impact on her son and inspires him to study well and take teaching as his career. Lizzie, as her husband used to call her lovingly, does her best to maintain a balance between her son and husband, who were like two poles separated from each other, situated at a distance. She tries to fill in the gap, which is there due to her husband's inability to give time in the family. She is the one, who feels trapped between her son and husband. She feels the pain after seeing a gap between both of them. She was the one who used to be loved, taken care of by her husband after their marriage. They used to spend sweet moments together, when things were all in favour of her husband.

Lizzie saw the gradual shift and transformation in Jonan's behaviour which was the result of the losses in the company. She became aware of all the malpractices of her

husband, which were coming up to his home now. She was pained to see the things which were changing and turning against them. More painful for her, was her inability to contribute and improve the situations which belonged to her husband. The only thing which she could do, was to watch and wait and not let the disturbance at Jonan's work affect their homely matters. She used to warn Jonan for all the wrong happenings she was coming to know. Jonan's ignorance was not only to his family but for his health also. He had involved himself in work so much that he had started having panic attacks. Being a failure in case of her husband, she was successful with her son Jeffia. She was happy to see Jeffia miles away from the happenings of the factory. She ensured Jeffia should remain unaffected of his father's influence.

Her husband's ignorance of their son made her work and life tough. She developed a very close association with her son, in an attempt to fill the obvious gap. She became a guiding force in her son's life and provided him with quality education. She made sure Jeffia should get all comforts of life and become an ideal son. Her efforts bore fruits and with this Jeffia became the boy of her dreams and expectations. She also missed her husband and felt his absence, more than her son could, but was helpless in such kind of horrible situation. Her only hope was the right and pure upbringing of her son and did her best for that. She favoured her son, when he craved for his father's presence at home. She was of the opinion that Jonan's factory matters should not disturb their home and he should give time to his son. She did not like her husband's over engagement that too at the cost of her son.

Though, she used to criticize her husband, she never let her son speak against him openly. On one hand we can see Jonan's actions and decisions affected everybody's life adversely, including that of their son. Her actions too had an impact on her son, but it was in his and everybody's favour. For Jeffia, one member in the family was in favour, where the other was against. In her case, it is her own education which had made an impact on her life and that of everybody's subsequently. It is her own education which had helped her notice the shift in the behaviour of her husband and her power of distinction of what is right and wrong. It is this education enabled observation only, due to which she ensured proper and right kind of upbringing of her

son. It is her education only which led her to understand the problem her husband was facing in the business. It was not that she was completely against her husband, but she found it unbearable to see him turning a blind eye to his family and his health equally. She did her best to caution and warn her husband when she noticed the things were slipping out of her hands. She did her best to mediate between her son and husband. When her husband turned deaf to her warnings and advices, she felt helpless and decided to devote herself completely to their son, who seemed to be her only hope. As a situation of heteronormative society, though, we do not see any kind of violence and compulsion against Lizzie; she seemed compelled to take care of her son alone. It seems she was forced to be responsible for her son's upbringing, which was her decision entirely. She too seemed to be suffering from the loss of the loved one, like her son Jeffia. In this case too, this loved one is none other than her husband Jonan and the loss is not physical but emotional and sentimental.

Initially she seems to be suffering from melancholia as she finds it difficult to express her agony to anyone. But once she realized that her words were not making an impact on her husband; she focused her attention entirely on her son and made sure that he should not follow the path of his father. She became happy to see her son Jeffia an honest boy and found a way to express her loss of her husband. It seems, Jeffia became what his mother wanted him to be, and it was not Jeffia who was against his father but Jeffia's mother who was against her husband. If luck would have it, Jeffia too could have become a spoilt son, had she not attempted and ensured to make him walk on the right path. Identity of Jeffia seems to be the manifestation of his mother's expectations through him. In both cases (Jeffia and Jonan), we can see that they are merely players who are playing in the hands of forces which are opposite to each other. Jonan seems to be representative of a dominating social structure whereas Jeffia has been trying to revolt initially silently and later openly.

Struggle and tensions between Jonan and Jeffia is the struggle between those two forces which are contradicting one another. Like Jeffia, Cynthia is another character who breathes hope on the face of life. Cynthia is a beautiful young girl who is made to face harsh realities of life at a tender age. Like many others in the novel, the person

responsible for ruining her family was none other than Jeffia's father Jonan. Cynthia's father was a worker in Jonan's paint factory. In spite of being a faithful worker, he was trapped and imprisoned by Jonan, after levelling false charges against him. Consequently after the loss of his job, he turned to drinking excessively and became a drunkard. His wife also died after some time. Other than Cynthia, there was no one in the family who could take care of him. Cynthia, who herself needed care and protection being too young and delicate to face world, took up the challenge to not only look after her father but to earn money also.

She accepted the atrocities of her life and grabbed the opportunity when she was offered the job of a nurse in a clinic and was ready to work even during odd night hours. Loss of job, imprisonment of her father along with her mother's death brought Cynthia almost on road, but she never showed her back to her adversities. Happenings in the family were beyond her wildest imaginations, which gave her spine shaking shocks and helped her face life more bravely. She hardly knew the problems of working in a clinic at night, but she was ready to take chance for the sake of her family. She was a kind hearted girl who knew how to help others, irrespective the odd circumstances. She was quick to understand the seriousness of situation when some people gave terrible beating to Gbenga a few yards away from her clinic. When it was difficult for her to help, support and carry Gbenga alone to the hospital, she did not hesitate to seek help from a stranger (Jeffia) at night, without caring for the repercussions she was going to face, for helping a beaten man.

Cynthia was a brave girl who faced all problems of her life courageously. It was she who took care of her father, after the death of her mother and helped Gbenga to reach her clinic, but he eventually died owing to the beating of Jonan's hired men. When one sees strength in character of Cynthia, one wonders and becomes doubtful of the source of energy and motivation in her life. It was certainly not her parents, who had simply given in, in the face of adversities in life. It might be her education which played a crucial role to make her brave and strong enough to face challenges with her chin-up. It might be her education and her love for her parents, which would have

given her strength to bear responsibilities in odd situations in life. She after finding the truth about the loss of job of her father did not lose hope.

She was a warm hearted girl who understood that it was not Jeffia but Jeffia's father who had ruined their family. Understanding of life gave her clear vision to notice the innocence of Jeffia and believed that a child should not be punished for the sins of his father. It is that understanding and insightfulness which helped her, see Jeffia's love for her and enabled her to go to him to give him emotional support after the death of his father. She appears to be a God-fearing girl, who believed in his ways of punishment. She knew Jonan was punished by the God for all wrong deeds done by him. In a social structure, where girls are thought to be simple home makers, submissive, dominated and diffident, Cynthia rose to be a warrior. Cynthia through her actions proved the strength of her character. She was a soft girl who was not exposed to the hardships of life; she had always been protected by her parents. She was too young to decode the mysteries of life. She had never thought to become a nurse and do night duties. But against the conventional approach, through her actions she broke the myths and proved everybody wrong.

No doubt Cynthia too was a medium and a channel of a system, where in girls were bound to home only. But Cynthia exhibited the qualities which are associated with the brave men. It is the actions of Cynthia which helped her re-establish the identity of woman, going against the famous statement of Simone de Beauvoir, 'One is not born, but rather becomes a woman.' Is Cynthia the one who is becoming a woman? One doubts. Not only Cynthia but Lizzie too, appears contrary to the statement of Beauvoir. These ladies broke the conventions along with readers' obvious expectations from them, and showcased the formidable strength of their characters. They seem to suffer losses of their loved ones in their family. These losses are literal as well as figurative in both of their cases. It is their losses certainly, which made them face harsh realities of life sternly. Lizzie was trying to compensate the loss of father by filling up the void, maintaining a balance in their lives. She made sure that her son should become the model of her dreams, away from the shadows of her husband.

