



From Regional Roots to Global Narratives: Exploring Identity in Nemade's *Cocoon*

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Abstract

Bhalchandra Nemade's *Cocoon* (Kosla), an important work in modern Indian literature, indirectly depicts themes of identity, regionalism, and globalization. Deeply connected to the lively culture and languages of Maharashtra, this novel unfolds the journey of a young scholar as he explores the challenges between his traditions and the thrilling opportunities of a changing, globalized world. In the novel *Cocoon*, Nemade beautifully examines the unique Deshivad philosophy of Nemade, exploring the balancing act between the sweeping changes of modernity and the vibrant flexibility of regional identity. It discusses how the novel distinguishes local traditions from global stories, presenting identity as a lively and evolving tapestry woven together by historical, social, and linguistic threads. Through studying the protagonist's personal conflicts, relationships, and ideological conflicts, the study explains how *Cocoon* is a criticism and a reflection of India's postcolonial transition. Moreover, the novel's analysis of language, folklore, and indigenous thought systems emphasizes the challenges of identification in a world that is constantly evolving. *Cocoon* bridges the gap between the regional and the global with a detailed analysis of cultural hybridity, making it an important work for understanding the changing discourse on identity in contemporary literature.

Keywords: identity, regionalism, globalization, Deshivad, nativism, postcolonialism, cultural hybridity, modernity, linguistic identity.

Introduction

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indirectly depicts themes of identity, regionalism, and globalization. Deeply connected to the lively culture and languages of Maharashtra, this novel unfolds the journey of a

young scholar as he explores the challenges between his traditions and the thrilling opportunities of a changing, globalized world.

Cocoon's story depicts the struggles of a man seeking meaning in life. He is trapped between tradition and modernity, rural and urban life, and individuality and society. Sangvikar often reflects internally, showing his feelings of confusion and doubt. The novel honestly depicts human experiences, critiques middle-class values, and explores Sangvikar's personal struggles, focusing on existential themes. This paper aims to explore Cocoon's unique view in Marathi literature as it captures the search for identity, feelings of despair, and the overall human experience.

In the novel Cocoon, Nemade beautifully examines the unique Deshivad philosophy of Nemade, exploring the balancing act between the sweeping changes of modernity and the vibrant flexibility of regional identity. It discusses how the novel distinguishes local traditions from global stories, presenting identity as a lively and evolving tapestry woven together by historical, social, and linguistic threads. Through studying the protagonist's personal conflicts, relationships, and ideological conflicts, the study explains how Cocoon is a criticism and a reflection of India's postcolonial transition. Moreover, the novel's analysis of language, folklore, and indigenous thought systems emphasizes the challenges of identification in a world that is constantly evolving. Cocoon bridges the gap between the regional and the global with a detailed analysis of cultural hybridity, making it an important work for understanding the changing discourse on identity in contemporary literature.

Bhalchandra Nemade received the 50th Jnanpith Award in 2015. He is the fourth Marathi writer to win this significant Indian literary honour, after Vinda Karandikar in 2003, V.S. Khandekar in 1974, and V.V. Shirwadkar in 1984. Nemade uses original language and themes in his writing. He skilfully applies

modern techniques while remaining true to Indian traditions. Many see him as the most influential radical among contemporary Indian novelists. He has published six novels, two collections of poetry, two volumes of critical writing, and several essays on literary culture. His essays cover topics like translation, comparative studies, linguistics, and stylistics.

He is a distinguished Marathi writer, poet, critic, and linguist who has played an essential role in shaping Marathi literature. Born on May 27, 1938, in Sangavi, Maharashtra, his literary journey spans multiple decades and covers a wide range of genres. He has written six novels, two poetry collections, two books of critical writing, and many essays on varied topics like translation, comparative studies, linguistics, and stylistics. His first novel, "Cocoon," published in 1963, had a deep impact on Marathi literature. He continued this influence with works like "Bidhar" (1975), "Jarila" (1977), "Zool" (1979), "Teekaswayamvar" (1990), "Indo-Anglican Writings" (1991), and his latest novel, "Hindu" (2010). He was seen as a high priest of desivad (nativism) in Indian literature, striving to free it from Euro-American influences.

Nemade is recognized as a notable in Indian literature who advocates a focus on native culture. He challenges the influence of Western literature, trying to free Marathi novels from unrealistic romantic notions. Before "Cocoon," Marathi novels often underlined unrealistic concepts over authentic experiences and simple storytelling. With "Cocoon," Nemade opened the door to a new era in Marathi fiction, introducing a new outlook on morality and life possibilities.

