



Embodied Precarity and Feminine Agency: Rethinking Subaltern
Womanhood in Bimalendu Halder's "Neader"

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Abstract:

This article examines "Neader" through the intersecting lenses of gender, caste, and subalternity, foregrounding how survival under conditions of ecological displacement produces complex forms of agency and constraint. Focusing on the character of Manti, the study argues that her subjectivity is shaped by a "politics of survival" in which gender roles are both destabilized and reinscribed. Drawing on Judith Butler's theory of performativity, the paper demonstrates how Manti reconfigures normative femininity through labour, leadership, and decision-making, even as her agency remains circumscribed by material precarity. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's formulation of the subaltern is employed to interrogate the limits of voice and representation, revealing how Manti's speech becomes legible only through bodily sacrifice. The analysis further incorporates Silvia Federici's critique of reproductive labour to highlight the invisibilization of women's economic contributions, alongside Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality to situate Manti's marginality within overlapping structures of caste and gender. Additionally, Michel Foucault's notion of biopower is used to examine the role of the state in regulating and selectively recognizing displaced populations. The article contends that while Manti emerges as a figure of resilience and leadership, her eventual violation exposes the violent conditions under which subaltern inclusion is secured. Ultimately, "Neader" reveals that agency within marginal spaces is neither fully emancipatory nor entirely foreclosed, but rather negotiated within a terrain structured by systemic inequality, coercion, and embodied vulnerability.

Key Words:

Gendered Survival, Subaltern Agency, Intersectionality, Displacement and Precarity, Biopolitics.

Introduction:

Bimalendu Halder belongs to a significant strand of contemporary Bengali writing that foregrounds the lives of marginalized communities in the Sundarbans, particularly those affected by ecological instability, poverty, caste exclusion, and political neglect. His collection *Nona Boner Panchali* (2018), from which

"Neader" is translated by Keshab Hira, documents the fragile world of deltaic communities whose everyday existence is shaped by recurring floods, erosion, displacement, and uncertain livelihoods. Rather than treating the Sundarbans as an exotic landscape, Halder presents it as a lived socio-ecological space where environmental catastrophe, state power, and social hierarchy intersect.

Within this context, Neader offers a powerful narrative of life at the margins, where ecological displacement and social exclusion continually unsettle the possibility of home. The story follows a group of flood-affected settlers who establish a precarious settlement on government land, only to confront eviction, bureaucratic indifference, and renewed uncertainty. At the centre of this narrative stands Manti, a displaced woman whose efforts to secure survival for herself and her community reveal the complex workings of gender, caste, labour, and power in a climate-vulnerable region.

This article argues that Manti embodies a deeply ambivalent form of subaltern womanhood in which agency emerges not as a straightforward narrative of empowerment but as a negotiated practice shaped by ecological precarity and structural inequality. Drawing on Judith Butler's theory of performativity, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's critique of subaltern representation, Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality, and ecofeminist insights into the interconnected domination of women and nature, the article examines how Manti's labour, leadership, and bodily vulnerability are produced within overlapping regimes of patriarchy, caste hierarchy, state power, and environmental crisis. Neader, therefore, reveals that the politics of survival in the Sundarbans is simultaneously ecological, gendered, and profoundly unequal.

Gender and the Politics of Survival:

At the outset, Manti emerges as a pragmatic and resilient subject who actively participates in decision-making. In contrast to Palan — whose consciousness remains affectively anchored to the lost homeland—Manti embraces mobility, adaptation, and survival. Her assertion, "This time I shall not leave this place for the Sundarbans," signals a decisive rupture from nostalgia and foregrounds a gendered pragmatism shaped by displacement (Halder 2). This contrast is not merely psychological but epistemological: while Palan embodies memory-oriented attachment, Manti articulates a future-directed rationality grounded in material necessity.

This orientation can be read through Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity, wherein gender is constituted through repeated acts rather than fixed essence. As Butler observes, "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body... within a highly rigid regulatory frame." ('Gender Trouble' 45). Manti's actions — organizing labour, devising economic strategies, and resisting dependency — function as performative acts that unsettle conventional expectations of passive femininity. Her insistence on alternative survival practices — "You know farming — head off to the nearby villages... Then catch fishes, prawns... make hand fans, brooms and mats" — demonstrates her active reconfiguration of gendered roles within a subsistence economy (Halder 2). She does not merely inhabit gender norms but reshapes them in response to material exigencies.

