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A Critical Review and Pedagogical Analysis of *Kaveri*: The NCERT English Textbook for Grade 9 (2026)

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Abstract

The introduction of *Kaveri*, the NCERT English textbook for Grade Nine, represents a significant curricular shift in Indian education following the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE) 2023. The textbook integrates literary texts, cultural narratives, and experiential activities to nurture linguistic competence alongside ethical and cultural awareness. This paper offers a critical review with pedagogical analysis of *Kaveri* by examining its thematic structure, ideological orientation and pedagogical framework. Drawing upon the contemporary theories from historicism, curriculum studies, nationalism studies, postcolonial theory and critical pedagogy, the study analyses how the textbook constructs advanced studies through cultural identity, national belonging and ethical citizenship. While the textbook foregrounds Indian cultural heritage and indigenous narratives, its limited engagement with global literary traditions raises questions about the balance between national identity and cosmopolitan literary exposure.

The paper argues that *Kaveri* exemplifies a deliberate curricular move towards cultural localisation and experiential learning while also revealing tensions between national pedagogy and global literary engagement. Having released the book recently, the research on this area, this paper investigates, has not been studied or analysed by any scholar yet.

Introduction

School textbooks play an influential role in shaping students' intellectual and cultural development, particularly during the formative years of schooling. Scholars in curriculum studies emphasise that textbooks are no longer neutral sources of information but have become powerful cultural instruments in shaping how knowledge and values are transmitted to young learners. The American cultural critic, Henry Armand Giroux in his book *Theory and Resistance in Education: A Pedagogy for the Opposition* views schooling as a significant site where ideology is reproduced and where students' perceptions of social realities are shaped through curricular materials (Giroux 45). Through the sociological lens, Basil Bernstein in *Class, Codes and Control: Towards a Theory of Educational Transmissions* explains that educational knowledge is structured and transmitted through institutional power, meaning that the selection and organization of content in textbooks are influenced by broader social hierarchies (85). Pingel highlights that textbooks are influential cultural tools that shape students' historical consciousness, cultural understanding and sense of national identity. In the Indian context, scholars have also emphasized the ideological and cultural role of school curricula (23). Kumar argues that textbooks in India often reflect dominant national narratives and educational ideologies shaped by historical and political contexts (67). Similarly, Chopra notes that school textbooks play a significant role in constructing cultural memory and national identity among students (112).

The newly introduced English textbook *Kaveri* for Grade 9 aims to integrate language learning with cultural awareness and ethical reflection. The book emphasises experiential engagement with texts and encourages students to connect literature with their everyday experiences. The pedagogical philosophy of the book is clearly articulated in its Foreword, which states that students should develop "critical thinking, creativity, and sensitivity along with the values needed for responsible citizenship (*Kaveri* iii)." The foreword of *Kaveri* further states:

> The NCF-SE 2023 recommends that the curriculum for Grades 9–10 equips students with the skills that are needed to grow as they advance in their lives. Students can use these skills for reasoning, argumentation, and effective communication… A diverse curriculum, covering ten subjects: three languages — including at least two languages native to India — Science, Mathematics, Social Sciences, Art Education, Physical Education and Well-being, Individuals in Society/ Environmental Education, and Vocational Education, promotes their holistic development. (NCERT iii)

This vision positions the *Kaveri* textbook as a tool for developing reflective and thoughtful learners rather than merely teaching language skills. It also shows how the book connects classroom learning with broader educational goals of holistic growth and responsible citizenship. However, as Anderson argues in *Imagined Communities*, institutions such as schools contribute to the creation of shared national narratives. He famously defines the nation as "an imagined political community" in which members may never meet but still share a sense of collective belonging (Anderson 6). Textbooks therefore play a central role in shaping students' understanding of culture, identity and citizenship. This paper seeks to critically analyse *Kaveri* by examining, its pedagogical vision, its representation of Indian cultural identity, its thematic and ideological orientation and its theoretical implications for curriculum studies.

Curriculum Ideology and Purpose of the Textbook

Kaveri explicitly aligns itself with NEP 2020 and NCF-SE 2023, emphasising communication, reasoning, and aesthetic appreciation. According to the introductory section, the curriculum seeks to develop "analytical and descriptive capabilities to prepare students for the challenges and opportunities that await them" (*Kaveri* "Foreword" iii). This orientation reflects principles of constructivist pedagogy, where learning occurs through active engagement rather than passive reception of information (Vygotsky 57). Constructivist pedagogy is a teaching approach in which learners actively build their own understanding and knowledge through experience, interaction and reflection. In their book *In Search of Understanding: The Case for Constructivist Classrooms*, Jacqueline Grennon Brooks and Martin G. Brooks mention that this (Constructivism) teaching practice challenges traditional models of teaching that view learning as passive memorization. Quoting Gardner and Jackson, they suggest that learning, in many classroom, has been treated as a "mimetic" activity in which students repeat newly presented information in tests or assignments (Brooks and Brooks 15). Constructivism is quite opposite to it. They further add to affirm the effectiveness of constructivism: "[C]onstructivist teaching practices… help learners to internalize and reshape, or transform, new information. Transformation occurs through the creation of new understandings…" (15). Attached with the text in prose and poetry,

Kaveri offers numerous activities such as *Reflect and Respond* and *Critical Reflection* to encourage students to interpret texts and relate them to personal experiences. Besides them, there are many more innovative activities that will be further discussed in this article.

