



## The art of giving voice: Women's narratives in Shauna Singh Baldwin's fiction

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### Abstract

This study investigates how Shauna Singh Baldwin gives voice to women's experiences in her short story collection *English Lessons and Other Stories*. The research focuses on how women's inner lives, challenges, and actions of resistance are portrayed in patriarchal, cultural, and diasporic settings. Using a qualitative and text-based method, the study studies chosen tales to understand how Baldwin foregrounds female viewpoints and converts personal pain into meaningful narrative representation. The results demonstrate that Baldwin's women characters navigate identification, migration, motherhood, and autonomy while fighting emotional, social, and cultural oppression. Baldwin disrupts male-dominated storytelling traditions and reclaims narrative space for women by elevating women's voices and naming tales after female heroes. The article identifies Baldwin as an important feminist voice whose fiction employs narrative as a strong instrument for representation, resistance, and empowerment.

**Keywords:** Women's narratives, Shauna Singh Baldwin, feminist writing, women's voices, identity, resistance.

### Introduction

The very beginning of feminist literary studies, one of the most important aspects has been the representation of women's voices in literary works. <sup>[1]</sup> In postcolonial and diasporic contexts, which are places where the intersections of gender, identity, and power are subjected to critical analysis, this is especially true with regard to the intersections of power, gender, and identity. During the past few decades, the narratives of South Asian women writers have emerged as vital spaces for articulating experiences that are frequently marginalised or silenced. As a consequence of the efforts of the writers, these spaces have come into existence. Among these authors, Shauna Singh Baldwin, who is of Indian descent and is of Canadian-American descent, holds a significant position. She comes from a community of indigenous Indians. <sup>[2]</sup> Not only does her fiction investigate the challenges that women face within the context of multifaceted sociopolitical realities that are formed by patriarchy, cultural displacement, historical trauma, and religious orthodoxy, but it also brings women to the forefront of the conversation with regard to the topic as a whole. <sup>[3]</sup>

Shauna Singh Baldwin's work is characterised by a rich narrative texture that gives voice to the histories and experiences of women who have been silenced. This is a defining characteristic of her work. Her works of fiction, which include novels as well as short stories, cover a wide variety of subjects, including but not limited to: violence during the partition, immigration, domestic oppression, moral agency, and identity negotiation. <sup>[4]</sup> Through the utilisation of her female protagonists, Baldwin is able to craft narratives that are not only emotionally resonant but also politically charged. These narratives grapple with both historical occurrences and the gender politics of the present day. She frequently blurs the lines between memory and history, as well as between fiction and reality, when she tells a story, which provides an opportunity for a profoundly

personal investigation of the female condition. She also blurs the lines between fiction and reality. <sup>[5]</sup>

The major works of James Baldwin, specifically *English Lessons and Other Stories*, *What the Body Remembers*, and *The Selector of Souls*, are the primary focus of this investigation. <sup>[6]</sup> A comprehensive analysis of the women's narratives that are presented in these works is going to be carried out as part of this research project. The diverse realities of South Asian women are reflected in these texts, which range from life in India before the partition to life in the diaspora in the West. Not only do these texts demonstrate how storytelling can become a mode of resistance and reclamation, but they also reflect the range of these realities. These texts also offer a reflection of the various truths that South Asian women have encountered throughout their lives. <sup>[7]</sup> For the purpose of this study, the objective of this research is to acquire an understanding of the manner in which Shirley Baldwin's fiction reconstructs the female experience from a feminist and postcolonial point of view that is relevant to this study. In order to accomplish this objective, the primary focus of attention will be placed on the narrative strategies that Baldwin employs, as well as the content of these narratives. <sup>[8]</sup>

Because of this, the research will be able to make a contribution to the larger field of feminist literary criticism as well as the field of South Asian diaspora studies, respectively. Both of these fields are related to each other. <sup>[9]</sup> There are ongoing discussions about identity, memory, and voice, and Baldwin's work will be positioned within the context of these discussions. When this is done, not only will it shed light on the narrative techniques that distinguish Baldwin's storytelling, but it will also place Baldwin's work within the context of contemporary debates. All things considered, the purpose of this research is to investigate the ways in which Baldwin's fiction challenges dominant patriarchal discourses and offers empowering representations of women navigating complex cultural landscapes. <sup>[10]</sup>

## Objectives

- To investigate the *English Lessons and Other Stories*.
- To analyse women's voices and experiences in *English Lessons and Other Stories*.

