



Tumour of Thought: Examining the Unheard Subaltern Voices in Abraham Verghese's the Covenant of Water

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Abstract- Abraham Verghese's *the Covenant of Water* (2023) presents a complex narrative of family, medicine, caste, class, religion, gender, disease, and social transformation against the historical and cultural landscape of Kerala and British India. This article examines the representation of marginalized and unheard voices in the novel through the theoretical framework of Subaltern Studies. It particularly focuses on the experiences of Anglo-Indians, Pulayars, tribals, women, and people stigmatized because of disease. The article introduces the concept of the "Tumour of Thought," derived from Mariamma's question regarding an invisible tumour in the brain: "What if they have a 'tumour of thought,' something that we can't see with the naked eye or with our usual tools?" (Verghese 625). In this study, the phrase is employed as an original metaphor for the deeply rooted belief that one person or community is superior to another on the basis of birth, caste, class, religion, gender, skin colour, or historical position. Like a tumour that disrupts the healthy functioning of the body, such prejudiced thinking disrupts the healthy functioning of society. Through the experiences of Digby Kilgour, Jeb Pellingham, Shamuel, Joppan, Lenin, Mariamma, Elsie, Big Ammachi, and other marginalized figures, the novel reveals the mechanisms through which social hierarchies silence and exclude people. At the same time, Verghese's narrative does not portray marginalized individuals merely as victims. Their resistance, solidarity, education, protest, professional achievement, and assertion of agency challenge oppressive structures. The article argues that *The Covenant of Water* ultimately exposes the "Tumour of Thought" as a social and ideological condition that must be confronted for a more inclusive society to emerge.

Keywords- Subaltern Studies, Tumour of Thought, Abraham Verghese, *The Covenant of Water*, caste, class, gender, disease stigma, marginalization, resistance.



I. Introduction

Literature has the capacity to illuminate experiences that are frequently absent from dominant historical narratives. By representing individuals and communities who have been excluded, silenced, or oppressed, literary texts can challenge established assumptions about power and identity. Abraham Verghese's *The Covenant of Water*, published in 2023, is particularly significant in this regard. Set primarily in Kerala and extending from the early twentieth century to the late 1970s, the novel combines medicine, family history, colonial history, caste relations, religion, gender, and social inequality within an expansive multigenerational narrative.

The novel initially appears to centre on the mysterious hereditary illness known within the Parambil family as "the Condition." However, its scope extends far beyond the medical mystery. The narrative repeatedly exposes the social conditions that determine who is permitted to belong, who is considered inferior, who receives education, whose suffering is acknowledged, and whose voice is ignored. As the project observes, the novel is "not just a novel about a family's struggle with a mysterious hereditary condition"; it is also an exploration of "social exclusion, caste hierarchies, marginalization of women, and stigmatization of 'The Condition'" (Varghese). The statement "All water is connected and only land and people are discontinuous" (Verghese 90) becomes particularly meaningful when read alongside the divisions produced by caste, class, religion, gender, and social status.

The present study examines these divisions through Subaltern Studies. The term "subaltern," associated initially with Antonio Gramsci and subsequently developed through the Subaltern Studies scholarship, has been used to examine communities and individuals positioned outside dominant structures of power. Ranajit Guha's work challenged histories centred exclusively on elite groups, while Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak questioned the conditions under which marginalized people can enter dominant systems of representation. As Simon During explains in his introduction to Spivak's work, Subaltern Studies attempts to place "those left out by history back into a history which is much more varied, inclusive and tolerant of gaps and holes" (229).

In *The Covenant of Water*, these "gaps and holes" appear in the lives of people whose experiences are shaped by social exclusion. Digby Kilgour experiences class and



religious marginalization; the Anglo-Indian community faces an uncertain position between British and Indian society; Shamuel and Joppan experience caste oppression; tribal communities are exploited through land and economic relations; people with leprosy are treated as social outcasts; and women encounter patriarchal restrictions in education, marriage, artistic expression, professional life, and bodily autonomy.

This article develops the idea of the “Tumour of Thought” as a way of connecting these apparently different forms of oppression. The concept originates in Mariamma’s medical speculation while examining Philipose’s condition. She asks, “What if they have a ‘tumour of thought,’ something that we can’t see with the naked eye or with our usual tools?” (Verghese 625). In the present study, this phrase is extended metaphorically to describe the belief that another person or group is inherently inferior because of birth, caste, class, religion, gender, skin colour, or historical position. Such a belief behaves like a tumour: it develops within individuals and institutions, grows through social practices, spreads through generations, and disturbs the healthy functioning of society.