Thematic, Theoretical and Literary Analysis of the Chapters

The book consists eight prose and eight poems tallying the number of chapters to sixteen. The very first chapter of the book "How I Taught My Grandmother to Read" by Sudha Murthy promotes the importance of literacy, dignity and intergenerational learning. Her literary works generally "feature strong female protagonists who challenge societal norms and stereotypes. By presenting girls who overcome obstacles and pursue their dreams, she empowers young girls and encourages them to break barriers" (Chatterjee and Khan i210). In "How I Taught My Grandmother to Read," a twelve-year-old girl living with her grandparents in North Karnataka reads aloud the serialised story "Kashi Yatre" by Triveni, published in the Kannada weekly magazine Karmaveera, to her grandmother Krishtakka, who cannot read. Deeply interested into the story, the grandmother becomes emotionally connected to its characters and story plot. Determined to read the magazine independently, the grandmother studies hard when her granddaughter teaches her to read, and eventually reads the novel on her own, showing that learning has no age limit. With the help of the story of the magazine, Sudha Murthy merges a story within a story leading to an interesting tale of education and women empowerment.

The story highlights the transformative power of literacy. The story broadly aligns with humanistic educational theory, which views education as a process of personal growth and self-actualisation (Rogers 157). To define, humanistic educational theory rests on the idea that students should be the primary drivers of their own learning. Rather than viewing learners as passive vessels to be filled with data, this theory treats them as whole individuals whose emotional, social, and cognitive needs are deeply intertwined. The grandmother's desire to learn Kannada language emerges from her inability to read a magazine episode independently. She confesses her frustration, saying that she felt "very dependent and helpless" when she could not read the story herself. Her determination to overcome this limitation reflects the emancipatory potential of education. She famously declares: "For learning there is no age bar" (*Kaveri* 8). This statement contextualises the central theme of the narrative, i.e., the idea that education is a lifelong pursuit that empowers individuals and enhances personal dignity.

On the other hand, if the story is explored through the lens of feminist approach, the narrative reflects gender inequality in traditional Indian society, where the grandmother recalls that "people never considered education essential for girls." She also confessed recalling her childhood days, "I got married very young and had children. I became very busy. Later I had grandchildren and always felt so much happiness in cooking and feeding all of you. At times I used to regret not going to school, so I made sure that my children and grandchildren studied well..." (6). This statement reveals the patriarchal social structures that historically denied women access to education, an idea discussed by theorists such as Simone de Beauvoir and Elaine Showalter.

The other story "The Pot Maker" is ingrained into the ideas of promoting cultural heritage and traditional craft. It depicts the traditional crafts and intergenerational knowledge transmission. It is the story of Sentila, a young girl who dreams of becoming a pot maker like her mother Arenla and

grandmother, despite her mother wanting her to learn weaving. Her mother's criticism to pot making exemplifies how deprivation and economic hardships compel rural people discard their cultural practices. However, Sentila likes pottery and secretly watches village potters working with clay from the riverbank. The village elders remind Sentila's father Mesoba that such skills must be passed from generation to generation as part of their cultural tradition. Sentila learns the difficult task of shaping clay under the aegis of a kind widow Onula. Eventually, Sentila succeeds in making beautiful pots, but tragically her mother dies the same day. The story ends with the villagers realising that a new pot maker has been born, symbolising the continuation of cultural heritage. Through the narrative of Sentila, the text emphasises the dignity of manual labour and the cultural significance of craftsmanship. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital can be applied to the story to understand how dispositions include practical skills, habits, and cultural knowledge that individuals acquire gradually through socialisation and lived experience. Cultural capital refers to forms of knowledge and skill that confer social value within a community (Bourdieu 243). Traditional crafts, such as pottery, function as repositories of cultural knowledge and artistic heritage. The story therefore positions craftsmanship not merely as labour but as a meaningful cultural practice that connects individuals with their community and history.

Extending the importance of art, culture and craftsmanship, the historical article "Winds of Change" explores the cultural history of the traditional Indian *pankha* (hand fans which are fanned by hands). The text highlights how different regions of India developed unique designs and materials for making these hand *pankhas* which are used for kings, deities in temple and common household people. The article notes that "different villages and towns developed their own varieties of traditional *pankhas*" (*Kaveri* 70). This observation reflects the diversity of India's regional craft traditions and demonstrates how everyday objects can carry cultural and historical significance. By documenting the history and craftsmanship of the *pankha*, the article encourages students to appreciate the cultural meaning embedded in ordinary objects.