## Research Methodology

The researcher collected data for this study from secondary sources, including scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, critical essays, and relevant dissertations. The study utilized online academic databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, Project MUSE, and other digital repositories to gather existing literature and theoretical insights. These sources helped position the study within the broader scholarly discourse on South Asian women's writing, feminist theory, and postcolonial literature.

Since the study relied on secondary data, it remained limited by the availability and scope of existing literature on Baldwin's fiction. The researcher did not conduct any primary data collection or fieldwork. The analysis remained interpretative and text-focused, shaped by the researcher's critical engagement with the texts and theoretical frameworks. Nevertheless, this approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of women's narratives in Baldwin's fiction and contributed meaningfully to literary scholarship in feminist and postcolonial studies.

## Results

Baldwin mentions in *Why Names Matter* that several tales in *English Lessons and Other Stories* simply provide the name of the female protagonist, such as "Lisa," "Jassie," or "Simran." I want to challenge the notion that women just serve as supporting characters in tales narrated by males. According to Baldwin, the process is still ongoing.

In "Rawalpind 1919," the collection's first tale, a mother learns of her son Surup Singh's plans to pursue further education in England. Choudhary Amir Singh is Sardarni Sahib's spouse. The couple has two boys together. The eldest is a poet, while Sarup, the youngest, plans to study in England. When her son wants to move overseas, Sardarni Sahib won't be like other mothers of 1919 who beg him to remain home. She is adaptable and willing to move with the flow of modern life. After her kid spends three years in England, she sees that he will change his ideals will shift. Her husband, the collector with the red cheeks and brown topi, washes his hands after shaking hands with an Angrez. However, Sarup is a sociable young man who will be friends with Angrez lads and who will learn to shake hands instead of our polluting palms - together we shall achieve Sat Sri Akal (Baldwin 12).

"Despite this intuitive knowledge, the mother knows she must be prepared to let him go," writes Kuldeep Gill in *Apprehending Shauna Singh Baldwin's stories* (194). Baldwin adds that the mother will not do so unless she informs her husband, who wants their son to be educated in England, about what they can expect upon their son's return. As the narrative starts, Sardarni Sahib is placing the chapatti on a steel "thali" or plate, ready to serve them to her husband. The thought came to mind because of the thali. Avoid using steel thalis, Angrez. White plates are used by them (Baldwin 13).

Knowing that her son's homecoming would bring new wants and requirements, she chooses to have a conversation with her husband about it. "As I bring him his meal," she adds. You should definitely purchase According to Baldwin, she

said that they would want dishes and chairs for the home upon his return. These changes are acknowledged and accepted by the mother. The plot of "Montreal 1962" is on a young immigrant couple who arrive in Canada. After getting back from work, the husband informs his wife, "They said I could have the job if I cut my hair short and removed my turban" (Baldwin 15). According to her recollection, her husband was informed, "You're a well-qualified man" while they were packing to leave. Experts are required. Baldwin states that they discussed possibilities for those who are fortunate enough to speak English, as well as independence (Baldwin 15). Adjusting to a new nation is no picnic for them. Their finances had been almost depleted. Baldwin shows his lack of cultural awareness in this theatrical speech. "No one told you that you had to be born white and show it by shaving your head if you wanted to survive," she adds (Baldwin 15).

The woman at the dry cleaners is so perplexed that she wonders whether her bridal saris are really curtains or bed sheets when she brings them there. Thus, the heroine goes home and washes both her sari and her husband's turbans. These cultural icons are integral to who she is, in her view. She defies the company's demands that she adhere to Canadian dress code. Her fury boils over as she vehemently rejects the notion that her Sikh husband may get a job by getting his hair chopped. According to Baldwin (18), while folding her husband's turbans, she puts one on her own head and recalls seeing her father as he must have seemed as a youngster, her adolescent brother as I remember him, herself as she has to be, and you as you confront Canada. "My hands will tie a turban upon your head and work so we can keep it there," the woman boldly decides, while the husband, the breadwinner, is in a predicament. Our children will one day recount how our father arrived in this nation with just his turban and how our mother had to learn to work since he was unemployed (Baldwin 18).