Nemade has criticized the escapist tendencies and romanticized tradition of pre-independence Marathi novelists like V.S. Khandekar, N.S. Phadke, and G.T. Madkholkar, as well as their many successors. He noted their flawed morals and the lack of relevance to contemporary subjects in their novels. He says,

They would only diagnose the disease without suggesting the remedy. If morality is judged by intentions, they are on the right side. They would not claim any virtue as they have taught the new generation only to disrespect everything ... These writers might seem to have chosen the wrong morality, ...the image of the old novelist, perched like a bird in the golden cage of traditional morality, singing old songs of idealism and complacent happiness is respectable anyway but the image of the new novelist as a valuable social irritant is much more meaningful (Indian Literature 21.5. Sept-Oct. 1978: 34- 38).

Cocoon (1963) is an important novel in modern Marathi literature. It is known for its deep themes about existence and its unique storytelling. The main character, Pandurang Sangvikar, struggles with issues of identity and purpose, reflecting the changes in Indian society after independence. Nemade often challenges traditional writing styles and includes postmodern elements in his work, making him a leader in contemporary Marathi literature. In addition to fiction, he has also made important contributions to poetry, literary criticism, and language studies, earning his place as a versatile and influential figure in Marathi literature.

It is considered Nemade's finest work and is recognized as a modern classic in Marathi literature. The novel narrates the journey of a young man, Pandurang Sangvikar, and his friends beyond their college years. The author has used the form of an autobiography in this novel. It uses a first-person narrative to tell the story of Pandurang Sangvikar, a young man dealing with his identity while facing societal pressures. Although it is rooted in Marathi culture, the novel addresses broader themes of feeling disconnected, resisting modern influences, and searching for one's true self. This paper will examine how Cocoon connects its local roots with universal themes, highlighting

the importance of local stories in the global literary conversation.

The novel "Cocoon" opens with two striking epigraphs that set the tone for a journey of self-discovery and transcendence. The narrative's major elements are echoed in two texts: a sutra by Shri Chakradhar and a Tibetan prayer. The selected quotations provide a philosophical context for the story. The novel "Cocoon," which means "cocoon" in English, uses this term as a metaphor for its main idea. This metaphor presents the main character's transformation, similar to how a caterpillar changes inside its cocoon. The story explains a journey of reflection, growth, and finally becoming a new version of oneself.

"Cocoon" takes a new approach to storytelling, using an effective first-person point of view instead of typical plot conventions. Pandurang Sangavikar, a twenty-five-year-old protagonist, gets between his rural roots in Sangavi and the urban landscape of Pune, Maharashtra's educational and cultural center. The novel's actual depth resides in its analysis of societal imbalance, despite initially appearing to be a story about lost ambition (a young guy sent to the city for professional opportunities but returned unsuccessfully). Pandurang's viewpoint helps readers understand the protagonist's struggle to adjust in both rural and urban contexts.

Regional Identity in *Cocoon*

The novel includes many references to Marathi folk traditions, rural life, and language. Nemade uses local dialects and everyday speech in his writing, challenging the idea that only standardized language is valuable. When Pandurang thinks about his life in the village,

he says: "मी गावाकडचा. शहरातील माणसं वेगळी असतात, त्यांना आम्हा गावकऱ्यांचे काही समजत नाही."

(I am from the village. City people are different; they do not understand us, villagers.)

This difference between rural and urban life highlights a key idea in postcolonial Indian literature: the conflict between local traditions and modern influences. By setting Cocoon in familiar customs and language, Nemade highlights how important regional stories are in fighting against cultural uniformity.

Pandurang's misfit status raises the question of whether society is not able to accept him or if he is just under-socialized for his environment. "Cocoon" questions conventional storytelling and societal expectations, exploring the relationship between individual identity and social conventions.

The novel analyzes how the protagonist's childhood disaffiliation rises during adolescence, which is a hard and influential time. "Cocoon" provides a linear account of Pandurang Sangavikar's life. In the beginning of the novel, the protagonist recalls his confused and fearful childhood, despite his belief that just his age and name are important details. "My whole childhood passed in awe of my father," he says. Pandurang's innocence gets ruined as he grows up in a house ruled by a 'wicked' and 'cruel' father who punishes him for playing the flute or acting in drama. The life he leads is far from pleasing. Despite being unable to question his father directly, he shows his rebellious attitude by trying to harm the rats in their old house, observing their merciless act towards an innocent young hare.

The Narrator's Alienation and Global Concerns

Pandurang's struggle is not just personal; it reflects larger issues of identity and belonging. His disappointment with education, urban life, and materialism shows a common fight against feeling disconnected and alone. He expresses this feeling when he says, "शिक्षणाने माणूस मोठा नाही होत, तो फक्त हरवून जातो." (Education does not make a man great; it only makes him lost.) This idea connects to global writers like Albert Camus and Franz Kafka, who discuss the

challenges of modern life. By setting Pandurang's pain in a Maharashtrian background, Nemade links local stories to global themes, proving that regional tales can express universal truths.

Cocoon discusses issues like caste, gender, race, and class politics. While these topics are important, the narrative lacks solutions and direction. Pandurang supports the underdog but refuses to align himself with any group. His perspective is like that of an absurdist. He understands the struggles women face under patriarchy. Without resorting to melodrama, Nemade highlights the vulnerability of women in a patriarchal society. He also portrays urban girls who skillfully expect men to pay for things. Ultimately, his understanding comes from being an outsider. It raises the question: how can one address these issues when the line between the exploiter and the exploited is unclear?