The text of Kaveri depicts different regions of India which developed distinctive varieties of *pankhas*, reflecting local materials, craftsmanship, and cultural traditions. In Rajasthan, appliqué and zardozi hand fans are decorated with fabric patterns and gold thread work, while engraved brass temple fans and painted cardboard fans are used in religious offerings. Gujarat is known for elegant cotton *pankhas* with mirror work, bead decorations, and cross-stitch embroidery, including the leather fans of Kutch. In West Bengal, artisans craft delicate sola pith *pankhas* and palm leaf fans called Tal Patar Pankha, commonly used in households. Uttar Pradesh produces richly decorated Phadh hand fans adorned with gold, silver zari, silk, and satin frills, whereas Odisha and Bihar are famous for their large palm leaf fans and colourful bamboo *pankhas*. Many tribal communities also create unique fans using grass, bamboo and geometric designs, highlighting India's diverse craft heritage.

The name of Jatin Das (1941–), the Indian painter, sculptor, and muralist from Odisha, can be considered an impetus with this historical discussion in order to understand the continuity of cultural practices in everyday life. Over the past four decades, Das has collected thousands of traditional hand fans, or *pankhas*, creating one of the largest archives of this craft. His exhibition "*Pankha: A Collection of Hand Fans from the Indian Subcontinent and Beyond*," held at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts in New Delhi from 26 May to 24 June 2018, displayed hundreds of fans gathered from different

regions of India and other countries. The collection demonstrates how a simple household object can reflect the social history, natural resources, and artistic traditions of communities. The article concludes with an emphasis on the importance of preserving the craft: "the beautiful culture of *pankhas* runs the risk of slowly losing its presence among Indians" (*Kaveri* 72). This reflects global concerns about the loss of traditional craft practices in the modern industrial world.

The story "Vitamin-M" explores the tension between care and independence in old age through the relationship between Ravi, his mother Vidya, and Grandpa. At the beginning of the narrative, Ravi's mother expresses concern about her father's fading memory and even wishes that someone would invent "a memory—Vitamin-M" (98) to help elderly people remember things. Her anxiety is further reflected when she warns Ravi that "you're not to let Grandpa go out on his own. It's too dangerous" (100). This protective attitude can be interpreted through Carol Gilligan's ethics of care theory, which emphasises moral responsibility grounded in "care, relationships, and responsibility toward others" (Gilligan 19–23). Ravi and his mother both attempt to safeguard Grandpa because they feel emotionally responsible for him. In order to keep an eye on him, Ravi secretly follows him when he goes out alone to buy a Tamil newspaper. During the journey through the park, tea stall, barber shop, and bus, Ravi anxiously observes Grandpa eating forbidden food and moving around independently.

Contrarily, Grandpa resists this protective control and insists on his autonomy, declaring, "I've been looking after myself for the better part of my seventy-five years" (99). His insistence reflects Erik Erikson's concept of ego integrity, which suggests that individuals in old age seek dignity, autonomy and self-respect in the final stage of life (Erikson 98). Even Ravi notices the contradiction in his grandfather's behaviour and wonders, "How can he remember all those thousands of chess games and still forget the names of people he meets often!" (*Kaveri* 101). Through humour and irony, the narrative therefore challenges the stereotype that elderly individuals are completely helpless and instead presents aging as a complex stage where identity, memory and independence remain central to human dignity. This tension becomes especially evident when Grandpa protests against his daughter's restrictions and says:

> I'll have you know, Vidya, my dear, that I've been looking after myself for the better part of my seventy-five years. After your mother died ten years ago, I took over her duties as well and have been cooking, shopping and keeping house too… First you force me to come and live with you in this poky little flat in this horrible, crowded city and then you think you have the right to forbid me to go out on my own! (*Kaveri* 99)

Grandpa's protest against his daughter's restrictions shows his strong desire to maintain autonomy and not to be reduced to dependence despite his advancing age. Through humour and irony, the narrator shows how Grandpa cleverly manages his outing and surprises Ravi by disappearing after giving his cap to a stranger, showing that he is still cleverly capable and fully independent.

The chapter "The World of Limitless Possibilities" presents an interview with Dr. Deepa Malik (1970–), an Indian Paralympian and award-winning athlete from Haryana, who overcame paralysis caused by a spinal tumour to achieve international success in para-athletics. Being diagnosed with spinal

tumour at the age of five and then twenty-nine, she underwent surgeries which left her paralysed. After rigid physiotherapy, she developed an interest in sports and finally became the first woman to win a paralympic medal for India bagging the silver medal at the 2016 Rio Paralympics, at the same time, proving the worth of determination, resilience, and self-belief. The narrative conveys that physical limitations do not define human potential, and it is through courage and resilience that individuals can successfully transform adversity into opportunities and raise themselves to inspire others.

It becomes imperative to know the history of paralympic games. The Paralympic Games originated from the Stoke Mandeville Games (1948), organised by Dr. Ludwig Guttmann (a German-British born neurologist) for soldiers with spinal injuries. In his book *A Sporting Chance*, Lori Alexander states that these games aimed at rehabilitation through sports, showing that "sport has played a very important part in the… rehabilitation of the paralysed" (9). Over time, this initiative grew into an international movement. The Games were formally recognised as the Paralympic Games in 1960 (Rome). Thus, Guttmann is credited as the founder of the Paralympics. India's first appearance in the Paralympic Games is recorded in 1968 in Tel Aviv, Israel.