It gives the lady more agency, almost like a role reversal. They are almost more driven to follow their passions in the new nation since males were favoured and women were not seen as equals in terms of their potential back home. Ultimately, she makes the decision to go to work so that "Canadians will learn what it takes to wear a turban" (Baldwin 18) while also bringing in much-needed funds.

The story of "Dropadi Ma" revolves on an elderly maid who has served a wealthy Sikh family. Their Canadian-based son Sukhi's marriage to a Thai girl is prearranged. The lad expresses his displeasure with the planned marriage and informs his father that he cannot marry a lady he has never seen when he is summoned to India by his father. The boy's Canadian lifestyle is to fault, according to his furious father. Draupadi Ma had originally given the bride-to-be one of her gold bangles to wear with her jewels, but she returns it after overhearing the dispute between the bride's father and son.

Afterwards, she contacts Sukhi, and before she knew it, the golden bangle materialised and was transferred from her to his two cupped hands. I overheard her say, "Jeeo Beta Live, my son," as her right hand gently touched his shoulder. "May you be happy," Baldwin says after that, "Khushi Raho" (22). Unfortunately, Sukhi has already departed for Canada, and the family learns this just as they are about to go for Bangkok for the wedding. A state of terror has gripped the whole home. "Mom Sukhi took a plane to Canada last night," the niece of Sukhi tells the maid in the kitchen. There must not be a wedding! Her broad, joyful

grin betrayed her lack of teeth. Little one, come here. By bestowing her "golden bangle" onto Sukhi, the devoted family servant has advised him to listen to his heart in order to find happiness in life, fulfilling her duty as Matriarch. In the fourth narrative, "Family Ties," a girl of 10 years old narrates the events. In Delhi, she and her brother Inder, who is fourteen years old, reside with their mother. Her dad is an Indore-based government employee. In 1971, when Dad visits Delhi, he refers to her as "Beti," which makes the small girl "absurdly happy" since her mother labels her "fatty."

As a war-like scenario unfolds across the nation, children are taught how to seek refuge on television. "Dad smells my fear and jokes that I am silly little kukri, a hen instead of a Sikhni of our family whom he can be proud of," the small girl says (Baldwin 25), describing how terrified she is. Prior to long, drone attacks begins, and even at noon, the streets are empty, and schools are shuttered because of the conflict. The main character states, "Since only the sparrows in our eucalyptus tree are fearless, I feed them scraps from the pricey bread that Mummy says is so expensive" (Baldwin 25).

"Dad" did not murder Mom. "I knew it all along," I tell myself. How could I have been such a horrible, immoral, and ungrateful daughter to entertain such a notion? Like any good parent would during wartime, he was just getting us ready for all he could see. Regarding Inder, I feel foolish for taking his "I will" statement seriously when he was just being manly, as he often does. According to Baldwin (30). After rereading the letter, she finds herself with more questions. What became of her if she was healthy in 1948? I mean, who could possibly know? Is somebody going to be honest with me and tell me? Somebody has to tell me. (Baldwin 31) Her expression is one of wanting me to discover the truth.

"English Lessons" shows how the main character Kanwaljit, whose husband wishes to keep her on the sidelines, quietly and gently fights to end patriarchal dominance. Three years ago in India, Kanwaljit tied the knot with Tony. Returning to America, Tony spent three weeks with his wife. While waiting for Tony to become a citizen, she gave birth to a son, Suryavir, and stayed with her in-laws. Tony had exchanged his green card for the marriage of an African-American lady, to whom he had paid off their funds. Kanwaljit is no longer Tony's wife; she and her kid now live with him. Her husband has her wear trousers to give the impression that she is Mexican and informs her that they will not be able to see anybody from India until her green card comes.