The argument of this article, therefore, is not simply that *The Covenant of Water* portrays suffering. Rather, the novel demonstrates how systems of thought produce suffering and how marginalized individuals challenge those systems. The “Tumour of Thought” becomes a metaphor through which casteism, class discrimination, religious prejudice, colonial superiority, gender inequality, and disease stigma can be understood as interconnected manifestations of the same social pathology.

II. Subalternity and the “Tumour of Thought”

Subaltern Studies provides a useful framework for examining the voices that remain at the margins of dominant social structures. The project draws on Spivak, Guha, Mannathukkaren, McLeod, and other scholars to understand the relationship between power and marginalization. Nissim Mannathukkaren describes the subaltern as referring principally to “marginal peasants, workers and other exploited sections” who experience the effects of caste and class oppression (24).

The concept of subalternity in the novel cannot be confined to one social group. Different characters occupy marginal positions for different reasons. Digby is



disadvantaged because of class and religion before becoming a beneficiary of racial privilege in colonial India. Anglo-Indians are positioned ambiguously between British and Indian communities. Pulayars are subordinated through caste and land relations. Tribals experience economic exploitation and dispossession. Lepers are excluded because of disease. Women are restricted by patriarchal structures. These experiences demonstrate that marginalization is not a single, uniform condition.

The “Tumour of Thought” provides a metaphor for the ideology underlying these different forms of exclusion. The belief in superiority is not merely an individual prejudice; it becomes embedded in social institutions and everyday practices. When caste determines whether a person may enter a house, when class determines who deserves medical care, when gender determines whose artistic work will be recognized, or when disease determines whether a person is permitted to remain within a family, prejudice becomes structural.

The metaphor also reflects the medical imagination that permeates Verghese’s novel. A tumour grows within the body without necessarily being visible from the outside. Similarly, discriminatory thinking may remain invisible while its effects become visible through social exclusion, violence, poverty, humiliation, and unequal opportunity. A tumour can obstruct normal bodily functioning; prejudice obstructs the healthy functioning of society. The project therefore argues that “just as a tumour disrupts the proper functioning of the body, these prejudiced thoughts divide society and hinder its proper functioning.”

The metaphor is particularly effective because the novel itself repeatedly connects physical illness with social attitudes. The Condition is initially mysterious, while social prejudices are often treated as ordinary or natural. Yet both require investigation. Mariamma searches for the physical source of the hereditary disease, while the present study searches for the ideological disease that produces social hierarchies.

III. Class, Religion, and the Anglo-Indian Experience

The experiences of Dr Digby Kilgour demonstrate the complex relationship between class, religion, race, and colonial power. Digby grows up in Glasgow in difficult circumstances. His mother, having sacrificed her theatrical career, works to support



him. His social position exposes him to humiliation, even though his racial identity later provides him with privilege in British India.

Digby recognizes the universality of suffering when he observes that “the sight of suffering is familiar; its language transcends all borders” (Verghese 99). Yet the novel simultaneously reveals that social systems do not treat all suffering equally.

At Longmere Hospital, Dr Claude Arnold assigns Digby to the native wards while retaining the British and Anglo-Indian wards for himself. When Digby admits that he lacks experience in major surgery, Claude tells him, “You learn by cutting. Remember, Kilgour, for these people the choice is you or nothing at all” (Verghese 100). The statement exposes the colonial hierarchy in medicine: the lives of native patients are implicitly considered suitable for the professional development of inexperienced doctors.

Honorine’s response to Digby further exposes the colonial structure. She acknowledges that hospitals, railways, and telegraphs may appear as beneficial developments but reminds him that “it’s their land, Digby, and we take and take” (Verghese 107). The novel therefore complicates the idea of colonial benevolence by revealing the economic and political structures beneath apparently beneficial institutions.

Digby himself occupies a contradictory position. In Glasgow, he experiences class-based humiliation; in colonial India, his whiteness places him above native people. The project notes that “in Glasgow, Digby was bullied by the scrub nurse and was fodder for the senior registrar or the consultant. But in British India, he is white and that puts him above anyone who is not.” His experience demonstrates that privilege is relational. The same individual may be marginalized within one social system and privileged within another.