However, such performativity must be situated within material conditions. Manti's agency is not merely discursive but embedded in a politics of subsistence. Her engagement in fishing, gathering, and petty trade situates her within a feminized economy of survival that is both adaptive and structurally exploitative. This aligns with Silvia Federici's argument that women's labour remains central to sustaining life while being systematically undervalued: "Women have been the main subjects of reproductive labor... the labor that produces and reproduces the workforce." ('Caliban and the Witch' 8).

Manti's agency is also inseparable from the ecological conditions that shape her existence. Her knowledge of rivers, canals, snails, palm leaves, and seasonal resources reflects an embodied relationship with the environment that is central to survival in the Sundarbans. This dynamic can be illuminated through ecofeminist thought, which links the exploitation of women with the exploitation of nature. As Vandana Shiva argues, women in many marginalized communities possess forms of ecological knowledge that emerge from their daily engagement with sustaining life rather than dominating nature ('Staying Alive' 42). Similarly, Val Plumwood critiques the dualistic logic that simultaneously devalues women and the natural world ('Feminism and the Mastery of Nature' 41). In Neader, Manti's labour is rooted in this intimate ecological engagement: she reads the landscape, identifies its resources, and transforms them into strategies of survival. Yet, the same environmental precarity that demands such knowledge also intensifies her vulnerability, revealing how ecological degradation and gendered marginalization operate together.

Manti's embrace of mobility further reflects a condition of forced nomadism. Her refusal to return to the Sundarbans is not an expression of autonomy but a recognition of ecological instability and economic precarity. In this sense, her movement resonates with Zygmunt Bauman's notion of "liquid modernity," where marginalized populations are compelled into continuous displacement ('Liquid Modernity' 13). Adaptability thus becomes a structural necessity rather than a voluntary choice.

At the domestic level, Manti's assertiveness disrupts patriarchal hierarchies. She challenges Palan's dependence on institutional authority and explicitly rejects reliance on the *pradhan*: "No more pradhan... They're the same everywhere. No one will do anything for us" (Halder 3). This moment is crucial, as it marks her resistance to both patriarchal mediation and state indifference. Such inversion of gender roles reflects Pierre Bourdieu's insight that seemingly natural divisions between the sexes are socially constructed ('Masculine Domination' 9). Yet, this reconfiguration remains provisional. Manti's authority is contingent upon her ability to ensure survival, rendering her leadership instrumental rather than transformative.

This dynamic echoes Saba Mahmood's critique of liberal notions of agency, which equate it solely with resistance. Mahmood emphasizes that agency must be understood within the conditions that enable and constrain action ('Politics of Piety' 14). Accordingly, Manti's agency is negotiated rather than autonomous, shaped by vulnerability and necessity. Her pragmatism also reveals a form of embodied knowledge rooted in lived experience. As Donna Haraway argues, "situated knowledges" privilege partial, embodied perspectives

over abstract universality (581). Manti's understanding of the landscape—its resources and possibilities — emerges from direct engagement rather than institutional authority. Yet, this knowledge does not translate into structural empowerment. Constrained by patriarchy, caste marginalization, and state neglect, her agency remains limited. Thus, Manti embodies a fundamental paradox: she is both an agent of disruption and a subject of constraint. While her actions unsettle normative gender expectations, they simultaneously reproduce the structural conditions of her marginalization. The politics of survival, therefore, emerges not as a space of liberation but as a fraught terrain where agency is continually negotiated within the limits imposed by systemic inequalities.

Subaltern Womanhood and the Question of Voice:

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's seminal interrogation — "Can the subaltern speak?" — provides a crucial framework for understanding Manti's characterization. Spivak argues that the subaltern woman is doubly marginalized — by elite/colonial discourse as well as by indigenous patriarchal structures—such that her voice remains structurally inaudible within dominant epistemic systems (*Can the Subaltern Speak?* 287). As she further notes, "the subaltern cannot speak" in any unmediated sense because her utterance is always already inscribed within structures that appropriate or silence it (Spivak 308). The question, therefore, is not simply whether the subaltern speaks, but whether her speech can be recognized, mediated, or rendered legible within hegemonic frameworks.

In "Neader," Manti appears, at least initially, to resist such silencing. She speaks assertively, challenges patriarchal authority within both domestic and institutional spheres, and actively mobilizes the community. Her rejection of the *Pradhan* — "No more pradhan... They're the same everywhere. No one will do anything for us" — articulates a sharp critique of political exploitation and state indifference (Halder 3). This moment signals the emergence of a subaltern consciousness that is not passive but critically aware, capable of interrogating structures that perpetuate marginalization.