She is unhappy with her "worm existence" and "unacknowledged wifehood," according to Kanwaljit. She takes matters into her own hands and enrolls in an English language course. After successfully completing her matriculation test and learning English at school, she is now faced with the daunting task of speaking only English during her immigration interview and reciting her amnesty tale. She receives the contact information for an English instructor from Valerie, one of their pals. Kanwaljit continues to maintain the instructor's number and is even prepared to alter her name to "Kelly" since "no one here can say Kanwaljit," despite her husband's disapproval and claims that they do not need the teacher. Furthermore, Kanwaljit is abandoned in Amritsar, in the path of the flames (Baldwin 141). The younger brother-in-law of

Kanwaljit's spouse assaulted her when she was residing with her in-laws. He had warned her that he would show her parents the photo of Tony's Afro-American wife if she declined. I had the impression that there could be some Before the deed could be carried out, an unforeseen force would intervene and separate him from my flesh. Rescue me just as Dropadi's virtue was rescued. Well, it was the case. "It is too late to be good, but it is never too late to get even" (Baldwin 142). Eventually, the authorities showed up at their residence to look for him. Gathering young Sikh lads for interrogation was common practice back then. The parents informed the police that he was in the United States with Tony when they had him in the servant's quarter on the roof. As they were leaving, one of the inebriated cops poured petrol into every room, then tossed a lighted match, setting off the home explosion. Once Kanwaljit handed her kid over to Tony's mother, she hurriedly pushed him aside and went out the rear window. Harriedly, she dashed towards the servant section perched atop the building. Plus, I secured it. And dashed back through the cleansing flames and lung-searing smoke. I was met with retaliation. (Baldwin 142) and I accepted it as responsibility.

How her spouse is oblivious to her plight is a mystery to her. "I live like a worm avoiding the sunshine" is what she believes while in America. So, in an effort to improve her situation, she contacts the English instructor, who is Punjabi-speaking and originally from India. 'I will have to ask Tony, but I believe it will be OK, great' for her to come and educate me, Kanwaljit thinks (Baldwin 143).

Tony is having breakfast the next day when Mrs. Keogh, the English teacher, comes. While she and Tony talked English, Kanwaljit welcomed her inside, offered her tea, and listened. Thank you very much, Tony says. My fiancée has just returned from India. I suppose taking English classes will keep her occupied until her green card arrives, since we want to get married as soon as it does (Baldwin 143). "I am pleased to assist you and your fiancé," she adds (Baldwin 143). Tony said, "I will not like it if you teach her more than I know," as Kanwaljit listened. Just enough to get a well-paying job at Dunkin' Doughnuts or perhaps the Holiday Inn, however. Although she is intelligent, you should not instill in her an excessive amount of American values (Baldwin 143). As she grins at Kanwaljit, the English instructor turns to him. Ignoring her spouse, Kanwaljit thinks, "Tomorrow, I will ask her where I can learn how to drive" (Baldwin 143), demonstrating her determination to make the most of her unfortunate circumstances.

The protagonist of "The Cat Who Cried" is a college-educated lady from Boston who fights for the right to live her life as she sees fit. She meets her future spouse and they tie the knot when she is a student in the United States. From her

Mataji, her mother-in-law, is always wary of her and believes that her parents' decision to send their daughter to college in the United States was "a sign of a family propensity to frivolous spending" (Baldwin 147). From the start, Mataji made it obvious that she was untrustworthy when it came to money. She left her dowry to her husband Prem's relatives; while he was unemployed in India, his brother sponsored their immigration to the United States.

In her old age, Mataji lives in a large home on Aurangzeb Road in Delhi. She constantly believes that her son did not live with her due of her daughter-in-law, who she views as a terrible influence. In the early years of their marriage, the

newlyweds make the decision to delay having children until they are financially able to do so. Warnings that Prem should not be swayed by his too educated wife start to come soon (Baldwin 147). According to Baldwin (147), the main character is aware that Prem, much like his three elder brothers, is not easily swayed by anybody, especially a lady. However, he really enjoys being the contest winner. Prem finds employment in the insurance industry. "Prem has had much less practise," his wife says, implying that he is less adaptive than her (Baldwin 147). She makes the decision to have a family, and he would have gone back to India.

After the birth of their son Nikhil, Mataji begins spending half the year with them. This is her first visit outside of Delhi's summer months, when the heat and chaos are at their worst, but she'll be arriving in December nevertheless. She tells Prem, "I have decided to leave the house on Aurangzeb Road to you when I die" (Baldwin 148), after she has unpacked. Prem acknowledges her kindness, but adds that she understands there were four brothers and that everyone should have an equal share. With "No, I have decided," she responds. I was bequeathed this mansion by your father. Anyone I like can get it from me. I do, however, have a one stipulation. You and that person, who is pointing at me, must move in with me immediately (Baldwin 148). The protagonist enquires of Prem, when they are both in bed, if he had considered returning to India. He responds by saying, "Absolutely, am I not?" (Baldwin 148). When she claims to be content in the United States.