The Anglo-Indian community experiences an equally complicated form of marginality. The railway colony in Perambur is described as “an enclave for Anglo-Indians that excludes native, yet whose inhabitants are themselves excluded by the ruling race with whom they align” (Verghese 136). The description captures the unstable position of a community caught between two social identities.



Jeb Pellingham's death provides one of the strongest examples of this exclusion. A promising hockey player and future Olympian, Jeb dies because of medical negligence. Despite promises of an investigation, justice is delayed. The Anglo-Indian community is forced to protest publicly against the indifference surrounding his death. Their protest eventually results in the dismissal of Dr Claude Arnold from the Indian Medical Service.

Jeb's story demonstrates that the subaltern is not necessarily powerless. The community converts grief into collective resistance. Their action challenges the structures that initially silence them. The novel therefore moves beyond the representation of victimhood and emphasizes collective agency.

IV. Caste, Education, and the Pulayar Experience

Caste constitutes one of the most powerful manifestations of the "Tumour of Thought" in *The Covenant of Water*. The Pulayar characters are positioned at the bottom of the social hierarchy and denied rights that are taken for granted by dominant groups. The project cites K. Saradamoni's observation that Pulayars were historically connected to slavery, denied land ownership, and deprived of social and economic rights.

The novel portrays this historical reality through Shamuel Pulayan and his family. The Pulayar are described as "the lowest caste in Travancore," and the narrative states that "Pulayar never enter the house" (Verghese 24–25). Shamuel eats separately, outside the house, despite being an indispensable worker within the Parambil household.

The contradiction between intimacy and inequality is central to Shamuel's experience. The members of the Parambil family may treat him with affection, but affection does not erase hierarchy. He remains a Pulayan in the eyes of society. This distinction becomes crucial to understanding the "Tumour of Thought": discrimination can persist even when individuals believe themselves to be kind or generous.

Joppan, Shamuel's son, refuses to accept the social position assigned to him. His desire for education directly challenges caste hierarchy. When he attempts to study, the Kaniyan abuses him and calls him an "Upstart pulayan" and a "Polluting dog"



(Verghese 221). Education becomes dangerous because knowledge threatens the social order.

The reaction to Joppan's desire to learn demonstrates that caste is sustained not merely through physical separation but through the control of knowledge. The upper-caste characters fear the possibility of a Pulayan acquiring the intellectual tools necessary to question his position. Joppan is punished not because he has committed a crime but because he has attempted to cross a boundary.

The contrast between Shamuel and Joppan is significant. Shamuel has internalized his subordinate position. Joppan, however, questions it. He recognizes that what is described as generosity toward a Pulayan may actually be exploitation. He observes:

«“If you gave this relative of yours who worked his whole life here the same reward—a plot for a hut and his accumulated wages—everyone around would say he'd been exploited. But if it's for Shamuel Pulayan...then it's generous” (Verghese 487).»

The statement exposes the ideological mechanism through which exploitation becomes invisible. The same treatment is interpreted differently depending upon the social identity of the recipient.

Joppan's resistance culminates when Philipose offers him twenty acres of land and the position of manager. Joppan refuses to allow material advancement to become another form of dependence. He declares:

«“I can't do much about being called a pulayan. But I can choose whether I want to live like one” (Verghese 488).»

This is one of the most important expressions of subaltern agency in the novel. Joppan recognizes that identity imposed by society cannot always be immediately removed, but behaviour and self-determination remain within his control. His refusal transforms him from an object of social hierarchy into an active subject.

The novel also connects caste with religion. Conversion to Christianity does not automatically eliminate caste distinctions. The Pulayars hope that conversion will make them equal to the households for whom they work, but their social position remains



unchanged. Big Ammachi's observation, "You can't walk across a lake just because you change its name to 'land'. Label matter" (Verghese 223), captures the persistence of social identity beneath religious conversion.

Education becomes an important means of challenging this inheritance. Big Ammachi secretly teaches Joppan letters after he is expelled from formal learning. She recognizes the limits of her action—"She can't undo the evils of casteism, but she can do this" (Verghese 224)—yet her decision creates a possibility for transformation.

V. Tribal Marginalization and the Politics of Land

The novel extends its examination of marginalization beyond caste to the experiences of tribal communities. Lenin Evermore becomes an important voice through which the exploitation of tribal people is represented. His experience reveals the hypocrisy that can exist between religious identity and social conduct.