In case of Cynthia, after the death of her mother, she must have realised the importance of parents in her life. She must have envisioned and visualised a life without father and parents, due to which she felt completely committed and motivated to take care of her father in young age, when she herself was to be taken care of. A deep analysis of identity, gender and performativity depicts the whole life of a human being. Identity tells us the structure of life. By putting a person in one gender we can trace out all social agents which contribute in the gender formation of a person. Performativity tells us about the instability of identity, as it is subject to change owing to the deeds of the doer, actions of the actor and performances of the performer, which can lead to decode deep mysteries of life.

Dangerous Love

As the title "*Dangerous Love*" conveys, it is threatening and dangerous for the lovers to make love to each other in this novel. This is a beautifully woven novel of Ben Okri. Main character Omovo was a young boy who was living with his father and step mother. Picture of Omovo is portrayed with elements of bravery, honesty and love in his character. Omovo was brave because he did not lose hope after the death of his mother when he was forced to live with Blackie as his step-mother. He braved the challenges of life after the death of his mother, who was his only source of motivation and strength, who he was very closed to. Omovo was a painter by choice and he dared to paint something which was not liked by the authorities. He was a clear hearted young painter, who wanted to paint what he observed, noticed and felt.

Portraying the filthy and poor living conditions by him were taken as, too revealing and direct by the hierarchy, which seized his painting. One could have moved into depression after the confiscation of his masterpiece, but Omovo did not; and accepted the reality with an affirmation not to paint ever again. The youngest of the brothers would have been broken in compelling circumstances after his two brothers were forced to leave home and thrown out. The evils of poverty and corruption were brimming in a post-colonial society which Omovo was part of. Unemployment was on peak at a time when there was scarcity of work. Harsh situation at home propelled by his step mother Blackie's rude talking and behaviour made Omovo's stay almost

impossible and difficult. The interest, which was giving him joy and happiness was his painting, was taken away from him. Omovo felt little comfortable to live when he saw some rays of hope, a silver lining on the horizon. The sign of good luck was an offer for the job of a clerk in a paint factory.

Getting an offer and a job in a tough time was much needed for Omovo. Here trait of honesty comes into force in the character of Omovo. Omovo's job was to record and settle the accounts files in the office and was frequently encountered by many people who were well-off. These rich people usually used to be in a hurry for the settlements of their accounts. In order to get it done they used to approach Omovo to win him on their side by bribing him. Omovo, no doubt was in search of the job which finally he was able to get. He was committed not to succumb to their pressure and the power of their money. He denied the requests of many such clients and became a villain for them. Omovo's denial not only disturbed his work but that of his colleagues and seniors too. He blocked their sources of extra income, they all wanted to get rid of him and somehow got manager's nephew recruited against his post.

So we can see life's endeavour to favour Omovo as good luck in tough times went in vain, owing to his honest approach. Any boy could have easily succumbed to the pressures of office with imposing poverty in background but it is the bravery and strength in his character that he did not compromise with principles of his life and was ready to face the odd circumstances life had to offer, come what may. The short respite, Omovo had in life was gone shortly. Omovo's heart found a soul mate in Ifeyiwa, a beautiful girl living next door. Ifeyiwa seemed to be the princess of his dreams, who gave him strength to bear and face the atrocities of life happily. Omovo was very much doubtful for his feelings for her as he was not sure how she was going to react, after knowing the truth. He never showed himself in the beginning as she was already married to a person against her wishes, who was a middle aged person. He was very watchful in the beginning curious to know about the girl, who seemed to be noticing his movements secretly.

Once he became sure of her love for him, he was frightened of his own father's scolding and Ifeyiwa's husband Takpo's wrath, who was also a drunkard. But Omovo

and Ifeyiwa both were sailing in the same boat. Once they both were sure of each other's love, they started finding respite in each other's company. Omovo was ready to face any consequences for the sake of her love for him. Very watchful of everybody's sight on him, he used to visit and see her in the compound and near the community washroom. Beyond everybody's reach and imagination, he used to follow and meet her in the farthest of the areas, in the darkest corners. He would have fled his home soon after his brothers were gone, had he not met Ifeyiwa in his neighbourhood. It was for the sake of her love only he was ready to bear the wrath of her husband Takpo and his father's scolding. What makes him so strong is character, one wonders.

Omovo is one of three sons of his father. Blackie did not disturb only two brothers, she fought with all three. Though Omovo was not happy to be at home and always wanted to flee, what made him stay while his brothers ran from home? He was the product of a social system where he was left to fend for himself. If we see the contribution of all social agents in the formation of his identity or gender identity, we don't see major contribution of his family, which is the most important social agents. His father had become a drunkard, while his mother was dead. He studied up to school level, and was unable to take admission in college due to lack of funds. Contribution of media is not visible and doesn't find any reference in the novel. But if we see more closely, he seems to be suffering from a loss. And in his case, the loss he is suffering from, is of his mother.

Though we do not find much reference of his mother in the novel, she is said to have succumbed to her husband's violent behaviour and beatings. It seems the death of his mother shook Omovo very badly. He is seen to be suffering from this loss, which is irreparable. He misses his mother too much and is not able to divert his attention anywhere. Seemingly, he found a way of expression through his painting but there also he faced adverse circumstances. He felt completely disappointed when his painting was confiscated which was a means for him to show his pain. He had been used to so much pain and grief that he hardly paid any attention to the consequences he was going to face after being axed from his job. It seems, Omovo was simply trying to find a medium to express his agony his pain. It is when he found Ifeyiwa in

his neighbourhood, he felt relieved and naturally attracted towards her. In her, he found the warmth and love of his lost mother. Ifeyiwa became the only source of inspiration and a site of relief for Omovo. His mother though, while being alive might not have contributed to great extent in his upbringing. But her death, in reality taught him a tough lesson.

Thankfully, Ifeyiwa became a medium for him to express himself and complete his life. Omovo had shown the strength of his character before he met her, he was resilient enough to put up with his father and step-mother and deny the bribery offers. One cannot tell what would have happened to him, had he not met her. Life for him, could have taken any unpredictable turn in her absence, without her; because he was able to have and maintain a balance in his life. His actions have become source of knowledge for readers to know what kind of a person he is. So it is his family and his mother only, who has played a major role in his upbringing even after her death, by making him look for her in Ifeyiwa.

For her life was a beautiful bag full of miracles. She used to study a lot. She loved books and was considered one of the bright students of the school. We are addressing here a girl, who stood against all odds of life, who did not compromise and falsified Simone de Beauvoir's famous statement, who broke the myth, who seems not to be girl described in "*The Second Sex*". She cannot be the second sex, because her name is Ifeyiwa, a girl who was forced to get married at a very young age that too, to a man who she had not seen, was a middle aged one whose first wife had died. Did Ifeyiwa revolt? Yes she did, up to the boundary of her village, until she was captured and overpowered by her family members, relatives and might be neighbours also. Because all of them were running after her, like a hunter runs after its prey. Prey! Who is the prey here? Can a human be a prey? Yes a human can be a prey. Someone who is hauled, hunted, captured and lifted like an animal is lifted like a scapegoat and a cow is lifted, who are running to save his/her life.