After they save up enough, he plans to start his own business in India, he adds. He is eager to attend because he wants to impress his old buddy, even though she claims he can do it in America too. According to Prem, there's no harm in doing this. "It seems... It seem so silly" (Baldwin 149), is the wife's response tries to persuade him by mentioning that she has acquaintances here and that Nikhil and Sheila's children are attending school in the United States. "Now, don't be foolish," Prem says. Do you honestly believe that I would approve of my daughter getting a boyfriend and painting her face by the time she's twelve, or my son being involved in a gang and bringing home a New Age junkie? "Just give me the decision-making authority," Baldwin says (149).

She turns her back on him as she lays over. Whoever tries to exert authority over me knows what I'm about. The first thing they say is that I am foolish (Baldwin 149). However, she is well-aware of her own intelligence thanks to her degree from Boston University. It is her decision to seek employment. Mataji takes down the statue of Saraswati from Sheila's room after she complains about how foolish it is to have a goddess statue in a girl's bedroom. Place this deity in the boy's chamber where she may do the most good. He will be motivated to study by her (Baldwin 149). "I refuse to apologise for wanting my daughter to be educated" (Baldwin 149), she says to her mother-in-law the next day as she returns Saraswati to Sheila's room, despite her silence the day before. Within a few days, our hero secures a position at an office. For the interview, I opted for trousers instead of a skirt I'm still not good at walking in skirts so Mataji wouldn't suspect a thing. Plus, I kept silent until I heard back from the agency about my acceptance. According to Baldwin, "then I felt weak with daring" (150). One night, she delivers the news with poise and conviction: she has landed a position at an accounting company. Yes, I will be taking it. Next week, I will begin (Baldwin 150).

Presumably, she struck him, according to Prem's expression. According to Baldwin, he never denied anything to her and said, "Is this how you repay me?" (150). "I have just decided that I need to go out during the day and let Mataji enjoy the children," she says in a very soft tone. (Baldwin 150) That is all. The spouse adds, "You have decided" (Baldwin 150). I hope being completely dependent on someone all day is what you love. In what ways will this establishment compensate you? (Baldwin 150). They will be able to return to India soon, according to Prem, since her employment will bring in more money. She wonders, "Why don't you tell Mataji that I don't want us to return to India?" when she sees her joyful expression. Instead of giving her false hope, why not just tell her no? According to Baldwin, "I knew when to be quiet" since I had won this round.

How can you claim to care for me while my kid is crying? Mom explains that she is very worried about her and promises to give her another necklace because of how much she loves her. "However, you'll be obligated to reside with the family that currently owns you" (Baldwin 151). I would rather them to be fair, not a gold necklace, the protagonist says in response. And being a feminist is so bad, right? (Baldwin 151). "Be cautious when you use that word," the mother warns. As a result, men start to feel scared. You must always give a guy the impression that he has power over you if you want to remain alive. Beti, quiet is a wonderful tool. Make good use of it (Baldwin 151). Baldwin cites her current thought as "there is limit to silence" (151). She began working four weeks ago, but she hasn't gotten any pay checks yet. When she contacts the agency, they tell her, "Oh, you were aware." Every two weeks, we have been directing the funds from your husband's account that he provided us with over the phone (Baldwin 151). Prem is asked by her in their bedroom:

'Just for convenience' is why you contacted the agency and instructed them to deposit my salary check into a certain bank account. Everything about him was innocent. Please, will you just give me the freedom to choose what works for me and what doesn't? He began to taunt me in the style we used when we were in college because my voice was abrupt. She wishes she could have seen a check with her name when she says,

"Does it have your name? Very insignificant, very little sum

'What were your intentions with it?'

My savings account is where it is now.

For example, "Which one?"

"The one for when we go back to India" (149), according to Baldwin.