The interview strongly reminds of "disability studies" along with "the social model of disability" which accentuates that disability is not simply a physical condition but is shaped by societal attitudes and barriers (Oliver 32–60). Dr. Malik explains in her interview that one of her biggest challenges was societal perception, adding that "people often underestimated my abilities" (*Kaveri* 141). This highlights how social assumptions about disability often limit opportunities to aggravate the physical impairment. The Paralympic Games thus become a space where these stereotypes are challenged and redefined. For her, "Disability is not a limitation; it's a unique strength waiting to be unleashed" (142). Sports comes as a solace here. Dr. Malik explicitly addresses this when she says that sports have the power to "challenge stereotypes and change attitudes towards disability" making people realise that a para-athlete can break down "preconceived notions" (141). Her success demonstrates that disability does not prevent excellence but rather reveals new forms of strength and capability.

The interviewed chapter also materialises resilience theory and empowerment theory. Resilience theory, which Ann Masten famously describes as "ordinary magic," focuses on an individual's ability to overcome adversity and transform setbacks into opportunities (Masten 227). After being diagnosed with a spinal tumour and becoming paralysed, Dr. Malik describes the critical moment of choice in her life: "I had two choices—squander my life in remorse or transform it to a world of limitless possibilities" (139). Her statement reveals that resilience is not confined only to endurance but also forms a conscious decision to reimagine one's future. Her eventual achievement at the 2016 Rio Paralympic Games, where she won a silver medal in shot put, becomes both a personal victory and a symbolic moment for changing social perceptions.

On the other hand, the interpretation through empowerment theory emphasises the importance of self-belief, agency, and collective transformation (Zimmerman 581). Theoretical framework of empowerment in social work was first articulated by Julian Rappaport in 1981 through his publication in the American Journal of Community Psychology (1). As stated in the text, Dr. Malik strongly believes in the principle of "ability beyond disability," emphasising that limitations do not define human

potential. Her statement that "advocacy is integral to my mission" further reflects empowerment as she strives to "strengthen the emotional health of persons with challenges and empower women through outdoor sports and adventure activities" (*Kaveri* 142). By organising awareness programmes and supporting para-athletes from economically weaker backgrounds, she extends empowerment beyond personal success to social change. However, Maslow's concept of self-actualisation also resonates through the ventures of Dr. Malik when she says, "every setback is an opportunity to prove your strength" (142). Self-actualization is the process of realizing your full potential and becoming the best version of yourself. The determination and perseverance of Dr. Malik not only reflect the humanistic belief that individuals can grow and realise their potential even in adverse circumstances, but also remind us of the individuals such as Helen Keller who, despite being deaf and blind, became a renowned author and advocate for disability rights; and Evelyn Glennie, a profoundly deaf percussionist, who achieved global recognition in music. Their lives, like that of Dr. Deepa Malik, challenge societal stereotypes and affirm the idea of "ability beyond disability" (140).

The play "Twin Melodies" by Mitra Phukan (a writer and trained classical vocalist from Guwahati, Assam) pivots on Shruti Sharma, a young violinist who secretly joins a fusion music group with her friends Iqbal, Avinash, and Peter. Her father Guru Nabin Sharma, a respected classical musician and principal of Sangeetika Music School, strongly believes in traditional Hindustani music and initially opposes fusion music. When he accidentally witnesses Shruti's rehearsal, he realises that she has preserved the essence of classical ragas even within fusion music. Ultimately, he supports her decision, recognising that innovation and tradition can coexist. The play explores the theme of artistic identity where young artists like Shruti struggles to find their own creative voice facing the dilemma of equilibrium against the broader challenges raised by conservative groups.

The play can be analysed through Homi K. Bhabha's concept of cultural hybridity, which offers the study of cultures and how they evolve through interaction and blending rather than remaining fixed (Bhabha 37). The Indo-Western fusion music performed by Shruti and her friends represents this hybrid cultural space. Christina Tetham defines Bhabha's Third Space in the essay "A Systematic Literature Review of Third Space Theory Iin Research with Children (Aged 4–12) in Multicultural Educational Settings":

> The Third Space is a space of transformative potential where people are not restricted to adhering to one or other set of dominant values and traditions. Instead, the Third Space is inherently productive, and people, individually or collectively, can create their own identities, drawing on elements of different discourses that are 'appropriated, translated, rehistoricized (sic) and read anew'. (870)

Nabin initially rejects the blending of the music by the children, fearing that classical music will lose its purity. However, when he observes Shruti's performance, he realises that the raga structure remains intact, demonstrating that cultural traditions can adapt and coexist with new forms. This moment symbolises the creation of a "third space", where traditional and modern elements merge to produce new cultural expressions. The dramatic play encourages students to appreciate both the richness of cultural heritage and the creative freedom necessary for its evolution. The dialogue between two

generations shows a conservative perspective rooted in tradition (by Nabin), and experimentation with innovation (by Shruti). The resolution of the conflict shows that tradition and modernity are not mutually exclusive but complementary.