Who? Did I use 'who' for an animal? How can I use 'who' for an animal? Because we are taught, and we teach that 'who' is a relative pronoun is used for human beings, and we use which for animals. But I have used who for animals, as I am unable to show

difference, between a scapegoat, and Ifeyiwa. I have seen people, and I myself used to run after goats, trying to catch them in the evening to lock them up in the shed. Is same thing going to happen with Ifeyiwa? Are they going to lock up her up somewhere? Why are they capturing her like an animal? And if she is the prey, the one who is being captured, run after, overpowered, tied, and lifted which is the hunter? Oh I used which now for humans. What is happening? But, why shouldn't I use? Why should I not consider them animals, if they themselves are treating Ifeyiwa like an animal? But again, are they really hunters? Directly, visibly, literally yes. Indirectly, figuratively no, they are not the hunters actually.

They are the ones which are made to hunt. But then who is the actual hunter? Actual hunters are the ones who are wearing the masquerade, who seem to show what they are not and what they are, they don't show. They are powerful, they have money. They are great in number and they have used all available resources for their own benefit justifying their own actions. They are the ones who think their power and discourses, speak volumes of their strength. They have made some systems. They have set some rigid regulatory frame works to be followed. The ones who do not follow their set and rigid norms, they launch a campaign of abjection against them. They have common interests and form in-group. For them, everybody disobeying them is a member of the out-groups, for whom they have zero tolerance.

They always believe in unitary structure of society, and for them there is no room for any kind of coalition in their system. Coalition for them would be accepting others' will and opinions, and others views might be different, which do not match with their own views. How they can accept something or somebody which is not like them that might lead to breaking the laws and the system and the norms which they have made, established, secured and strengthened after a number of sacrifices. Sacrifices? They did sacrifice their lives? No, they did not sacrifice their lives, but that of others'. But this sacrificiality is of another kind. This is a very rare kind, albeit, we witnessed it many times. They aborted, they molested, they subjected, they discriminated, they tortured, they exploited, they abused, they kicked, they chained, they raped and they murdered but they sacrificed, not their own lives but that of others'. And, who are they

going to sacrifice today? Oh my God! Is it Ifeyiwa? Are they going to establish the systems at the cost of human life? I think, yes, because this is what Beauvoir states (...rather one becomes a woman). This is evident in the books. History is replete with such instances, in which human beings are crucified for the sake of the system.

Will it be same with Ifeyiwa? Yes it seems, because this is what history says. Ifeyiwa too appeared to have given up. She was captured and taken back home, where a person had been waiting for her like a lion wait for a sheep. She had not seen Takpo. She didn't know who he was. She only came to know that she was going to marry this man, who was double of her age. After the dowry was paid, settlements done, she came into his house in the neighbourhood of Omovo. In the hindsight, readers should know that her parents were forced to marry her as her father had died recently and she was thought to be a burden. At Takpo's house, Ifeyiwa had traumatic, near death experiences. She was too young to understand the gravity of marriage and was forced to have sex with Takpo. She felt like raped as she was not willing to sleep with her husband. She was slapped, kicked, beaten and raped as an animal for her unwillingness.

She had almost given up, thought to commit suicide many times until the moment she saw Omovo, not so handsome but young almost of her age in the neighbourhood. Initial discussion revealed to both of them of their sailing in the same boat. She had almost become a patient of depression, but seeing Omovo filled her life with a new hope. She became happy to see Omovo in the proximity which surprised her husband also, who didn't know anything in the beginning. Ifeyiwa was ready to face and beat challenges for the sake of Omovo's love. She was determined to not let this opportunity slip off her hands, which was her only hope. She was very watchful of her actions and everybody's reaction in the compound, when she used to talk and meet Omovo. Both of them, after knowing each other's conditions, fell in love and met with each other in darkest of the corners, beyond every body's sight. They were aware of each other's homely violence, problems and pain.

Their knowing of each other's pain became the base upon which their plant of love grew. They found their soul mates in each other. Ifeyiwa was new in the area but

somehow managed to arrange for a room to meet her lover Omovo there, ignoring all the consequences she was going to face. She bore the brunt for her meeting with Omovo. One wonders, what made so fierce in her approach and go against her husband. How did she rise against the expectations of Takpo and the readers? How did she become so bold to ignore the repercussions of her meeting? How did she turn against her husband, which was like turning against the system? It appears, her agony and the problems she faced gave her strength to do what she was not supposed and expected to do in a heteronormative social structure. It seems that she was already exposed to the horrors of life in extreme.

She had already experienced extremities of life after marrying Takpo. Since her life had already become horrible and traumatic that she was thinking to end her life. What more life had to offer if she was already exposed to violence and murder in her family? It is Omovo who gave her a vision of new life. After seeing Omovo and Omovo's love for her, she could not but imagine life with him only. He was the only hope in her life, so how she could let go him. Rising against her husband, and readers and Beauvoir, she endeavoured to break the myths. She was the one who was made to sacrifice her life by 'them', but she decided not to. She refused to succumb to the pressures of life. Her actions show her bravery of not fighting her husband but the system which is expecting from her against her wishes. Her actions reveal a hope. She seems not to be the woman of Beauvoir's "The Second Sex". She rose against odds, broke the myths. She attempted to liberate herself, against the conventional approach of system. She seems not to be the same Ifeyiwa, who was captured and controlled and was faced to marry against her wishes. She attempted to break and re-establish her identity and with this her destiny as well.

Takpo is a middle aged man. He is a well off person, who, out of his loneliness, starts looking for a suitable match, a lady who would give him sexual ecstasy and will look after him in his old age. He is desperate to get married and quench his thirst that made him approach his friends and relatives to seeking help in finding a lady for him. With the help of friends and relatives he arranged some money as dowry and approached Ifeyiwa's mother to marry her, whose father was dead. Ifeyiwa was unaware of

discussions of her marriage at home. She was an innocent girl who loved books and wanted to study as much as she can. But her example proved the proverb of 'Man proposes but God disposes'. Life for her did not go as she had planned and thought it to be. The person, who was going to control life, was other than her a man who was hungry and waiting for his bait. He had lured the parents of Ifeyiwa with large bait, tied at the end of the fishing hook.

Takpo proved to be true representative of men category, a true medium for the systems to be regulated strongly. He has used his money and his influence in the relatives to catch a fish that was too young to be his bait. But his relatives along with mother and relatives of Ifeyiwa, who thought her a burden, were not worried about her being young. They were sub-mediums or sub-tools to be used to strengthen the system which is male dominating in nature. Takpo got to overpower Ifeyiwa as soon as they came home after marriage. He thought and simply took her as an object that he had purchased after paying a huge sum of money to be used and played with. He was furious to see Ifeyiwa's reluctance and unpreparedness for the sexual act, and felt humiliated, rejected and insulted in his very home. How could an object refuse to be used who was solely brought with the purpose of having fun and pleasure?

He behaved with her very rudely, controlled her using his might, slapped her and entered her forcefully. One can control the body not the spirit. Ifeyiwa's unwillingness gave him no pleasure and enjoyment in his attempts to penetrate her. This made him more furious in his dealings with her. He was a pure kind of orthodox person, felt humiliated each time when he could not make her love wilfully. Ifeyiwa surrendered her body to him not the soul, which made him angrier. He could not disclose his failure to win her to his side, fearing his insult by others making him a butt of ridicule. He did not want to be ridiculed outside, but was being ridiculed at home by Ifeyiwa by not surrendering mentally. In order to win her he tried to behave politely and softly with her sometimes, but that too did not budge her. In fact she got a chance to meet Omovo's in their neighbourhood and build relations with him. He spoke to her politely, got all the things of her interest, and tried to listen to her and understand her feelings.