Moreover, Manti's speech is not confined to verbal articulation; it is socially effective. She influences collective decision-making, assumes leadership as 'neader,' and becomes the focal point of communal organization. In this sense, she appears to exceed Spivak's pessimistic formulation by occupying a provisional space of audibility within her immediate social context. However, such a reading risks overstating the emancipatory potential of her voice.

Spivak's caution against romanticizing subaltern resistance becomes particularly relevant here. Her argument resonates with Michel Foucault's insight that discourse is always imbricated within power relations: "discourses are not once and for all subservient to power... but are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations" ('The History of Sexuality', Vol. 1 101). Manti's speech, therefore, cannot be read as fully oppositional; rather, it operates within — and is constrained by — the very structures it seeks to challenge.

This limitation becomes more evident when read alongside Judith Butler's formulation that the subject is constituted through power, not prior to it. Butler argues that "the subject is not only formed by power but also subordinated by it" ('The Psychic Life of Power' 2). Manti's capacity to speak and lead is thus inseparable from the conditions that simultaneously delimit her agency. Her voice emerges within power, but cannot transcend it.

This paradox reaches its most unsettling articulation in the story's conclusion. Manti's return — visibly violated yet publicly triumphant — suggests that her "voice" achieves recognition only through bodily sacrifice. Her declaration, "We have won... Everyone will have their names on the voter's list," marks a moment of political inclusion, yet it is secured at the cost of her corporeal integrity (Halder 7). Here, speech exceeds the verbal and becomes inscribed upon the body itself.

In this context, Manti's body emerges as the site where subaltern voice is simultaneously produced and contained. This dynamic may be further illuminated through Veena Das's observation that violence is often "folded into the recesses of the ordinary" and becomes a condition through which marginalized subjects negotiate existence ('Life and Words' 7). Manti's "victory" is thus inseparable from the violence that makes it possible, revealing how subaltern agency is frequently mediated through embodied suffering.

Ultimately, "*Neader*" does not resolve Spivak's question but rearticulates it within a contemporary context of ecological displacement and socio-political precarity. Manti's character demonstrates that subaltern speech is neither absent nor fully autonomous; rather, it is contingent, negotiated, and often inscribed through violence, exposing the profound cost at which such agency becomes legible.

Gendered Labor and Economic Agency:

Manti's role in sustaining the household foregrounds the gendered division of labour within marginal economies. She not only participates in economic activities — selling fish, managing resources, and engaging in petty trade — but also conceptualizes strategies for survival. Her practical suggestions — "Then catch fishes, prawns in the river... make hand fans, brooms and mats... I shall dig into this bheri and collect snails" — demonstrate an intimate understanding of the local ecology as well as the informal economy that sustains displaced lives (Halder 2). In this sense, Manti is not merely a labouring subject but a planner and organizer of subsistence.

Silvia Federici's analysis of reproductive labour offers a productive framework for understanding this dynamic. Federici argues that women's labour, particularly in precarious contexts, remains indispensable yet systematically devalued: "Housework is not only unpaid labor; it is naturalized as a woman's destiny" ('Caliban and the Witch' 75). Manti's work exemplifies this condition. Even as she extends her labour beyond the domestic sphere into productive economic activity, it remains unrecognized as skilled or transformative labour.

Furthermore, Manti's labour operates within what may be termed a subsistence economy, where the boundaries between productive and reproductive labour collapse. Her activities — gathering, crafting, selling, and caregiving — are not discrete but continuous, reflecting the inseparability of survival and labour in marginalized contexts. This aligns with Federici's broader claim that capitalist and pre-capitalist economies alike depend on the invisibilization of women's labour for their functioning.

At the same time, Manti's economic agency complicates reductive notions of victimhood. She actively negotiates available resources, identifies alternative means of livelihood, and adapts to shifting material conditions. Her refusal to depend solely on male income destabilizes patriarchal assumptions of economic dependency. Yet, this apparent agency remains circumscribed. As her labour is embedded within informal and precarious structures, it does not translate into long-term security or structural empowerment.

This limitation can be further understood through Bina Agarwal's observation that women's access to labour does not necessarily ensure control over resources or decision-making power ('A Field of One's Own' 1994, p. 3). Manti's labour sustains the household, but it does not alter the broader structures of inequality that govern her existence. Instead, it intensifies her burden, positioning her simultaneously as caregiver, provider, and risk-bearer.