In comparison to his father, Pandurang's mother is a caring presence. "For my mother, though, I felt great love," he says. Having a deep affection for his father, he remains fearful of him. In addition to his difficulties, he is frequently targeted for bullying by the son of a local sweet maker for unknown reasons. Pandurang introduced his character through a series of horrific dreams. In his nightmares, he transforms into numerous shapes, such as a horse that must race at high speeds until its chest cracks, or a house among higher constructions that slowly crushes smaller ones.

Pandurang's feelings of alienation deepen after the tragic loss of his younger sister, Mani. When a five-year-old girl's life is tragically cut short, the protagonist goes through stress. In an act of anger, he threatens to murder his father. "I'll murder father. I'll kill Grandma. Then I will set fire to that house. Spare only mother. Knowing the complexity of doing so, he engages in symbolic damage by cutting up and burning a "flame-yellow" sari.

During a trip to Ajanta, Pandurang thinks about his grief and realizes that, compared to the deep sorrow of the Buddha, his own sadness is just a small part. He understands that death brings freedom: "Mani is now free from everything—free from color, body, mind, and perception." Although this insight helps him find some comfort, Pandurang is still deeply troubled by the harsh realities of life and the ongoing sense of loss he feels in a world full of emotional pain.

Pandurang faces the painful truth that the death of a child, especially a girl, is often dismissed by the emotionally hardened adults in his life. This societal indifference deepens his sense of isolation and leads him to consider ending his own life. He sharpens a knife with the intent to stab himself in the stomach, yet ultimately hesitates and reconsiders. At another moment, he envisions, "it must be beautiful to take one's life in this sea." Despite his profound disconnection from life's harsh realities and his attraction to the idea of an 'all-free state' after death, Pandurang does not take the drastic step that Girdhar, another character, hastily chooses. Girdhar's suicide is an effort to escape a similar personal crisis, while Pandurang's inner conflict and fear hold him back. This emphasizes the complexity of his emotional turmoil, as he struggles with the desire for freedom from suffering while also recognizing the significance of his existence and the consequences of such a final decision.

The stylistic achievement of Cocoon cannot be overemphasized. The narrative makes use of the conventions of modern Western genres such as the autobiography, the diary, and the novel, and the Indian folktales, folk narratives, medieval saint literature, and fuses all of them into a convincing synthesis. Its sources are from a wide variety of language use: the standard, the archaic, the urban, and the non-urban dialects, the slangs, the jargons, and above all, the poetic and the rhetorical. The possibilities of language is what Cocoon seems to play with, rather than making meaning as a

single instance of parole, and in that it seems to have the audacity to reach out to capture life itself rather than simply tell a tale.

Language as a Site of Resistance

One striking feature of Cocoon is its use of everyday language. Nemade chooses a casual, non-standard form of Marathi that avoids the formal, Sanskrit-like style. This choice shows pride in his identity by challenging the dominant, elite version of Marathi. He says:

"शब्दांचेही गाव असते, आणि ती गावे जपून ठेवली पाहिजेत."

(Words, too, have villages, and those villages must be preserved.)

By highlighting regional language, Cocoon serves as a statement against cultural loss. This connects with the global push for linguistic decolonization, where writers from marginalized groups express their identities by preserving and promoting their native languages.

Thematic Parallels with World Literature

Cocoon is a novel that reflects regional themes, but it also connects to global literary traditions. Its introspective narrative, thoughts on existence, and critique of modern life are similar to James Joyce's work, especially *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Like Joyce's character Stephen Dedalus, Pandurang struggles with his cultural background and the demands of a changing world.

Nemade does not use a candid story structure. Instead, he writes in a style that reflects a person's inner thoughts, which connects him to modernist writing. He shows the confused mind of someone living in a postcolonial world, similar to themes found in African and Latin American literature.

Resistance to Western Influence

Cocoon strongly focuses on indigenous storytelling, even while engaging with global literary themes. Nemade criticizes

Westernization and believes that Indian literature should create its own style instead of copying Western examples. He shows this belief through Pandurang's doubts about English education: "What have I achieved by learning English? My roots are in this soil." This pushback against cultural imperialism puts Cocoon in the broader discussion of postcolonial literature, where writers from former colonies deal with the effects of colonial education and cultural displacement.

Conclusion

There is no East and no West, all is global.-Nemade

Bhalchandra Nemade's novel Cocoon shows how strong regional identity can be in a world that is becoming more globalized. The book combines local experiences with universal themes, connecting regional roots to global stories. Nemade uses specific language, cultural references, and deep questions, making Cocoon an important work in both Indian and world literature. This study points out how the novel helps keep cultural identity alive while also contributing to global literary discussions.

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