He could not understand anything as he had already turned Ifeyiwa into a stone with his violent behaviour and tendency to control her physically all the times, and was not capable enough to know and understand her deep, intense unfathomable silence. Ifeyiwa would have accepted him as her husband, had he tried to be kind and polite with her in the beginning. In their home, they were living as husband and wife visibly, very close to each other physically, but were miles away from each other spiritually and mentally. There was no warmth prevailing in their home except the doubt, suspicion over each other and cold looks full of hatred and anger, which were the result of Takpo's attempts to win her and penetrate her forcefully. How can a person, whose first wife was dead, treat a girl cruelly, who was like his daughter, by chance had ended up being his wife. How can a man be so selfish? How can one think the other as an object to be used, and played with, as per his time and taste? Takpo became her husband and did his best to monitor her his way.

The purpose of his marriage was clear to him not to her. He, being a model of male dominating society, spent his money to play with her. But how one can think of playing with the 'other' if the 'other' is not willing? The answer is lying in the system and its practices. Takpo is furious and in dilemma to know about Ifeyiwa's affair with Omovo. This is something serious which he finds very hard to digest. This act of affair between both of them would become source of insult for him. It would disclose his inability to control her, he thought. This added fuel in the fire but helpless Takpo who had become a drunkard could do nothing about it. To some extent he showed compassion, pity and mercy towards her so that he could be successful to grow flower of love in her heart, but was in vain. His ability to do anything in such painful situation made him drink time and again and beat her violently. Takpo used his money, his might and his compassion to win her, but was unsuccessful. He tried all the available means to fulfil his desires.

So we see his attempts and use of everything he had to win her and make her ready for his pleasures and make a room in her heart. In a society where use of all means is justified linguistically, one cannot imagine a failure but this is what happened with Takpo. He was defeated by Ifeyiwa, his wife. He felt frustrated because he was made

a channel to establish and strengthen the system but was not successful even after performing the given role, using all available resources to the fullest. Takpo was not ready to accept his defeat since his defeat would be the defeat of the system, from a person who is a woman and his wife, above that. He was not made to accept this defeat because his defeat means victory of the 'other'. Other that is made to be sacrificed, to be used as a tool to establish the system, an object to be used and played with.

His defeat would be an insult, a slap on his face and the face of the system, and the face of all those who are the keepers and protectors of the systems and on the face of the hunters. Takpo is presenting mind-set thinking, according to which one who takes the role of a wife in heterosexual matrix and sexual binary, is supposed to listen to the husband and should always be ready to serve him submissively, as per his wishes. In this thinking there is no room for her own wishes, her own say. Giving a room to her say will be giving a room to the 'other' in the coalition, and the structure of this system is unitary not coalitionary. Omovo's Father's role is similar to that of Takpo to some extent. He also used to deal with his wife violently, owing to which she met with her death unexpectedly, at a time when her sons needed her most. Omovo's father also got remarried, but the lady who married Omovo's father, married him knowingly, very well aware of her purpose of life. In case of Ifeyiwa, she was completely dominated by her husband.

In case of Omovo's father, not initially but later, he was dominated by his wife. Omovo's father was not so wealthy but not even poor too. Like Takpo, he also got remarried to find a support in his old age through his wife. He was also a violent man by nature, but witnessed his second wife's quick and determined approach to gain control over family's resources. He came to know of her aggressive and revolting nature soon after she came into the house, which was in contrary to his first wife. He wanted to control her also, but felt a kind of helpless which he could not show and complain about to anybody and used to drink excessively, owing to which he lost control over his wife who started spending her time, her own way. Although used to beat his first wife, he was not so violent and rude with his sons. But, when he could

not control Blackie, who abused and treated step sons badly and got rid of them, he could not intervene and help them in home.

In fact he played into the hands of Blackie and got angry on them instigated by her, shouted and asked them to leave home immediately. Omovo was youngest of the three sons, was very timid and shy, and might have escaped the wrath of his father. Omovo's father was not angry with him, but did not support him in his studies after the school education, and left him to fend for himself. He did not support and favour Omovo when his painting was confiscated. Omovo was going through an emotional turmoil at home and also as an artist at personal level. Omovo's father should have helped and given him emotional support. He did not comment on his joining and leaving job of a clerk in a paint factory. He was a failure as a husband and as a father too. Why was he not able to say anything to his second wife Blackie who was sweeping almost everything in front of his eyes? It means he shifted his gears and adjusted himself to the situation.

He beat and murdered his first wife who was always ready to sacrifice herself in his service, whereas the one who came into his life after her death; controlled him completely, felt helpless before her. Omovo's father, like Ifeyiwa's husband, was an ideal model of a heteronormative social structure in which he was naturalised to act aggressively but was not as successful as Takpo. He felt more helpless than Takpo felt. Both of them were perceived as the representatives of a system in which they were dominated but were supposed to dominate the 'other'. Playing into the hands of the system, they thought to play with their second wives as objects. One was successful in that as his was a young girl the other one could not, as she was ready and mature enough to deal with the matters in a different way. Omovo's father was also a drunkard like Takpo.

Both of them used their money and power and their influence to manage the things their own way. Both of them were used to communicate their terms to the 'other'. Both of them were made to use the available resources to dominate the others and justifying, their acts of dominance. Both of them felt helpless to not make impact on the others. Both of them could control the bodies of the others but not the spirit and

the souls. They made bodies of others, passive recipients of their violence and sexual atrocities, but could not inscribe their impact on their minds. Omovo's father felt more helpless as he was older and shocked by the abrupt reactions of Blackie. His unfulfilment of his expectations from Blackie might be the reason of diversion of his anger towards his sons. He was not as aggressive to Blackie as he was with his first wife, due to the available options in the forms of sons. Takpo's anger and violence for Ifeyiwa lingered longer, due to non-availability of other options. Their identities seem to be the outcome of a social structure in which women are said to have less or no value at all. Both of them represent the thinking of orthodox system in which only one is there who has got the position for speaking and there is no room for the 'other'.

While having a discussion about all characters, Blackie's discussion is important keeping in view the role she has played in the novel. Readers get a shady impression of Blackie's characters after reading the novel. Blackie seems to contribute a lot to ruin Omovo's life. If we draw a comparison between Blackie and Ifeyiwa, Blackie appears to be more aggressive, firm, cunning and dominating, whereas Ifeyiwa is bereft these qualities. The first obvious reason of difference of these attributes is their age. Ifeyiwa was very young in age when she got married with Takpo, whereas Blackie was ripe in age, ready to get married. Second there was a great difference between their mental statuses when they got married.

Ifeyiwa being very young, wasn't aware of concept of marriage, she was a student as a school who wanted to study a lot but was forced to marry a middle aged man who she had never met earlier, against her wishes. Blackie was ready to get married, she knew, who she was going to marry. Marriage was not imposed on her unlike Ifeyiwa. Ifeyiwa was astounded to be pushed into the role of wife which was new to her as she did not know anything about becoming someone's bride. Blackie on the other hand, was aware of her role in the family and was clear of her purpose of marrying Omovo's father, a middle aged old man. When we see Blackie's role in the novel, we hold her responsible, and blame her to ruin Omovo's life. She appears heartless in her dealings with Omovo's father and Omovo also. The kind of behaviour she showed through her actions is not normally attributed to the females.