"I already informed you that I do not wish to return to India," she informs her spouse. Why not just inform Mataji about that? As stated by Baldwin, fifteen. "I want to go back," Baldwin says (152). The room seems to be encroaching on her as Prem's expression becomes "strange and menacing" (Baldwin 152). "Well, then return to India by yourself," she ultimately said (Baldwin 152). As she slips into her dressing robe and slippers, she makes her way downstairs to the living room. Whenever Mataji hears a cat yowl outdoors, she gathers them all in the living room to pray. Joining her daughter-in-law in the living room, she enquires, "What happened?" tonight. Was a cat's wailing audible to you? Arnold 153. "Yes, Mataji," I said after

retrieving her little tape recorder, inserting the correct cassette, pressing a button, and ending the recording. According to Baldwin, I was the one who yelled out. In "The Insult," the older sister asks her younger sister for a favour, and when her request is turned down, she interprets it as an insult. Aunt Nimmi and Neelu's mom are the main characters in the novel.

Her mother wants Nimmi Massi to find a suitable Sikh lad for her daughter Neelu, who is 23 years old and of marriageable age, when she travels to India next month. However, there are just subtle signals that Nimmi Aunty fails to understand. Because Neelu is an American girl, in her mind, she may easily find a life spouse without paying a dowry. Aunty never proposes it, but Neelu's mother sighs since she was denied a favour. After they go, Neelu's mum reveals, "She wanted me to ask her straight out like a beggar, Huh!" Harold 157. After that, she avoided Nimmi Aunty at all costs. Even though he was not wearing a turban, her parents found a "good Sikh fellow" in Delhi to marry her. He was assaulted, had his hair chopped off, and had his beard pulled out by the crowd during the 1984 Sikh riots. According to Baldwin (157), Neelu claims that she has never asked her husband why he doesn't feel the need to shave. Even if Neelu wants to see her Aunty as a patient because of a toothache, her mother still won't let her. This is only one example of how closely knit Neelu's family is.

A daughter has been bestowed to Neelu. Neelu is informed by Minni aunty that her mother was not on good terms with her and that she is unable to comprehend the gravity of her own wrongdoing when her aunt and uncle visit the newborn. She feels betrayed since she was not invited to Neelu's wedding. Aunt Minni has asked Minni to inform her mother that they are preparing to purchase a new home and, if it's okay with her, they would want Neelu's father to be the one to sign the mortgage. the middleman. Neelu ensures that her mother mentions that "she wants a favour" before relaying the message to her. According to her mother, however, there are many other Indian real estate agents in Chicago, so they really aren't in need of a bigger home.

Neelu feels a sense of relief since her mother's refusal of the request has fulfilled her honour and she now understands that the "two year wound" (Baldwin 160) has healed. The 65-year-old Indian woman known as Jessie lives in the United States with her daughter Yasmeen, also known as Minni. She and her son-in-law's mother occupy a hospital room at the beginning of the novel. They are frequent visitors to the hospital for both of their children. Although Jassie is a Sikh, Elsie is a Christian. As a matter of habit, Jessie and Elsie recite the answers together every Sunday when the service is broadcast over the loudspeaker. Nevertheless, she proceeds to read Japji, the Sikh morning prayer, from her ancient gutka (prayer book). Elsie demands to know how she is able to remember the mass's words. She was educated in a Christian school, Jessie tells her. The only thing these two moms have in common is that they are both married with children from the same family. Other than that, they couldn't be more different.

According to Baldwin, Jassie believes that the term "motherhood" might have several interpretations. As far back as Jassie can remember, a lot of her friends had more than one mother. This was because having more than one mother was a sign of a wealthy and powerful father. The traditional role of a -wife or concubine - included providing housing, clothing, and jewellery. We, their children, are

obligated to attend the finest schools available, which are missionary schools. Our education will include English classes and uniforms. According to Baldwin, 162. Her biological mother, Jassie, was a complete wife who was married with all the proper ceremonies when she was sixteen years old. Baldwin states that his second mother was the woman whose inadequacy was overlooked out of a spirit of love. Jassie joyfully followed her upbringing of loving and respecting both of them as they loved her as their own. On one of the school forms, there was a space for the mother's name. Jassie came up with a reasonable solution for this: she would take turns with her mom. (Baldwin 162) I had only two, so it was simple. Teachers at Jassie's school seemed as if they were confused by the practice of having a mother and a stepmother, in her opinion. In the Convents, the nuns are referred to as moms, while Jesus is considered the father. There were a thousand wives for the Hindu god Krishna. Christian referred to the oldest wife as "mum." superior, and she was always treated with the utmost respect. My elderly mother, however, was not recognised. "At the time and now, it still irritates me" (Baldwin 163). The nuns, Jassie believed as a little girl, had chosen a life of penance after being banished from their homes due to their infertility.