Thus, Manti's economic role embodies a critical paradox: while her labour is indispensable for survival, it remains undervalued and precarious. The narrative reveals that gendered labour in such contexts does not lead to empowerment in any straightforward sense; rather, it reinforces the very structures of marginalization it seeks to navigate.

Leadership and the Politics of Representation:

Manti's election as 'neader' marks a crucial moment in the narrative, signalling a collective recognition of her competence and a disruption of entrenched patriarchal leadership norms. Her elevation to this role suggests that, within conditions of crisis, authority can be reconfigured beyond conventional gender hierarchies. However, this apparent empowerment remains deeply fraught and internally contradictory.

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital is particularly instructive in this regard. Bourdieu argues that recognition, prestige, and honour function as forms of power that are often misrecognized as natural or legitimate ('Distinction' 291). Manti's leadership confers upon her a degree of symbolic capital within the community — she is acknowledged, trusted, and followed. Yet, this recognition does not translate into material resources or institutional authority. Her power remains informal, contingent, and structurally unprotected, revealing the limits of symbolic legitimacy in the absence of access to state or economic power.

Furthermore, Manti's leadership is profoundly gendered in its expectations. She is not merely a decision-maker but is also positioned as a moral and affective anchor for the community, expected to ensure

collective survival and cohesion. This gendered burden becomes evident when the eviction crisis unfolds. The narrative underscores her internalization of responsibility: “This was a defeat for them... she couldn’t do anything at all? This was shameful for her” (Halder 6). Failure, in this context, is not distributed collectively but is absorbed personally, reflecting how leadership, when embodied by women, is often tied to notions of self-sacrifice and moral accountability.

This dynamic resonates with Bourdieu’s observation that symbolic power operates through internalization, where social hierarchies are reproduced as dispositions or forms of habitus (‘Masculine Domination’ 35). Manti’s sense of shame does not arise solely from external judgment but from an internalized expectation that she must succeed for the community. Her leadership thus becomes a site where empowerment and burden converge.

At the same time, her position may also be read through Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s notion of representation (‘Vertretung’ versus ‘Darstellung’), wherein the subaltern is often compelled to “represent” a collective without possessing the structural authority to effect change. Manti speaks for the community, organizes it, and embodies its aspirations; yet, she lacks the institutional means to secure its rights. Her leadership, therefore, remains symbolic rather than transformative.

Thus, Manti’s role as ‘nearer’ reveals a critical paradox: while it disrupts patriarchal exclusions and enables a form of subaltern visibility, it simultaneously reinforces the structural limits placed upon that visibility. Leadership, in this context, does not signify empowerment in any straightforward sense; rather, it becomes a site where gendered expectations, symbolic recognition, and structural powerlessness intersect.

The Body as a Site of Violence and Resistance:

The most disturbing and analytically charged moment in the narrative occurs with Manti’s return after her disappearance. Her torn clothes, bloodstains, and dishevelled body strongly imply sexual violence; yet, she proclaims triumph: “We have won... Everyone will have their names on the voter’s list” (Halder 7). This moment crystallizes the central paradox of the text — political recognition achieved through bodily violation.

Feminist theory has long conceptualized the body as a site where power is both inscribed and contested. Judith Butler argues that the body is “a site of cultural inscription,” constituted through regulatory norms that discipline and produce subjectivity (‘Bodies That Matter’ 2). Manti’s body, in this sense, becomes the surface upon which power writes itself. The marks of violence on her body are not merely personal but political, signifying the coercive mechanisms through which marginalized subjects are incorporated into structures of governance.

This dynamic resonates with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s insight that the subaltern woman’s body often becomes the terrain upon which ideological and political struggles are enacted. The subaltern does not simply “speak” through language; rather, her body is made to bear the burden of representation. In Manti’s case, her violated body functions as the medium through which the community secures recognition — ration

cards, voter inclusion, and the right to remain.

This convergence of violence and recognition may be further illuminated through Michel Foucault's notion of biopower, wherein modern power operates through the regulation of bodies and populations ('The History of Sexuality', Vol. 1 139). Manti's body becomes the point at which sovereign neglect and administrative inclusion intersect: it is through the disciplining and violation of her body that the state's apparatus finally acknowledges the community's existence.