The penultimate chapter with the metaphorical title "Carrier of Words" idealises the life of Khetaram, a Gramin Dak Sewak who delivers letters and money orders to remote villages in the Thar Desert near the Indo-Pakistan border. Despite extreme heat, sandstorms, and long distances, he continues to carry mailbags across dunes and isolated settlements, acting as the only communication link between villagers and their distant families. The narrative shows that his work is not merely administrative but deeply social and emotional wherein he, as an ordinary worker, becomes essential connector in the fabric of human society. Quoting the words of the Indian writer, Mulk Raj Anand, the story adores the arduousness of the GDS (Gramin Dak Sewak): "In no other country a person in remote villages is so dependent on the post office for transmission of small sums of money … It reflects the absolute confidence which most Indians place in the post office" ("Carrier of Words" 208). The narrative illustrates the dignity of labour and the commitment of public service workers in rural India. Khetaram shows extraordinary physical endurance, working under the harsh geographical and climatic conditions. The story explains that his footprints appear "some 120 km beyond the last railhead at Barmer, 50 km beyond the last phone and 10 km beyond where the Barmer–Chohtan road directionlessly crumbles into sand so soft that even bicycles can't ply" (205). His labour demonstrates the concept of service-oriented work, where social responsibility often outweighs personal comfort. Even when temperatures rise above 50 degrees Celsius, he continues to deliver letters, explaining that "even a single delivery is tiring, as I have to cover 20 km for it" (205). As a Gramin Dak Sewak, Kehtaram also acts as a bridge between communities and their distant relatives, becoming "the sole link between the oases of humanity in India's extremes and their faraway families" (204). His work symbolically represents the postman as a carrier not just of letters but of emotions, memories, and relationships. The narrative also highlights the trust placed in the postal system by rural communities. The villagers rely on the postman not only to deliver letters but also to read them aloud and write replies. The text highlights this trust by noting that "everyone feels comfortable asking him to read the letters and draft the replies in his slightly shaky hand" (208).

However, delivering letters is not always a joyful task. Khetaram explains that there is one kind of delivery he fears the most: "the envelope with the right corner torn off, which signifies that the missive bears news of death" (209). In such situations, he stands outside the house and reads the letter aloud before tearing it apart, believing that "bad news must be destroyed" (209). The chapter also provides insight into the historical development of the Indian postal network. During the colonial period, postal services primarily functioned to serve administrative and commercial interests of the British East India Company. After independence, the objective of the postal system expanded to connect the entire population of India. The narrative notes that "compared to 25,000 post offices in 1947, today we have about more than a lakh and a half post offices throughout the country" (207). This dramatic expansion demonstrates how the postal system became a crucial instrument of national integration and rural development. The manual efforts of a GDS serve as a scathing attack on the digital world where AI and Internet have facilitated communication, but Indian rural areas are still embarking on the methods that connect people and their emotions.

The final chapter "Follow That Dream" presents a reflective letter written by a mother, Irene Chua, to her daughter Ming, encouraging her to pursue her dreams with dedication and perseverance. The chapter has been derived from the 1996 published book "My Daughter, My Friend" which is "a collection of 45 letters originally sent by the writer Irene Chua Hwee Kee to her teenage daughter, Ming" (Raihanah 246). Analysing the letters by Irene, Raihanah further states:

> Chua's voice and perspectives of life in these letters are clear as her cultural and religious sensibilities come through in the life lessons that she imparts. The epistolary genre works as the voice of the mother comes across authentic and believable. This is important as many of the initial statements made, albeit sounding didactic, when read as genuine letters written to her only daughter, helps readers get a sense of Chua as a mother of a teenager. (246)

The letter in *Kaveri* presents a humanistic and motivational theory, primarily Abraham Maslow's concept of self-actualisation, which suggests that individuals strive to realise their full potential. The mother explains that greatness comes from commitment and sacrifice, stating that "great men and women become great because they have a dream and they pursue it till it comes true" (232). She reminds Ming that success requires long years of effort: "to reach world-class standard in any field, one has to be singularly and intensively pursuing the subject for at least ten years" (232).
The letter also addresses the realities that can disrupt dreams. The reference to historical events, such as the Japanese invasion during World War II, illustrates how external circumstances may change life trajectories. The mother acknowledges that life circumstances can alter one's aspirations when she says, "… for a lot of people, dreams remain dreams… They could have preferred to trade their dream for security. Perhaps circumstances changed their lives" ("Follow That Dream" 233). As a literary form, the epistolary style (letter writing) creates intimacy and authenticity for students, allowing the text to promote self-reflection, goal setting, and perseverance, encouraging them to view challenges not as obstacles but as steps toward achieving their aspirations.

The eight poems in *Kaveri*, attached with each prose chapter, collectively explore themes of nationhood, labour, memory, nature, empathy, communication, music, and self-belief, demonstrating how poetry can illuminate both personal emotions and collective social values. Subramania Bharati's "Bharat Our Land" (taken from *Poems of Subramania Bharati* 1982) evokes a strong sense of cultural nationalism and civilisational pride. The repetitive use of "ours' is indicative of cultural, traditional, military and spiritual prowess of Bharat. The poem celebrates India's natural and spiritual heritage through powerful imagery: "The mighty Himavant is ours" and "the generous Ganga is ours," (*Kaveri* 24) emphasising geographical grandeur and sacred tradition. By referring to "the sacred Upanishads" and declaring that "of hoary antiquity is Bharat," the poem situates the nation within a long philosophical lineage. The poem also celebrates brave warriors, wise sages, divine music, and many auspicious traditions have flourished throughout history. From a postcolonial perspective, the poem reclaims indigenous cultural identity and urges readers to celebrate the intellectual and spiritual heritage that defines the nation.