Women are said to be embodiment of patience, kindness, mercy and love, but Blackie's behaviour was quite opposite to that. She did not show any kindness, patience to Omovo, rather she used to abuse and talk with him rudely. She did not have any kind of mercy and love to a child whose mother had died. She showed little love to Omovo's father, but that appeared only physical infatuation or attraction, which was a kind of duty that, as a wife she was supposed to do. At spiritual level on the level of soul, there seemed to be no love for even Omovo's father also. She appeared very rude to Omovo, which actually she was. But one can never imagine or tell what would have happened to her, had she become submissive in her approach and attitude with Omovo's father. No doubt, she was heartless with Omovo in her dealing, but her dealing his father was completely justified. She was fair with her rude behaviour, ignorance, lovelessness and aggression towards him. Because there was somebody who loved, served, wished to stay with him. She was full of love, and compassion and politeness for him. She was always ready to serve him irrespective of the award, she was getting in return.

She was none other than Omovo's first mother, who met death unexpectedly as a reward for her readiness to serve her husband. She loved him very much, but he used to beat her. She prepared food and took care of him for which he beat her. She fulfilled all her duties as an ideal wife, for which she was treated like an animal. Blackie would have met the same fate, had she shown any kind of compassion, mercy and real love for Omovo's father. The struggle between Omovo's father and Takpo on one side and Ifeyiwa and Blackie on the other is a struggle of two thoughts, two identities which are opposite to each other, between dominating and dominated between the main and the other, between the oppressor and the oppressed.

Omovo's father, Takpo, Blackie, Ifeyiwa and many others are simply means, used by these two opposite forces, one of which has established its influence and continuously striving to strengthen it, while the other is constantly looking for the ways of emancipation. Seeing the struggle, one wonders that the day is not very far and the tables are going to turn very soon, we have been witnessing the scenes of revolt and protests. Nobody knows when the story is going to be told the other way round, what

we fear is more turbulence, chaos, disorder, struggles and disagreement in the offing, which no doubt, are going give way to new life with emerging ideas of equality.

The Famished Road

“The Famished Road” is the most prominent text of Ben Okri for which he was awarded with the Man Booker Prize. This is the story about young boy Azaro, who is an Abiku. A spirit child is called an Abiku child. Showing the element of magical realism in this novel, Ben Okri narrates the movement of characters between human’s world and spirit world. Creatures in the spirit world have their own ways of living with each other. They are beyond the limitations of body and matter. They move from places to places in a group and are bound to remain in a group. Remaining united in groups is their identity. They take forms of animals and birds and come back quickly after their death. They are beyond the feelings and attachments which beings of mortal world feel for each other. They are united through a very special pact which they have made for themselves and are bound to follow.

Many of them many times, take birth in the mortal world. According to this pact, the ones who are born would also have to die as soon as possible to join back others. If someone tries to escape them knowingly or unknowingly and breaks the pact, all others are bound to bring him/her back in their world. He would have to face the challenges and wrath of his spirit companions. They are being ruled by a king, who controls the exits and arrivals of the spirits. Pact breaking spirits would find relief only after returning to their world, joining friends. They have always respected the pact made by them for themselves. Azaro has been the spirit which has taken birth many times to a particular couple and has returned and joined his friend every time. He has to return as remaining united is his identity, obeying the condition of pact. But once after taking birth, he decided to explore the world of mortals, longer than before and stayed for quite some time.

The reason of his stay, though, was uncertain to him; he wanted to explore the novelties of mortal world. Moreover he was, to some extent exhausted after vacillating between two worlds for many years. Above all it was for the sake of his mother, who

had conceived him many times, after that he used to die. His parents had longed for him for many years, and mother had almost become half dead after losing her vitality in the process of conceiving and giving him birth. Azaro felt compelled to stay longer after seeing the half dead pale face of his mother. Azaro's decision to stay in mortal world was the beginning of problems in the life of his parents and his life as their son. This decision to stay with his parents meant the breaking of pact, between him and his sibling spirits. His sibling spirits requested him many times to return to their world to be united with them. They were talking to him in dreams and through many other ways during odd timings of the day, which made his parents suspicious of him.

Sibling spirits requested him many times to return, and became angry at his denial, on knowing his wilful stay with his parents. They started harassing him through many ways. They tried to hallucinate him in an attempt to make him walk into death. They attracted him many times but every time Azaro was able to escape them with the help of his parents. Azaro's parents were happy to see Azaro living with them longer than before but their happiness was short lived as they lost and spent almost everything there had, in order to save him from his companion spirits. Though Azaro was aware of their presence in his life, his parents could only see and believe what they used to see and feel. Azaro, undoubtedly, obliged to his parents' longing for himself, he put not only his life but that also of his parents in danger. He put his parents in danger several times but managed to save them also.

As Azaro had abilities to see and notice the movements of sibling spirits, he had developed a precise intuition with which he could foresee the future events to some extent. Many a time, he had foreseen the accidents which were directed to him and was able to avoid those. He had saved his mother from a car accident. It was a close shave for him and his parents when their house was on fire. It seemed, the problem in their lives was due to Azaro's decision to stay but actually his decision was also founded upon their longing for having him as their son. Once Azaro had made a decision to stay, he did his best to save them and be with them. Though he wanted to keep his parents happy all the time, being Abiku, happenings were not always in his own hands. He did not know, for how long he would be able to stay with them but

wanted to stay as much as he could. To save the wrath of spirits, once he tried to flee from house so that he could take them away from his parents. He ended up being captured by a family of police officer. He felt strange and lonely in their house, where they were treating him with love and care.

Having reservations for their love to him, he discovered that they had lost their son and had developed an intimacy for him. Somehow he escaped and fled from there with the help of his mother. He witnessed all the problems his parents were facing, owing to having him in their life. Azaro also did his best to repay his parents love for him. He always tried to help them in whatever way he could starting right from cooking, washing and helping in family chores. He took the job of waiter in Madame Koto's bar, in order to supplement the family income which was meagre. The idea was to help and heal financial wounds of the family. Although Azaro is characterized as a spirit initially, he developed love for a human being which was not an attribute of a spirit.

One wonders, what made him have pity over his mother who subsequently made him to decide to stay with his parents. On One hand, as a spirit he was supposed to stay with his siblings, respecting the pact, on the other, he developed an attachment for humans. No doubt, it was the sprouting of love in his heart for his mother and parents, due to this love only he broke not only his pact but his identity too. Fact remains unanswered that why and how a sentiment of attachment was developed in his heart. Answer is his constant movement between both worlds. He was tired of his regular movement and wanted to stay in one world, preferably with his companion spirits. But his attempts to stay were disturbed by the regular calling and longing of his parents. Oscillating between two worlds was very painful for him, so finally he decided to stay so that he could enjoy being human little longer, obliging his mother's love and affection for him.

We have seen the character of Azaro as spirit and as a son as well. His mother's longing for him made him break the pact and be her son. Now in the mortal world, he like an obedient son, tried to do whatever he could to make his parents happy, living both identities at a time. In mortal world children are supposed to be obedient and

respectful to the parents. Azaro, as an ideal son tried to present himself as obeying and helpful to his parents. He not only tried to save their lives whenever he could, but also worked very hard as waiter in Madame Koto's bar, where spirits had troubled him many times. His picture is portrayed by Ben Okri as an obedient son and helpful human being.

They were living a rough, monotonous, boring and fun less life without a child. Azaro's father longed for a child as much as his wife. Then, there came happy news of his wife's conception of a baby. The news brought newness a new spirit, a new hope in their lives. Life became an expression of joy and a fun filled game for them. They were going to complete all their wishes and aspirations of being parents at this happy news. Level of happiness was increasing day by day as the date of delivery of baby was nearing. But lo and behold! The very baby who was expected and waited for over a long time, had died and gone as soon as he took birth. Life was back on the track of monotony, accompanied with disappointment and dullness. The child was born normal, except a strange kind of cut or marks on the forehead which gave way to suspicion. But there was no room for suspicion after the death of the child. Happy news of conception arrived again, child was waited with finger crossed and died, soon after he was born. It appeared the child was same who had taken birth earlier, which made them more doubtful and confused. Now the child has taken birth and has died many times with a mark on his forehead.