During a smallpox epidemic, Lenin loses his parents and sister. When he approaches a Christian household seeking food, he is rejected. A voice warns him, "Don't you dare come closer! Go away before I unchain the dog!" (Verghese 470). A Pulayi woman, in contrast, offers him food. The contrast exposes the distance between professed Christian values and actual social behaviour.

Land exploitation is another important dimension of tribal marginalization. Lenin explains how outsiders encourage tribal people to construct permanent houses and acquire materials through credit. When they cannot repay, "they forfeited land" (Verghese 550).

The loss of land is especially significant because land represents livelihood, identity, and independence. Economic transactions that appear voluntary can become mechanisms of dispossession when one party possesses greater knowledge and economic power. The exploitation of tribal people therefore reflects the same "Tumour of Thought": the assumption that those with less wealth or social power can be used for the benefit of those above them.



Lenin's political development also represents resistance. He initially considers religious service as a means of helping disadvantaged communities but realizes that it is insufficient. He subsequently joins the Naxalite movement because he believes it offers another means of resisting exploitation. His journey demonstrates the growing awareness that charity alone cannot resolve structural inequality.

VI. Disease, Stigma, and the Social Other

Disease is one of the most distinctive elements of Verghese's novel because medicine functions simultaneously as narrative subject and social metaphor. The condition within the Parambil family is eventually identified as a variant of neurofibromatosis or von Recklinghausen's disease. Yet the novel is equally concerned with diseases such as leprosy and the social meanings attached to illness.

The experience of the inhabitants of the lazaretto demonstrates how disease can transform a person into a social "Other." Dr Rune Orqvist dedicates himself to the care of people with leprosy, while society treats them as contaminated and unworthy of ordinary human contact. The boatman's fear of approaching the lazaretto illustrates the extent of this exclusion.

Sankar and Bhava describe the severity of their exclusion: "People won't even let us lean against cattle sheds" (Verghese 200). Sankar, a carpenter, loses the ability to work when his hands become numb, and Bhava is abandoned by her husband. Dr Rune observes that "the real wound of leprosy, and the only pain they feel, is that of exile" (Verghese 201).

The distinction between physical disease and social suffering is crucial. The disease damages the body, but stigma damages relationships, identity, dignity, and belonging. The social response becomes another disease.

Ali Imron's study, cited in the project, explains how negative stigma can associate leprosy with contagion, incurability, hereditary transmission, divine punishment, uncleanness, and disability (960). Verghese challenges such assumptions by depicting the humanity and creative potential of people living in the lazaretto.



The Condition itself also produces fear within the Parambil family. Deafness, aversion to water, unusual behaviour, and drowning become associated with a mysterious hereditary curse. Philipose's deafness, in particular, contributes to his exclusion. Yet he ultimately becomes a columnist for Manorama, using writing as a means of speaking to ordinary people.

Disease therefore becomes another site of subalternity, but it also becomes a site of knowledge. Mariamma's medical investigation seeks to understand rather than fear the Condition. Her approach contrasts with social attitudes that immediately label and exclude. In this sense, scientific inquiry and social empathy become possible ways of confronting the "Tumour of Thought."

VII. Women as Subaltern Voices

Gender forms another major dimension of marginalization in the novel. Women are restricted by patriarchal expectations concerning education, marriage, domestic responsibility, artistic expression, professional achievement, and sexuality. Bharati Narayan observes that literary texts have frequently represented women as "the 'Subaltern', as the 'Other', so, as the marginalized, the silenced, and the oppressed" (101).

Big Ammachi's life illustrates the restrictions imposed on women by an earlier generation. When Mariamma asks what she imagined as a girl, Big Ammachi explains that she imagined only what her time permitted: a home, husband, children, and granddaughter. She later acknowledges that if she were young in the present, she would want to become a doctor and build a hospital.

Her unrealized aspiration is contrasted with her later action. Although society did not permit her to pursue education freely, she uses knowledge to transform another person's life by teaching Joppan. Her resistance is therefore not always dramatic; it operates through education and care.

Elsie provides another example of patriarchal limitation. A talented artist, she discovers that her paintings receive recognition when submitted under a male-sounding name. She remarks that her work had repeatedly been rejected until it was submitted as "E.



Thetanatt,” after which the judges accepted it. The episode demonstrates how gender can become an invisible barrier to recognition.