> Here Brahma-knowledge has taken root,
> and the Buddha preached his dhamma here.

Of hoary antiquity is Bharat,
she's peerless, let's praise her! … ("Bharat Our Land" 25)

The anonymous poem in free verse "Gifts of Grace: Honouring Our Vocations" offers a lyrical celebration of labour and craftsmanship, highlighting the dignity and identity ingrained in everyday professions. Through the refrain, with which the poem begins and ends, "I hear Bharat celebrating, the varied vocations I hear," the poem foregrounds the creative energy of artisans, carpenters, electricians, boatmen, shoemakers and cooks. The line "the voice of their vocation is the voice of their identity" (59) suggests that labour is not merely economic activity but a marker of individuality, identity and cultural expression. Occupation often becomes the defining marker of social identity. The American sociologist, Everett Hughes (1897–1983) also notes that the concept of "master status" is how a particular role becomes the primary way a person is recognised within society (Hughes 142). Viewed through a Marxist and sociological lens, the poem honours skilled labour and traditional crafts, reminding readers that social harmony depends upon the contributions of diverse professions.

Similarly, Maya Anthony's "Canvas of Soil" reflects an ecocritical and aesthetic perspective, portraying gardening as an act of artistic creation. The metaphor "Palette of earth, rich and deep" transforms soil into a painter's palette, while "Brushstrokes of seeds" suggests that planting itself is a creative act (87). When the poet writes that "Each plot, a canvas wide / Where art and life coincide," the poem highlights the intimate relationship between nature and creativity. Through the rhyme scheme ABAB, the poetic diction presents imagery and natural beauty which correlates the sensuousness of Keats' style,

Blossoms bloom, a painted sight,
Dancing in the morning light.
Shades of green, red, and blue,
Nature's artwork, ever new. (*Kaveri* 87)

The poem encourages readers to recognise the artistic value rooted in everyday natural processes, reminding students that art exists not only in galleries but also in gardens, landscapes, and traditional practices.

The next poem "I Cannot Remember My Mother" by Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) offers a poignant meditation on memory and emotional presence. The speaker admits, "I cannot remember my mother," yet her presence survives through sensory impressions such as "the smell of the shiuli flowers" and "the stillness of my mother's gaze" (127). Through these delicate nostalgic images, the poem demonstrates how memory operates emotionally rather than intellectually. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the poem suggests that maternal influence remains embedded in the subconscious, shaping the child's perception of the world which was also evident in "Rain on the Roof" by Coates Kinney, where the poem showed how the poet's mother comes to his memory due to the patter of the rain.

"I feel that the stillness of
my mother's gaze on my face
has spread all over the sky". (*Kaveri* 127)

"Now in memory comes my mother,
As she used long years agone,
To regard the darling dreamers" (*Beehive* 41)

Thus, the poem invites readers to reflect on the importance of family bonds and the enduring influence of parental love, matter not if it is through emotions of nostalgic surge.

The other poem is "Nine Gold Medals" by the 1954 born American singer and song writer. Based on the event of the 100-meter race at a 1976 Special Olympics in Seattle, Washington, the poem explores humanistic ethics and inclusivity, portraying a remarkable moment of compassion when eight athletes stop their race to help a fallen competitor. The poem recounts how "the eight other runners pulled up on their heels" (*Kaveri* 158) and returned to assist the boy who stumbled. Their decision transforms competition into solidarity, culminating in the symbolic moment when "all the nine runners joined hands" (*Kaveri* 158). It is also imperative to note that Special Olympics is an international sports programme for people with intellectual disabilities. From a humanistic and ethical perspective, the poem challenges the conventional notion of victory by presenting empathy and cooperation as the highest achievements:

> That's how the race ended, with nine gold medals
> They came to the finish line holding hands still
> And a standing ovation and nine beaming faces
> Said more than these words ever will. (*Kaveri* 158)

Bryanna T. Perkins' "A Friend Found in Music" reflects the therapeutic and emotional power of art. The poet compares music to a constant companion, stating that "Music is the ocean / That pulls me to the shore" and describing it as "the needed friend when no one seems to care" (195). This metaphorical representation of music (through the rhyme scheme ABCB) aligns with humanistic and psychological theories, which emphasise the role of art in emotional healing and identity formation. The poem encourages readers to appreciate music not only as entertainment but as a profound source of comfort and self-expression.