Level of happiness was coming down with disappointment and gloom on the rise, with their attempts to save child after every birth. Azaro's mother sounded like a half dead woman, turning into a birth giving machine losing her health and vitality with each conception and birth. They had almost given up and were going to take the last chance when they were successful to save child little longer. Taking it as their blessings and success they were completely unaware that it was Azaro's decision to stay not theirs', which was undoubtedly shaped by their longing for him. Seeing their son as a source of joy, they were about to face a slew of wrong happenings in their lives. Mother was a strong and simple lady who wanted a son and was feeling over the moon to have

one. Both parents had to pay a great deal for their longing. Azaro being an Abiku child, needed protection at every step of life, from his sibling spirits.

Parents lost their home, money and almost everything they had to save their son. At times, they were about to die but rescued by Azaro's quick-wittedness. Parents and Azaro were doing their bit to save each other from spirits, in their own ways. It was a narrow escape for the whole family when their house was on fire which spread to the whole compound. Having Azaro as their son in their lives put not only their own lives in danger, but that of others too. They had spent their whole saving to pay to sorcerer in order to save him. In another incident mother had to go and bring him from a policeman's house alone, as suggested by the sorcerer. Both of them were doing their bit to keep him with them safely. Family's reputation and money were both gone. They had to look for a new room, which they got in a new locality on rent. People were very mean there, who were always disturbing and harassing them. With the little savings gone, family was on the road and had to spend a number of nights with empty stomachs.

Poverty and unemployment were on height in the area. There was no work to be found. People did not like them being new in the area. Mother was an unhealthy lady but was very strong mentally. To do her bit she exploited her limits and decided to contribute in the family income. She got some provisions and decided to sell them as a hawker, moving in the streets of the town. Although she tried to give her best, she could get nothing after moving into the streets for whole day. Family was facing the problems, being new in the area. Father's job was to carry goods on his back as a worker. He was a man of strong physique and used to carry loads. But, being new in the area where the work was very less, increased his woes that could do nothing except moving from place to place, in search of work. And whenever he used to get work, the money he was being paid, was too less in proportion to the work he was doing.

Azaro had made his sibling spirits furious by ignoring them. It was not he only, who was facing their wrath but his parents also. Companion spirits wanted to take back Azaro at any cost. They were not only disturbing Azaro but his parents also, who were

the reason of his staying away from them. They pestered and troubled his mother in the streets by hallucinating her. Parents were soft targets for spirits as they had no abilities to see their movements. Mother was confused many times in her house and work. Father was very badly treated as he was made to lose concentration at the work which he was begging for. Azaro's attempt to help parents in income was almost in vain, when he decided to go Madame Koto's bar as a waiter, because many spirits tried to come and disturb and kill him at the bar also. Azaro was able to see and notice the odd happenings at the bar but did not want to run from the situation, as Madame Koto had lent family money and food, at the time of need.

Working as two agents of heterosexual binary, mother and father after their act of reproduction, were trying to save son from all problems. Azaro's mother's strength is obvious to the readers. She is made to give birth many times, an expectation which a lady has to meet to establish and strengthen sexual binary. If we closely examine all happenings of the novel, it seems that all incidents take place naturally one after the other, which is true to some extent but not completely. After the birth of Azaro, all problems his parents are facing are owing to his longer stay in their lives. So the obvious reason of their woes was none other than their son, who, they have longed for, over a long time. But a deeper analysis will reveal, Azaro's stay was motivated by his parents longing for himself. It is their longing and expectations of him for a long time, which forced him to think to stay with them, forced him to break the pact and move away from the group of spirits and go against his own identity. It is not Azaro, but they themselves who were responsible for all the problems they were facing. In the longing for son and happiness they have changed their lives and destinies equally. We can see how one decision leads to create impact on the lives of the others. The most perfect example of performativity is given by Okri in this novel that is identity of Abiku. The children who we take birth and die are identified as Abiku. Actions of taking birth and dying are natural in nature, but effect of constant actions leads to generation of an idea that is identity.

All the struggles and happenings between spirits and Azaro and his family are based on one decision of Azaro, forced by his parents. And when we see the attempts of

spirits to kill Azaro and his parents, and their trying to save themselves, it appears that one is cruel and one is weak. But at the subtle level, this is the struggle, not between spirits and Azaro, but between two identities which are placed opposite to each other. These two identities do not have any history of animosity, they have become enemies lately. Both of the identities are trying to establish and strengthen themselves through their agents and representations. These representatives are made to work, act, perform, kill or do whatever they can, to supplement and establish their identities which actually are the identity of the whole group. We can see how decisions and actions of one person in a system, have a deep impact on the decisions and lives of the other persons associated with him/her. The life of a person is an example how identities are inscribed on the bodies and placed against each other to perform the roles given to them to establish and solidify their situations.

One of the important characters of the novel is Madame Koto. With her bold and overbearing personality, Madame Koto has got control over her life and has created a niche for herself. She is owner of a bar and serves the customers with chicken and pepper soup. Both females in the novel have contrasting personalities and characters when compared with each other, Azaro's mother is a poor lady who is unhealthy and works as a hawker in the town. She is a resolute by nature and helps her family in need, to earning money. Madame Koto on the other hand is of dominating and arrogant type, who has her own business. She seems to be a kind hearted lady and tries to help Azaro and his family when they were facing financial problems. She gave some money and food to Azaro's mother and showed her association with them. This stopped many money lenders, troubling her, in the new locality.

Seeing the pathetic conditions of the family, she offered Azaro job of waiter, which Azaro's parents happily quickly accepted, thinking that it would help them in distress. Madame Koto actually had become aware of mysterious powers of Azaro; she thought that his presence in the bar would attract customers. Azaro was a small school going boy and wanted to help his parents who were penniless, and facing a lot of problems. They spent many days without work and used to sleep at night with empty stomachs. Mother had become unhealthy and weak. To help parents, Azaro decided to work as a

waiter in the bar and was astounded to see increase in number of customers. It was after some time, he noticed a fetish tied at the door of the bar which had magical powers and was attracting spirits in various forms to the bar. Madame Koto was a business minded lady who did not have any family.

She wanted to earn a lot of money to be rich. She had employed Azaro in her bar not only with purpose of helping his family but to earn money using Azaro's powers. Azaro noticed later that those were his sibling spirits coming to bar in various deformed figures in order to disturb, kill and take him back in to their world. Madame Koto was a prominent figure in the town, and was clear of her purpose in life. That was the time of elections in the area and there were a lot of activities going on, including workers of both parties coming and wooing voters. Main parties in the election were the party of the poor and party of the rich. Party of the rich distributed spoiled milk among poor to tempt them to vote, many poor people started vomiting and there was a fight between workers of party and common people. People of rich party lost confidence among people but Madame Koto made an announcement to support party of the rich. She supported them because she wanted them to visit her bar and increase her sale, and to gain maximum benefit with her association with them.

Madame Koto seems to be the maker of her own life. She was confident and took all decisions of her life which were going to benefit her financially and socially. Everybody in the area was furious about Madame Koto's decision to support party of rich. Madame Koto against wishes and reactions of all others did not care for anything. Azaro was also popular in the area being a mystic boy who had powers to see the future happenings. Madame Koto took the benefit of his powers, against Azaro's mother who was facing a lot of problems from Azaro being an Abiku. Presence of Azaro with his parents gave them troubles whereas Madame Koto tried to reap maximum benefits by employing and keeping him in proximity. Companion spirits of Azaro, were benefiting certain people while troubling others.