Elsie also questions the assumption that marriage should consume a woman’s aspirations. She asks Philipose whether Ravi Varma, had he been born a woman, would have been free to study, exhibit, and travel as he did. “If Ravi Varma had been born a girl,” she asks, “do you think he’d have been free after marriage to study with a Dutch tutor?” (Verghese 355).

Honorine similarly questions male-dominated structures of power. Having lost brothers in the First World War, she observes, “If women were in power, you’d not see us sending lads to their death” (Verghese 119). Her statement suggests that women’s marginalization is not merely a gender issue but also affects the ways in which societies organize political power.

Celeste’s experience further exposes the vulnerability of women within marriage. Claude Arnold attempts to use his wife as an instrument for protecting himself when his role in Jeb Pellingham’s death is challenged. Celeste ultimately refuses to remain in a marriage in which her dignity is disregarded. Her decision represents another form of resistance against patriarchal control.

Mariamamma represents perhaps the strongest female voice in the novel. As a medical student and later a doctor, she enters a profession historically dominated by men. Yet even academic achievement does not protect her from sexual harassment. During her oral examination, Brijmohan Sarkar threatens her academic future when she refuses his sexual demand: “Either put your hand in my pocket or come back in September” (Verghese 540).

Mariamamma’s response is violent, but within the context of the narrative it functions as a dramatic assertion of bodily autonomy. She refuses to allow institutional authority to become a justification for sexual exploitation. Her act symbolically reverses the power relationship: the woman who is expected to remain silent becomes the person who refuses victimization.

Her intellectual role is equally important. Mariamma does not simply inherit knowledge from the men around her; she actively investigates the Condition and searches for its



cause. The phrase “Tumour of Thought” itself comes from her medical imagination. Thus, the concept at the centre of this article emerges through the voice of a woman who occupies both a historically marginalized position and a position of intellectual authority.

VIII. Resistance, Agency, and the Possibility of Change

One of the significant strengths of *The Covenant of Water* is that it does not represent subaltern communities solely through suffering. The novel also depicts resistance, solidarity, and transformation. This is essential because a reading of subalternity that focuses only on oppression can unintentionally reproduce the very silencing it seeks to challenge.

Jeb Pellingham’s death generated collective action among Anglo-Indians and hockey players. Their protest eventually results in Claude Arnold’s dismissal. Joppan questions the exploitation of his father and refuses to accept the social identity imposed upon him. Big Ammachi uses education to challenge caste barriers. Philipose uses journalism to speak for ordinary people. Mariamma resists sexual exploitation and dedicates herself to medical research. Dr Rune works to restore dignity to people excluded because of leprosy.

These acts are different in form but similar in principle. They reject the assumption that one group has the right to determine the value or destiny of another.

The novel also presents moments in which social barriers temporarily disappear. Arjun reflects on the experience of a train compartment: “Strangers of all religions, all castes getting on so well in a compartment. Why not the same outside train?” (Verghese 331). Similarly, Thankamma observes, “All barriers of caste vanish when you enter hell, is it not?” (Verghese 28).

These observations expose the artificiality of social divisions. People who share the same physical space can recognize their common humanity, yet the moment they return to social structures, inherited hierarchies reappear. The problem, therefore, is not difference itself but the ideology that transforms difference into superiority and inferiority.



This is precisely where the “Tumour of Thought” becomes a useful interpretive concept. A tumour can be contained, treated, or removed only when it is recognized as abnormal. Similarly, social prejudice often survives because it is normalized. Caste discrimination can be called tradition; gender inequality can be called custom; colonial domination can be called civilization; exploitation can be called generosity; and disease stigma can be called protection. The novel challenges these disguises.

The “Tumour of Thought” as a Social Metaphor

The central concept of this study emerges from the intersection of medicine and social thought. Mariamma’s question about an invisible “tumour of thought” initially belongs to the medical investigation of Philipose. However, the phrase becomes significant when read alongside the novel’s numerous representations of social exclusion.

In the present study, the “Tumour of Thought” refers to the belief that one individual or community is naturally superior to another because of birth, caste, class, religion, gender, skin colour, race, or historical position.

The metaphor can be understood through three principal characteristics.

First, the tumour is internal. Prejudice begins as a way of thinking. Before it becomes a law, custom, institution, insult, or act of violence, it exists as an assumption about the value of another human being.