According to her, "They informed me in later years that they chose their exile," but she remains unconvinced. Not widows, even those who have lost a spouse to God, make the decisions I (Baldwin 163). Even though these guys were not their spouses, they nonetheless insisted that we pray for the Pope's and the bishops' and archbishops' health on Sundays. According to Baldwin (163), I hoped that these guys would be charitable because I believed they had authority over my professors. However, I did not pray to their God. "I say, that is not the kind of violence one should fear," Jassie says in response to Elsie's complaint about the amount of violence depicted on television. The kind of violence that should be feared is discrete and cloaked in terms like 'love,' until it becomes a daily reality and you start to value only what the offender values (Baldwin 164).

The youngster had the opportunity to practice ballroom dancing at a school-sponsored celebration. Also, Jassie met Firoze at one of the "social" events. Father Firoze had the blessing of Mother Agatha, who described him as a "proper gentleman" (Baldwin 165). Unfortunately, his family's departure for Pakistan put an end to his ballroom dancing career. The son of a Sikh landowner was chosen by her father as a nice and kindman. According to Jassie, her dowry was a home in old Delhi, which her husband received from her father. In return, Jassie received a daughter to help her through her old age and two boys. In honour of Firoze, I gave my daughter the Muslim name Yasmeen. My name is Yasmeen Kaur. Because of my red face, my Sikh relatives have always referred to her as "Minni" (Baldwin 165).

The sons of Firoze. The fact that "they are both gone" (Baldwin 166), however, renders it irrelevant at this moment. After having two kids, she remembers selling the Khadi business and fleeing as far as possible (Baldwin 166). Minni became their housemate. "A chilliness of the spirit that my husband never grew used to" (referring to the icy climate in the United States), she recalls her late husband. Like always before, I was icy when it came to him. I earned this anguish ballroom dancing to the Convent's Steinway with Firozel (Baldwin 166), but I left my warmth in India. The narrative "Devika" follows a young Indian bride as she

fighters against and attempts to change the gender stereotypes that are culturally ingrained in her. Ratan, Devika's husband, now resides in Canada. Her journey to Canada eventually takes place after a year of waiting for the visa. Upon arriving at the airport, she almost loses his identity. Ratan doesn't think it's necessary to assist his wife in adjusting to her new home since he's too busy pursuing job advancement. Devika waited for her husband to return from the workplace as she cooked and cleaned.

A test is being administered to her, she feels. According to Devika, it was her area of expertise. To understand other people's intentions and expectations. The next step would be to make the choices they want her to make in order to please them (Baldwin 172). Baldwin recounts how her college companion Asha who she had sworn never to marry had a kid and now sounded much like the other females at her college after receiving a letter from her. This revelation caught her off guard. According to Devika, the letter couldn't have been written by Asha. The memory of Asha's statement that she would never be happy being married to a wealthy man and having children and servants to take care of them lingers in her mind. "I would never allow anyone to test me I would prefer a little girl" (Baldwin 170), which was not the Asha she recalled. Devika's father takes great pride in the fact that his daughter has married a successful stock trader from Canada. She had Canadian sister-in-laws as guests of honour at her wedding. Baldwin cited Vandana Di as saying, "If my father finds out that Kavali Di's daughter worked as a model for a lingerie catalogue or that Vandana Di made her husband help with the children and the dishes, she will be mortified" (174).

### Conclusion

The analysis comes to the conclusion that Shauna Singh Baldwin's *English Lessons and Other Stories* regularly puts women at the center of narrative discourse and realistically, sensitively, and deeply depicts their experiences. Through female-centred storytelling, Baldwin reveals the subtle and overt forms of oppression suffered by women in household, cultural, and diasporic spheres, while simultaneously showcasing their resilience and potential for self-assertion. The women characters are not only victims but active actors who seek dignity, freedom, and voice under limited societal institutions. Baldwin questions patriarchal conventions and highlights the value of women's storytelling by turning personal suffering into a public narrative. In the end, the study shows that Baldwin's fiction greatly advances feminist and diasporic literary studies and is a prime example of the art of giving voice to women.

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