Madame Koto stood against all odds challenging the established notions and categories of women and female. Following the ancient social structure, women are supposed to be submissive in nature, dominated and ready to be used. Their sole

purpose in heterosexual society is to be a part in the process of reproduction, the role which seems to be the foundation of their life. Madame Koto, rising above all orthodox notions, did not feel dominated and any need to engage her in any kind of sexual as reproductive activity. Her purpose in life was clear to her irrespective of the point what others used to think of her. She did not bother of people's reactions of opening a bar in the town by a lady. She had the courage to not only own the business but to run it also properly.

Madame Koto did not hesitate to approach and help Azaro's family, when everybody in the area was pestering them to return the borrowed money. She felt pity over family, though; with this she seems to kill two birds with one stone. She kept her business minded approach in mind while announcing her support to the party of the rich. She was a lady of imposing character that's why she never worried about people's reactions about her proximity with rich party. This shows her determination, strength and boldness to deal with the matters of self-interests. Her approach to employ Azaro seems to be her trick to reap benefits of spirits' nearness to him. She was aware of his magic powers and wanted to attract customers through him. She made the best use of spirits in her interests. Spirits which were source of troubles for Azaro and his family became a source of income and fame for Madame Koto. Madame Koto increased her clientele using Azaro and with him, his spirit companions.

In orthodox society male and men are said to use all available resources against the others. In situation of Madame Koto how tables were turned, one wonders. How she was able to acquire all qualities which were thought to be attained by males and men. Seeing her acquisition of these attributes, are we right if we call her a male and man instead of addressing her as female or woman? If she is to be addressed a female, how was she allowed by men procure everything that was of men and males? Are we right to think that she, instead of being dominated, dominated the dominating? There was no kind of movement against the atrocities of male dominating society in the novel. One is forced to think her as him, male and man. Not only she tried to build up her business, she tried to help another lady who happened to be Azaro's mother. How she

was able to have her say in the town, where males were threatening Azaro's mother for their money. Identity of Madame Koto, which is opposite to that of Azaro's mother, depicts and reaffirms Butler's theory of performativity which tells us about the instability of notion of Identity. Madame Koto's identity makes us use the idea of 'might is right' in the formation of identity, which means identity shifts and changes with shifting of baton from one hand to the other.

The Freedom Artist

This is the latest novel written by Ben Okri in 2019. Ben Okri has mirrored the modern society and the trauma faced by the people in this novel, unlike previously selected three novels, in which poverty and corruption were used as base themes. The novel is about a person who seems to be the maker of freedom.

Central character of the novel is a young boy Karnak, who appears to get freedom after a lot of struggle. The Freedom refers to here, is not something which is physical or concrete like freedom of slave from the master at bodily level, but emotional and mental freedom of one from the system. System includes people of influence in a social structure who have made certain laws to be followed by common people. They have made themselves keepers of law. Laws and rules, which include generation and regeneration of old myths and values, are expected to be accepted by the common people. At times, certain people do not compromise with their personal opinions which are not in sync with the social values and imposed laws. They are few in number and act in contradiction to imposed laws. They are punished mildly to make others aware of seriousness, and sanctity and such rules and laws.

Values and laws lose meanings if these are not respected by everybody equally. Keepers of the systems and law make sure that values should be viewed seriously, are not to be taken for granted. In order to gain more justification and seriousness stringent actions are taken and rigid punishments are given, so that a kind of fear should be generated for the laws to be respected by everybody. Now the punishment, which was merely a punishment for a wrong act earlier, is used as a tool to exert influence and fear over the minds of common people.

Strict actions are taken against the wrong doers, so that others should feel discouraged to follow the rebels and question the systems and its practices. There are people who rebelled against such practices and went against and staged protests. These kind of people are regularly being captured by the keepers of the law and taken away from the mainstream people so that they should remain unaffected from the influence of rebels. The other kind of people are the ones who are fearful of the system, they are frightened of the keepers of the law and have learnt to remain silent, not questioning the systems and its practices. They are fearful of the strict actions that could be taken against them, had they tried to speak anything against hierarchy. These people including Karnak, watch all the happening in their surroundings, but remain silent because they see people being dragged and taken away from them for reacting and speaking truth, making objection to the system and hierarchy. They are watching constantly and have become non-responsive to any atrocities of the keepers of the law.

It seems they have accepted the system readily, with their acceptance and non-responsive approach. They don't react, nor do they speak anything which they are prohibited to speak. They behave with all very naturally. They behave like they are walking statues. They walk like they are day dreaming while they are walking, they are sleep-walkers. Their non-responsive approach further strengthened and validated practices of system. They walk-like machines which don't express themselves neither do they respond to any query raised by any person. They did not respond to the queries of Karnak who was in search of his beloved Amalantis. Amalantis was with him and it seemed that he somehow had lost her unknowingly. He felt quite embarrassed to find people looking back at him with blank responses, whenever he asked them about his beloved.

Karnak feels shocked to find people unresponsive, forgetting that he too, was like them in the past. It seems that Karnak was not looking for his beloved Amalantis but for his lost freedom. Karnak was representative of sleep-walkers. Their freedom was taken away from them and was made silent with the show of punishment. Punishment is used by the powerful to dominate and build pressure of the common people mentally. This punishment is used to steal freedom of people of all walks of life. They

don't speak and don't let others speak of prohibited words. They have become receptive to all happenings. Their acceptance has made hierarchy's attempts and efforts easier. Sleepwalkers' non-responsive approach has made them slave of systems with their freedom gone. They remain silent to save themselves from the systems but face emotional outbursts. Those emotional outbursts are happening almost everywhere in general public, which are the consequences of their remaining silent.

Life is not easy for them, when they watch others being hauled and dragged into the prison, nor is it easier when they try to remain silent to avoid situation. Karnak later realizes that his freedom, his Amalantis has been taken away from him as a prisoner and tries to look for her asking others. He feels and sees people remaining untouched and unaffected from every kind of happening in their surroundings. He was so furious to find everybody blank including some of greatest painters and artist. He was looking for his beloved Amalantis who was taken away from him as a prisoner, but slowly and gradually realisation dawned on him that everybody was the prisoner in his/her own body, who was not allowed to speak for or against anything. It seems they were fighting for their lost freedom, but that fight was against themselves only, in which they were hurting their own bodies, by remaining silent first, and then exploding emotionally later.

People who were rebelling and reacting to the practices of hierarchy were Amalantis, Ruslana and others. They were the ones who were not compromising with their old original values and systems, and were fighting the system in their own way. When they witnessed strict actions against all those who spoke against hierarchy openly they changed their plan of protests. Now they changed their ways and style in opposition to system. These people were fighting double struggles, at one hand they were objecting and fighting the new system which is imposed on them, on the other hand they were fighting their own people to become like them, which was also a part of their struggle against system. They seemed to be the ones, who knew what old books, values and myths were like which were in original forms.

The new rules and systems were modified and manipulated as per the need of hierarchy, which was different than the old ones. These people, including Amalantis,

Ruslana and others wanted others also know the difference between old and new, between actual and presented truths, values and freedom. First category of people, in order to avoid the ire of hierarchy, considered presented truth as actual truth and freedom, whereas rebellions did not worry about wrath of authorities and opposed to the imposed truth and freedom, irrespective of the consequences they were going to face. They were sacrificing their lives, being captured by hierarchy, they were taken away from mainstream people, and they wanted the people of other category must know the difference before they started accepting new freedom and truth as actual freedom.

