Comparative Literature is a rapidly growing academic field that has attracted numerous scholars to conduct research involving the comparative analysis of various literary works. Defining comparative literature remains a challenge, as H. H. Remak suggests, and Bijay Kumar simplifies it as the examination of similarities and parallels between two literary bodies. This thesis focuses on conducting a comparative examination of the thematic elements present in Bharati Mukherjee's "Jasmine" and Jhumpa Lahiri's "The Namesake". Evaluating literature through thematic lenses enriches the reading experience and comprehension of the works.

The aim of a comparative study is to enhance the appreciation of the themes and structures being discussed. By comparing the selected authors and their works, a broader understanding of universal human behavior and experiences is attained. These women writers have explored diverse themes and structures within their novels. The insights gained from such an analysis hold credibility and reliability. Consequently, the need arises for a comparative study to dissect the structures and themes employed in the provided novels.

This comparative study hinges on identifying both the similarities and differences in themes and structures between the given novels. A theme embodies the core idea or message within a literary piece. The themes under examination encompass various aspects such as the parent-child relationship, identity associated with names, language barriers, feelings of alienation, the juxtaposition of the United States and India, and the tension between life and death, along with sentiments of nostalgia. The term 'Comparative Literature' denotes an exploration of literature that employs comparison as its principal tool. The purpose of comparative analysis is to study literature not in isolation but in conjunction with other works for meaningful insights.

Nature

The current century is particularly conducive to engaging in comparative literature studies. The objective of such an endeavor is to uncover shared elements within diverse literary traditions. This involves a form of coordination that strives to identify similarities in certain aspects. Notably, all significant literary works are rooted in their contemporary era while also having connections to the past and future. The act of comparison is an inherent function of rational thinking. Even in our daily interactions, comparison subtly influences our reactions and conduct. Thus, it appears to be a natural and unavoidable cognitive process. Consequently, the examination and enjoyment of literature inherently involve a comparative dimension.

Motives

The motives behind studying comparative literature can vary, yet its primary purpose is to serve as a highly effective technique for analyzing artistic creations. By comparing a work to others in different languages, one can discern its qualities more adeptly. This comparison also enables a balanced evaluation of literary excellence. Furthermore, literature cannot exist in isolation; it necessitates examination in conjunction with other literary traditions. Comparative literary study endeavors to explore diverse national literary heritages. Within such study, certain ideal types that may not be embodied by a single individual within a particular country can be considered, aiding in defining the nation's spirit as reflected in its language and literature.

Importantly, in the modern era characterized by multiculturalism, comparative cultural studies play a pivotal role. Amidst the backdrop of globalization, comparative studies have become an integral intellectual discipline. They significantly contribute to academic research in language and literature. Reflecting on the initial efforts in this field both in India and abroad, two prominent figures stand out: the renowned European writer Goethe and India's Nobel Laureate and artist, Rabindranath Tagore. In 1906, Tagore employed the term "Viswa Sahitya" to describe comparative literature, while Goethe introduced the concept by coining the term "Weltliteratur" to encompass the study of literature from various countries together.

A comprehensive approach to comparative literature should embrace the unlimited potential for studying literatures. Examining diverse elements of literature, such as linguistic precision and the historical context of literary texts, enhances the comparison of two or more works. In the context of Indian ethos, practicing comparative literature is particularly harmonious, as Indian philosophy posits that the individual and the particular are grounded in the universal. The essence of the individual is nothing more than the universal.

Comparative literary studies primarily entail exploring both similarities and differences. These investigations into resemblances and disparities aim to construct a universal framework of unity. Initially, comparative literature was embraced as a universal category. However, some literary critics and historians challenged this idea of a universal construct, even though formalistic analyses of literary works might keep structuralists detached from historical context. Comparative literature transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries. In this realm, Indian English literature is compared to comprehend the attributes of works created by authors of Indian origin in foreign lands.

11111

The origins of the novel can be traced back to the medieval romance and fantastical tales of love and adventure, which drew inspiration from ballads and fragments of epic poems. In 1350, Boccaccio authored a renowned collection of love stories in prose titled "Decameron." These concise stories were referred to as 'novella' in Italian. Initially signifying a fresh tale, the term evolved to denote a prose narrative distinct from verse, which retained the name "romance." As prose gained widespread usage, the term 'Romance' began to represent a story or sequence of stories from a legendary past, exemplified by works like Malory's "Morte d'Arthur." It's also employed to describe historically rich novels that prioritize excitement over scholarly rigor.

A more formal definition characterizes the novel as a lengthy prose narrative detailing the actions of fictional characters. Meredith aptly termed it 'a summary of actual life,' encompassing both internal and external aspects. Fielding loosely described it as a comic epic in prose. While the novel shares similarities with plays in terms of having a plot and character development through dialogue, the novelist relies on descriptions to bring to life what cannot be portrayed on stage.

Indian literature consists of works penned by writers from India. The earliest pieces of Indian literature were transmitted orally. Sanskrit epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata emerged around the end of the first millennium BCE, alongside the initial Tamil Sangam literature. Telugu literature followed in the 9th and 11th centuries, while Marathi, Bengali, various Hindi dialects, Persian, and Urdu literature began to flourish in the early 20th century. Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore became India's first Nobel Prize laureate in literature.

The style of Indian English literature shines in its adept usage of British English while infusing the language with Indian contexts. Creativity is palpable in all works by Indian English writers. These works often mirror struggles of Indians, cultural clashes, quests for survival, emotional turmoil, social and familial oppressions, all conveyed in a foreign tongue. The writings of Indian authors have effectively transported India's culture, traditions, and distinctive attributes to other nations.

Writers

The inception of the novel can be traced back to the medieval romance and fantastical narratives of love and adventure, which found their roots in ballads and fragments of epic poems. In the year 1350, Boccaccio authored a well-known collection of love stories in prose titled "Decameron." These succinct tales were termed 'novella' in Italian. Originally denoting a fresh narrative, the term gradually evolved to represent a prose-based story distinct from verse, while the term "romance" continued to be associated with verse narratives. With the rise of prose's popularity, the term 'Romance' evolved to signify stories or sequences of tales from a legendary past, as seen in works like Malory's "Morte d'Arthur." Additionally, it has been used to describe novels rich in historical content that prioritize excitement over scholarly rigor.

A more precise definition characterizes the novel as a lengthy prose narrative that intricately details the actions of imaginary characters. Meredith aptly referred to it as 'a summary of actual life,' encompassing both internal and external dimensions. Fielding provided a looser characterization, describing it as a comic epic in prose. While novels and plays share certain features such as having a plot and character development through dialogue, novelists rely on descriptive elements to vividly portray what cannot be conveyed on a stage.

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The style of Indian English literature shines through its adept utilization of British English, infused with Indian contexts. Creativity permeates the works of all Indian English writers. These writings often mirror the struggles of Indians, cultural clashes, quests for survival, emotional upheavals, social and familial oppressions, all conveyed in a foreign language. The works of Indian authors have effectively transported India's culture, traditions, and distinctive attributes to other nations.