The English poet Charles Swain's "Words" presents a reflective critique of language itself. Charles Swain (1801–1874) warns that empty speech lacks genuine value, remarking that "words, like summer birds, depart" and often leave behind "empty air" (*Kaveri* 221). However, he also acknowledges that sincere communication has transformative power, observing that "a little said, and truly said, / Can deeper joy impart" (221). The poet beautifully concludes the poem with the worth of the words by comparing it to the flower that blooms but doesn't culminate into any fruit:

> Like plants that make a gaudy show,
> All blossom to the root;
> But whose poor nature cannot grow,
> One particle of fruit! (*Kaveri* 222)

The above lines suggest that many words may appear attractive and impressive, like flowers that bloom brightly, but they often lack real substance or meaningful action. Through this contrast, the poem emphasises the ethical responsibility attached to language, reminding readers that words gain meaning only when they express authentic emotion.

Finally, Robert Langley's "Believe in Yourself" delivers a motivational message centred on self-belief and personal growth. The poem urges individuals to confront uncertainty and embrace

change, declaring that "the first step is the hardest" and concluding with the affirmation that "you just need to believe in yourself / For your future to be on track" (*Kaveri* 246). From an existential and motivational perspective, the poem suggests that courage and self-confidence are essential for shaping one's future.

Pedagogical Innovation and Other Features of *Kaveri*

The book *Kaveri* offers some certain features to accentuate the pedagogical practices. It has been designed not only to teach language but also to help students develop critical thinking, linguistic competence, creativity and communication skills. Each unit begins with a "Reflect and Respond" activity which encourages students to share their personal thoughts and ideas about the topic before reading the lesson. By doing this, students become mentally prepared for the theme and learn to express their opinions confidently. The section "Reading for Meaning" (which is the text for the chapter) helps students interpret ideas, understand deeper meanings, and are able to connect the text to real-life situations. This process strengthens their comprehension abilities and helps them develop analytical thinking.

Another important feature is "Check Your Understanding," and "Critical Reflection" to stimulate students to think for the questions asked in these two sections. The questions are related to the themes of the text, forming opinions and analysing ideas about the chapters. There are questions like NCERT Questions based on Short and Long Answer Type Questions as well as Extract Based Questions.

The part titled "Vocabulary and Structures in Context" teaches grammar and language to explain how language is used naturally in communication. This section is significant for integrating grammar learning with contextual usage. The whole set of such sections in different chapters varies from grammar to vocabulary enrichment. Students learn about binomials, prefixes, suffixes, idioms, collocations, phrasal verbs, compound words, and specialised vocabulary related to economy, sports, different vocations, colour cognition, movement and sound perception, sensory vocabulary, word map, Latin terms and phrases, etc. They also practise grammatical concepts such as clauses, articles and determiners, modal verbs, reported speech, and tense usage. This contextual approach enables students to understand how language operates in real communication, thereby improving both accuracy and fluency.

The section "Learning Beyond the Text" plays an important role in expanding students' knowledge outside the classroom. Through projects, creative activities, presentations, discussions, field work, and research activities, students are encouraged to learn 22 major languages of India, National Literary Mission Authority (NLMA), financial literacy, the Early Literacy Project, cultural literacy, group work for geographical features of the country, pottery as art and profession including visual identification. Through interdisciplinary topics, this section also promotes identification of regional art or craft for making a presentation, making a mini project about gardens, learning about flowers, learning about Olympics and athletes, learning about music and ragas, playing non-verbal games, learning about postal service-daakroom-telegram, making a vision board to learn about great personalities and leaders like Shivaji, Queen Madalasa, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam. Pair work and group activities also help develop teamwork and collaboration.

Most importantly, through the poems, students are guided to focus on poetic elements such as hyperbole, ode, allusion, imagery, metaphor, personification, repetition, alliteration, symbolism, lineation, rhyme scheme, tone, mood, allegory, speaker, refrain, visual imagery, auditory imagery, rhyming words, rhythm, meters, antithesis, etc. Students also learn the terms of dramatic plays such as aside, non-lexical fillers, cacophony, pitch, bass, tempo, baritone, scale, etc. This helps them appreciate the beauty of poetry and understand how language can express emotions, ideas, and experiences creatively.

The section "Speaking Activities" in the textbook plays an essential role in strengthening oral communication skills. There are many activities such as Turn Coat debates, speaking about one's village, town, or city. Students are promoted to participate in role plays based on different vocations, music, and role play involving characters such as a dreamer, parent, mentor, teacher, friend, or sibling, which help them understand different perspectives. Activities like introducing a fan by speaking as an object, speaking on an object, place, or song, and explaining advantages and disadvantages encourage imaginative and analytical thinking. Students also practise taking interviews, expressing their point of view, and selecting and explaining quotations, which strengthen their ability to present ideas clearly. Special focus is given to stress and intonation in speaking, as well as voice modulation and presentation of self through helpful actions. Additionally, special focus is also on the importance of communication tools such as postcards, inland letters, envelopes, and money orders along with the speaking or role-playing based on proverbs and sayings. Through these varied activities, students gain confidence, improve articulation, and develop collaborative communication skills.

One of the most important components of the textbook is the writing section, which introduces students to a wide variety of writing forms. Students learn formal letter (Editor), paragraph writing, reflective writing, poster making, descriptive paragraph (on artefact, garden, etc.), article writing, diary entry, notice writing, slogan writing, writing a play, invitation letter, condolence message letter, quotation description, e-mail writing, speech writing, etc.