At the same time, Manti's declaration of victory complicates any reading that reduces her solely to victimhood. Her act, however fraught, constitutes a form of embodied resistance—she returns, speaks, and claims a form of political gain. Yet, this resistance is inseparable from coercion. As Veena Das observes, violence is often "folded into the recesses of the ordinary," becoming a condition through which marginalized subjects negotiate survival ('Life and Words' 7). Manti's "victory," therefore, cannot be disentangled from the violence that makes it possible.

In this context, her body assumes a profoundly ambivalent status: it is at once violated and instrumentalized, oppressed and mobilized. It becomes a transactional site where rights are secured at the cost of dignity, where agency is exercised through suffering. The narrative thus resists any simplistic binary between victimhood and empowerment.

Ultimately, Manti's body exposes the brutal logic of power that governs subaltern existence. Her "victory" ensures survival and recognition, yet it simultaneously reveals the structural violence that underwrites such inclusion. The body, in "*Neader*," is therefore not merely a passive site of suffering but a contested terrain where resistance is enacted, albeit at an immense and troubling cost.

Caste, Gender, and Intersectionality

Manti's identity as a woman from a marginalized caste location significantly complicates her position within the narrative. Her experience cannot be understood through gender alone; rather, it must be situated at the intersection of caste, class, and gendered vulnerability. Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality is particularly instructive here, as it foregrounds how multiple axes of identity "intersect" to produce specific and compounded forms of oppression ('Mapping the Margins' 1244). Manti's subjectivity emerges precisely within such an intersectional matrix.

In "*Neader*," caste operates as a crucial determinant of social hierarchy and embodied stigma. The narrator's description of Manti as "the wife of a Keora Bagdi — a low-born" (Halder 4) underscores how caste identity is both socially visible and ideologically internalized. This labeling is not incidental; it situates Manti within a historically entrenched system of exclusion that shapes access to resources, dignity, and recognition. Her marginalization, therefore, is not solely gendered but caste-inflected, reinforcing her position at the lower end of multiple hierarchies.

This intersectional positioning intensifies the precarity of her agency. While Manti demonstrates resilience, leadership, and economic initiative, these capacities do not translate into structural empowerment because they remain constrained by caste-based exclusion. In this regard, her experience resonates with Crenshaw's broader argument that forms of oppression are not additive but mutually constitutive—producing conditions that are qualitatively distinct rather than merely cumulative.

At the same time, Manti's character also exposes the limits of an abstract, universalized notion of "womanhood." Her struggles differ significantly from those of upper-caste or economically secure women, highlighting what intersectional theorists identify as the heterogeneity of gendered experience. This insight may be further deepened through the work of Sharmila Rege, who argues that caste and gender must be analyzed together in the Indian context, as "Brahmanical patriarchy" structures both social and symbolic relations ('Writing Caste/Writing Gender' 20). Manti's life exemplifies this entanglement: her gendered labour, bodily vulnerability, and social marginalization are inseparable from her caste location.

Moreover, her leadership as 'neader' temporarily unsettles these hierarchies by enabling a form of subaltern visibility and collective organization. However, this disruption remains fragile. The persistence of caste-based marginality becomes evident in her ultimate vulnerability — particularly in the violent means through which recognition is secured. Her body, already marked by caste and gender, becomes further inscribed by power, revealing the durability of these intersecting structures.

Thus, an intersectional reading of "*Neader*" reveals that Manti's agency is neither singular nor unbounded. It is shaped — and limited — by a dense network of social hierarchies that operate simultaneously. While she challenges these structures through her actions, her eventual fate underscores their enduring force. Intersectionality, in this context, does not merely describe overlapping oppressions; it exposes the structural conditions that render subaltern agency precarious, contingent, and profoundly unequal.

State Power and Gendered Exclusion:

The role of the state in "*Neader*" is marked by a dual logic of neglect and coercion, revealing the deeply uneven relationship between governance and marginalized populations. The panchayat's eviction notice foregrounds the precarious legal status of the displaced community, who, despite being citizens, remain excluded from basic rights, security, and institutional recognition. Their existence on the mound is rendered "illegal," exposing how legality itself functions as a mechanism of exclusion rather than protection.

Michel Foucault's concept of biopower provides a crucial framework for interpreting this dynamic. Foucault argues that modern states exercise power through the regulation and management of populations, employing administrative mechanisms such as surveillance, classification, and enumeration ('The History of Sexuality', Vol. 1 139). In the narrative, the census and voter list operate precisely as such instruments. They

do not merely record existence but actively determine who is entitled to recognition and who remains invisible within the state's apparatus.