And new truth and freedom in system means to accept whatever is presented in front of them, not questioning any wrong doing or irrelevant practices. Amalantis, who for the readers is an embodiment of actual truth and freedom, wants her lover Karnak to see the difference clearly. She seemed to fight at both ends, against the system by being a part of all groups which were engaged in activities against hierarchy and with Karnak to make him move from sleep-walking to wakefulness. Her fight with Karnak was, at her personal level, a unique kind of fight. She never felt impressed and motivated whenever anybody including Karnak praised her beauty, which was based on her outer appearance. She was pained to see Karnak notice and believe what was visible to him of her and ignore her inner self inner beauty, like people of her category wanted others to see the hidden not only whatever was presented and visible to them.

Amalantis always tried to utter the restricted words and terms like books, library, education and prisoner in front of Karnak to make him shake. Karnak was very much fearful and hushed her whenever she uttered those words in front of him and used to react but secretly scolding and restricting her to keep mum. Karnak and others had not only restricted themselves to save their lives but not allowing many others to speak the banned words. They were frightened and were not letting the seed of protest sprout in the hearts of the others. They, after accepting the new founded truth and freedom, had become instrument of the system to work for it, justifying it and its practices by accepting and making others not to speak and accept silently whatever was imposed

on them. It is not like sleepwalkers were not aware of difference between actual and presented freedom.

They were able to make distinction but were not speaking openly seeing the punishment given to all those who had tried to object and oppose the system in the past. They started maintaining silence and became non-responsive. Their non-responsive attitude and their ignorance became their acceptance. Wise men's silence to the unlawful activities is their support and validation to them, which is entirely based on their fear of the system. Rebellions fear, lest it become their new identity which was actually happening, which is evident in case of Karnak, who could not revolt and oppose when his beloved Amalantis was taken away from his eyes, in front of him. Karnak looked like everything was happening in a dream. Amalantis was very silent and serious in her approach and behaviour with Karnak.

She never responded abruptly seeing him opposite to her in nature. She never believed Karnak would ever try to find her once she was gone, which she was sure of. But she had faith on his love for her and vice versa. She knew that her attempts to shake him and wake him would bear fruit one day. She was not at all surprised when Karnak remained stoned at the time of her arrest. She did not oppose her arrest but did what the best she could do, to make a deep impact on him, and that was giving him a last an undying mysterious smile. Karnak could not understand the smile and gravity of the situation; he took everything as a normal happening but soon felt a change look over him. Somehow in the bottom of his heart he had realised that Amalantis was taken away from him, and he would never see her again. He was not very quick to have this realisation. Whether Karnak was able to find Amalantis or not irrespective of It, Amalantis was able to be successful in her efforts to shake him, and be conscious oriented making him move from one category to the other. This had been the attempts of rebellions to make sleep-walkers notice the difference between what was visible and what was hidden. A war was taking place in this novel also, between dominating and dominated between repressor and repressed, between one category and the other. The war in this novel was not particularly against and directed towards category of the women and female, but a war between system and common folk regardless of their

gender or categories they are part of. This war is more emotional and abstract not concrete and physical. The attack is not on the body but on the mind through body. Bodies being passive recipients became a channel for hierarchy to establish and stamp their rules. This is a war of the system against its residents using all available means that include law agencies and systems of communication. Old histories and books are being torn and destroyed and new ones are prepared and made available for everyone to read, and believe what is given to them. Systems and procedure of punishment which was merely a method to warn others, gained prominence and was now used as a medium to repress the old and present the new. People of both categories (sleep-walkers and wakefulness) were merely players in the hands of the system, and were playing or made to play the roles, given to them. The idea of prison and punishment was very strongly and presented and imposed, and the prison was not rooms and cells to keep the prisoners. Metaphorically prison was the body of person, and the prisoner was none other than bearer of the body. Karnak, for whom Amalantis was his beloved and his freedom as well, rose to become maker of freedom who attained it, got it by learning to react and respond in time, by noticing the difference between actual and imposed truth by becoming aware and mindful leaving his identity of sleep-walkers.

In the concluding chapter of the thesis, researcher has tried to string identity, gender and performativity together to discuss the themes, events and characters in the novel, analytically. Stamp of identity is applied and used on human beings before even they are born. They act or are made to act in certain ways, which is distinct for them, being members of particular a group, category as class. For them their class as category, is a source of their identity which helps them as well as others to classify and get classified. They wear the identity of a particular group, are seen, treated and dealt with being member of the very category.

They take the identity of a group, get acted upon accordingly and complement, strengthen and establish the identity of that group through their actions. Problems appear on surface when there starts a competition between and among various groups. Competition is bound to happen between people being members of separate groups. As soon as they are categorised, leaving personal identities they see themselves and

each other either members of in-group (with common interest) or members of out-groups (with conflicting interests). Competition happens when members are concerned with positive image of their group, which is actually their image or vice versa. Their wish of self-importance and positive image makes them favour in group members regardless of their personal as well as group identities, and disfavour the members of other out-groups. This feature remains common among all kinds of groups to favour in-group and disfavour out-group members. This competition or fight can be there between two brothers, two families, two teams, states or nations. This can be a fight between two communities, categories of men and women, or human beings and animals. In fact this competition can be there between two identities of a single same person.

Worst things happen when in a competition, two sides are not equal in sources, numbers and statures. The one which is more powerful uses the available resources to benefit itself but disturb and dominate others. This leads to exploitation at one side and unrest, distrust and disorder on the other. Frictions and fights happen in between opposite forces. The ones who are less in number and fame are always dominated. This has been the case in "*Flowers and Shadows*", when Jonan who has power in his hands, misuses it to kill some and ruin other's lives. He uses his influence to get his son out of police station in a few minutes, slaps and treats Juliet very badly, gets Gbenga beaten, his half-brother Sowho and Cynthia's father imprisoned. He singlehandedly, being very powerful tries to get everything managed his own way, though, he did face consequences for that.

Judith Butler's theory of performativity is used mainly to highlight the categories of men and women and male/female. She has talked about the formation and notion of gender identity, while pointing on its instability. She has kept action not actor, performance not performer in the focus for formation of identity, which seems true not only to gender but to all kinds of identities. It appears that with the change of baton from one hand to the other, change and shift occurs in identities also. Cynthia and Jeffia's mother being females proved to be women of mettle who not only fought the system but presented themselves as a hope to the society. Second novel taken by

researcher, (*Dangerous Love*) too showcases power shifting from one person to the other shifting of identities from being timid to powerful and vice versa. Omovo's Father and Takpo who were violent in their approach and dealings with their wives and others in the novel, found themselves helpless and pathetic when Blackie and Ifeyiwa stood on their ground to fight for their rights.

Discrimination and exploitation is not pertinent to categories of male/female only and man/women only. It can take place between the ruling and the ruled too. 'The Freedom Artist' has been a perfect example of class struggle and ruling govt's atrocities. Acts and decisions of one, affect the decisions and lives of all others who are in his/her association. It seems it was Azaro's decision to stay with his parents in novel 'The Famished Road', which made every body act in a certain way, including his siblings' attempts to trouble him, kill him and bring him back, and his parents loss of home, money and everything they had, in their attempts to rescue him. But if one sees more clearly it was Azaro's parents only who had made him break the pact with companion spirits and take a decision to stay with them which subsequently changed everybody course of life and their destinies. In this novel also, power shifts from human to spirits and spirits to humans and with that shift happens in identities too. But this movement and shift gives us idea of instability of power and its influence on identities subsequently.

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