To fill the gap of the global literature, the book offers (though not in the syllabus content to teach), other literary texts for self-reading like "stories, poems, and articles at the end of the chapters and poems" (*Kaveri* X). They are – "Quality" by John Galsworthy, "The Lamplighter" by R. L. Stevenson, "The Last Leaf" by O. Henry, "A Sea of Foliage Girds Our Garden Round" by Toru Dutt, "The Lost Child" by Mulk Raj Anand, "I Remember, I Remember" by Thomas Hood, "Music" by Walter De La Mare, "Weigh Your Words" by E. F. Hayward, and "Always Believe in Yourself" by Dorothy Hewitt.

Based on the content of the book, the curricular goals and competencies look close to meet the requirement of the proposed goals of effective pedagogy and overall development of the secondary stage class 9 students. The book certainly meets what the syllabus of English proposes:

> Depending on the matter of study, context, and stage of the student, these effective pedagogical approaches would be of a wide range, including pedagogy that is more experiential, integrated,

inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, discussion-based, project-based, arts-based, sports-based, and activity-based. Such pedagogy will not only be more effective, but also more engaging and enjoyable. (NCERT 31)

Nationalism, Cultural Identity and Indian Knowledge Systems

A striking feature of *Kaveri* is its emphasis on Indian cultural heritage and national identity. Most of the content testifies that "India" has turned to the glorious "Bharat" with national modernity. Many texts celebrate Indian traditions, crafts and social values. In the century where the world is replete with the sensation of Generation Z (Zoomers), the inclusion of Indian Writers and their works testifies the motive of instilling the generation with the nationalism and cultural plurality in the country which can be noted through Anderson's views that nations are constructed through shared narratives and cultural symbols that create a sense of collective belonging (Anderson 6–7). By presenting stories about Indian crafts, rural life, and cultural traditions, the textbook fosters a sense of cultural continuity and national pride. The emphasis on Indian knowledge systems also reflects the broader objectives of NEP 2020, which seeks to integrate indigenous knowledge into the curriculum.

Critique and Limitations of the Book

Debates about textbook politicisation often arise when curricula emphasise national identity or cultural heritage. Apple argues that textbooks inevitably reflect ideological choices because curriculum design involves selecting certain narratives while excluding others (Apple 3). In *Kaveri*, the emphasis on Indian cultural heritage aligns with the policy priorities of NEP 2020. While the textbook reflects a cultural nationalist orientation, it avoids overt political messaging and instead emphasises empathy, resilience, and ethical responsibility.

One major limitation of *Kaveri* is the limited inclusion of international authors, i.e. limited global literary representation. There are foreign writers and poets like David Roth, Bryanna T. Perkins, Charles Swain, etc. in the text book but the proportion is largely unequal. English language education traditionally exposes students to both local and global literary traditions. Martha Nussbaum argues that exposure to world literature fosters cosmopolitan imagination and intercultural understanding (Nussbaum 10). The absence of significant global voices may therefore restrict students' engagement with diverse literary perspectives. Compared with the previous books—Beehive and Moments—which has global writers like Isaac Asimov, Robert Frost, Katherine Mansfield, Coates Kinney, W. B. Yeats, Phoebe Cary, James Kirkup, Vikram Seth, William Wordsworth, Ruskin Bond, Oscar Wilde, Anton Chekov, O. Henry, etc., Kaveri book contains most of the Indian writers. With reduced canonical literature, the textbook emphasises contemporary narratives rather than classical English literature.

While this approach increases accessibility, it may limit students' exposure to the historical development of English literary traditions. The other limitation is the overemphasis of moral values. Many texts emphasise moral lessons and inspirational themes. While these narratives are valuable for character education, excessive emphasis on moral instruction can sometimes overshadow aesthetic and literary complexity. This may limit students' engagement with diverse interpretations and critical thinking, as texts are often approached with a fixed moral outcome in mind.

Future Scope of Study and Conclusion

Ultimately, *Kaveri* demonstrates how textbooks function not only as instructional resources but also as cultural artefacts that shape students' intellectual, ethical, and civic development. The book represents a significant shift in English language education in India. The textbook integrates cultural heritage, experiential learning, and competency-based pedagogy to create a holistic learning environment. Further scope of study may include a comparative analysis of Kaveri with other national and international textbooks to examine varying representations of culture and identity. Additionally, a gendered reading of the text can reveal how roles, voices, and experiences of different genders are constructed and presented. Future research can also explore students' reception of such texts and the extent to which they influence critical thinking, inclusivity, and global awareness.

By foregrounding Indian cultural narratives and ethical values, the book contributes to the formation of cultural identity and civic awareness among students. At the same time, the limited representation of global literary voices raises important questions about the balance between national and international perspectives in English education. The challenge brings the onus on the teachers who knows that "[t]he cultivation of humanity requires the cultivation of imagination" (Nussbaum) by teaching the students "to read to know that we are not alone" (*Shadowlands*). Though the book limits the students to India and Indian writer, it is teacher's duty now to do what C. S. Lewis calls for literature: "Literature adds to reality, it does not simply describe it. It enriches the necessary competencies that daily life requires and provides; and in this respect, it irrigates the deserts that our lives have already become."

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