The irony, however, lies in the conditional nature of this recognition. The community is ignored when it seeks protection from displacement, yet becomes hyper-visible when it enters the domain of electoral calculation. Manti's earlier critique — "No more pradhan... They're the same everywhere. No one will do anything for us" (Halder 3) — captures this disillusionment with a system that oscillates between indifference and intervention depending on its own interests. The state, in this sense, does not fail; rather, it selectively functions.

Manti's final act must be read within this framework of selective inclusion. Her declaration—"We have won... Everyone will have their names on the voter's list" (Halder 7)—signals the community's entry into the domain of state recognition. Yet, this inclusion is neither benevolent nor emancipatory. It is secured through coercive and exploitative conditions that implicate her body as the medium of negotiation. Recognition, therefore, is not granted as a right but extracted through sacrifice.

This dynamic resonates with Giorgio Agamben's notion of "bare life," wherein certain populations exist in a state of exception, included within the political order only through their exclusion ('Homo Sacer' 8). The inhabitants of the mound occupy such a liminal position: they are governed yet unprotected, visible yet unrecognized. Their eventual inclusion in the voter list does not resolve this condition but merely reconfigures it within the logic of state control.

Moreover, the gendered dimension of this process is critical. It is Manti's body that becomes the site through which this transition from exclusion to inclusion is effected. The burden of negotiating with state power is thus disproportionately borne by a subaltern woman, revealing how governance operates through gendered asymmetries. Her "success" exposes the unequal distribution of risk and sacrifice that underpins the state's mechanisms of control.

Ultimately, "Neader" presents the state not as a neutral guarantor of rights but as a contingent and strategic apparatus that produces inclusion and exclusion simultaneously. Manti's act secures recognition for the community, but at a profound personal cost, underscoring the violent conditions under which marginalized subjects are incorporated into the structures of power.

Intimacy, Desire, and Gendered Humanity:

Amidst the pervasive precarity of displacement, "*Neader*" offers fleeting yet significant moments of intimacy between Manti and Palan, which complicate reductive representations of subaltern life. Their playful exchanges, gestures of affection, and moments of physical closeness foreground an emotional world that resists being subsumed entirely within narratives of suffering. When Manti teases Palan about becoming a film heroine, or openly embraces him — "I am not hugging a stranger; I am loving my husband" — the text foregrounds a relational dynamic marked by warmth, humor, and mutual attachment (Halder 5). Such

moments humanize their relationship and challenge the tendency to portray marginalized lives as devoid of affective depth.

These instances of intimacy are analytically significant because they affirm Manti's subjectivity beyond her roles as labourer, provider, and community leader. She is not merely a figure of resilience or sacrifice but a desiring subject who experiences pleasure, companionship, and emotional fulfillment. In this sense, the narrative resists reducing her to what Lauren Berlant terms "bare survival," instead allowing space for what she calls "intimate publics," where affective bonds sustain individuals within conditions of structural precarity (*Cruel Optimism* 2). Manti's relationship with Palan thus becomes a site where life exceeds mere survival, opening up possibilities for tenderness even within marginality.

At the same time, these moments of intimacy subtly disrupt patriarchal norms governing female desire and propriety. Manti's uninhibited expression of affection — her willingness to embrace Palan publicly and assert the legitimacy of her desire — signals a form of gendered agency that challenges expectations of feminine modesty and restraint. Her assertion that their intimacy requires no external validation underscores a claim to bodily autonomy, however limited its scope may be within the broader structures of power.

Yet, the narrative ultimately situates this intimacy within a fragile and precarious framework. The tenderness that marks Manti and Palan's relationship is overshadowed by the violence that follows, revealing the vulnerability of such human experiences within oppressive socio-political conditions. The same body that expresses desire and affection becomes, in the end, the site of violation and negotiation. This stark juxtaposition underscores the instability of subaltern humanity under conditions of systemic marginalization.

This tension may be further illuminated through Judith Butler's reflection on precarity, wherein she argues that certain lives are differentially exposed to injury, violence, and loss (*Precarious Life* 25). Manti's capacity for intimacy does not shield her from violence; rather, it accentuates the stakes of that violence by revealing what is at risk — the very possibility of relational and emotional life.

Thus, the intimate moments in "*Neader*" do not merely provide narrative relief; they deepen the ethical and political force of the text. They remind the reader that subaltern existence is not reducible to labour or suffering but encompasses a full spectrum of human experience. At the same time, the fragility of these moments exposes how structures of power continually threaten to erode the very conditions that make such humanity possible.

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