Second, the tumour grows. A discriminatory belief repeated across generations becomes normalized. Shamuel learns to accept his position; his community is taught that certain forms of education are not meant for them; women learn to understand sacrifice as destiny; society learns to regard people with leprosy as permanently excluded.

Third, the tumour spreads. A belief held by individuals becomes embedded in institutions. Caste enters education, employment, religion, housing, and interpersonal relationships. Patriarchy enters marriage, education, art, medicine, and professional life. Colonial superiority enters medical institutions and administrative structures. Disease stigma enters families and communities.



The consequences are equally significant. Just as a physical tumour can obstruct the normal functioning of the body, prejudice obstructs the healthy functioning of society. It restricts education, employment, healthcare, dignity, mobility, and participation. The project emphasizes that marginalized communities experience restricted access to opportunities and that such exclusion perpetuates economic and social inequality.

The metaphor also makes it possible to connect apparently unrelated forms of oppression. The casteist Kaniyan who prevents Joppan from learning, the colonial doctor who differentiates between British and native patients, the society that rejects lepers, the examiner who sexually exploits Mariamma, and the patriarchal structures that limit Elsie's artistic ambitions may appear to belong to separate systems. Yet they are united by the same underlying assumption: some people deserve more freedom, dignity, recognition, or humanity than others.

That assumption is the “Tumour of Thought.”

The novel nevertheless suggests that the condition is not incurable. Education, solidarity, protest, empathy, scientific inquiry, and individual courage become forms of treatment. Big Ammachi treats caste prejudice through education. Joppan challenges inherited inferiority through self-assertion. The Anglo-Indians challenge injustice through collective protest. Rune challenges disease stigma through medical service. Mariamma challenges both medical ignorance and patriarchal authority through knowledge and action.

The cure, therefore, is not merely medical. It is ethical and social.

IX. Conclusion

“How did a small island wind up ruling half the globe?” (Verghese 373). The question captures one of the fundamental concerns of *The Covenant of Water*: how systems of superiority become powerful enough to determine the lives of entire populations. Colonialism, caste, class, religion, gender, and disease stigma operate differently, yet they share an underlying logic—the belief that some people are more valuable than others.



Through the experiences of Digby Kilgour, Jeb Pellingham, Shamuël, Joppan, Lenin, the inhabitants of the lazaretto, Elsie, Big Ammachi, Celeste, Honorine, Mariamma, and others, Verghese brings marginalized experiences into the centre of the narrative. These characters reveal that subalternity is not produced by inherent weakness. It is produced by social structures that determine whose knowledge matters, whose body is valued, whose suffering is recognized, and whose voice is heard.

The novel is particularly significant because it does not end with silence. The marginalized characters resist in different ways. Jeb's community protests. Joppan questions exploitation. Big Ammachi teaches. Philipose writes. Rune heals. Elsie challenges gender restrictions. Celeste refuses marital manipulation. Mariamma pursues knowledge, resists sexual exploitation, and searches for a cure.

The "Tumour of Thought" thus becomes the central metaphor through which these experiences can be understood. Like a physical tumour, prejudice can remain hidden while gradually damaging the larger body. It can grow through inherited beliefs, spread through institutions, and produce visible social consequences. The cure begins with recognition—with the willingness to identify the prejudice that has been normalized.

Verghese's novel repeatedly reminds readers of human interconnectedness. Arjun's question about why strangers of different religions and castes can live peacefully inside a train compartment but not outside it reveals the artificiality of social boundaries (Verghese 331). Thankamma's observation that caste barriers disappear in hell similarly exposes the absurdity of divisions that human beings themselves create (Verghese 28).

The significance of *The Covenant of Water*, therefore, lies not merely in its representation of marginalized people but in its insistence that marginalization can be challenged. The novel asks readers to look beyond visible differences and recognize the invisible structures of thought that produce inequality. The "Tumour of Thought" is ultimately not a condition belonging to one individual or one community; it is a social condition that can affect the collective body.

To confront it requires more than sympathy for the oppressed. It requires questioning the assumptions that make oppression possible. It requires listening to voices that have historically been silenced, recognizing the agency of marginalized people, and refusing



to treat inequality as natural or inevitable. In this sense, the novel's movement from illness to investigation, from exclusion to resistance, and from silence to voice offers a larger vision of social healing.

The cure for the "Tumour of Thought" begins when humanity ceases to measure human worth through hierarchy and begins to recognize the fundamental interconnectedness of human life.

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