



## **THEMES OF LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP IN MODERN ENGLISH STORIES**

**Dr. Mala Sharma <sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Bengali, Nagaon, Dhing College, Assam, India

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### **Abstract**

Creating a modern English narrative, love and friendship are two of the strongest and universal emotions of human beings, which still influence the plot structure of the works. This term paper discusses the way modern authors develop these themes in their texts using characterization, dramatic confrontation, setting, and storytelling. This paper through examining some of the contemporary short stories and novels in the English language brings out the changing aspect of the relationship, depth of the human feeling as well as the impact that the modern social transformation has on the human relationship. The results indicate that the current narratives reflect the love and friendship as not only the sources of happiness and connection but also as the domains of conflict, compromise, transformations as well as maturation. Such motifs are always present in the human telling of stories, as it is a kind of the modern life reality.

**Keywords:** Love, Friendship, Modern English Literature, Relationships, Emotional Themes, Contemporary Stories, Character Development, Narrative Techniques

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### **1. Introduction**

The themes of love and friendship have been in literature at all times. In classical literature or contemporary fiction, these themes help human authors to study human feelings, principles and relationships in their diversity. These themes have undergone transformation in the contemporary English stories because of the culture, globalization, individualism, as well as improvement of communication.

Contemporary author focuses more realistically, diversified and even disputing when love and friendship are treated. They concentrate over the psychological depth, emotional opposition, social compulsions and identity struggle. In contrast to the traditional stories, where the relations were often idealized, the love and friendship in modern literature is described as dynamic and even weak bonds as we expect them in the society, personal freedom, profession ambitions and digital communication.

The current research paper will examine the representation of the themes of love and friendship in some of the modern English stories. It talks about their significance, how the writers emerge with

such themes using characters and plot and how the contemporary changes in the society have redefined the storytelling methodology.

## 2. Literature survey

In their article, Resuscitation of Relationship in Ladies Coupé by Anita Nair, Agalya and Mahalakshmi (2001) discuss the restoration and recovery of different types of relationships such as familial, emotional and social relationships by the novel. They also stress that the dialogues in the train compartment between the women are a place where they could share experiences, support, and contemplate themselves and others, thus allowing characters to restore a sense of contact with themselves and other members of society. According to the authors, any significant relationship plays a crucial role in overcoming personal and emotional disputes, and the Nair novel demonstrates the appeal of strained or even un-maintained ties which can be revived by understanding and communication. Some of their themes include culture, family, love and friendship and they demonstrate that reinstating the relationships are the core elements in helping the characters to grow emotionally. Although the paper is insightful on feminine experiences and the need to support one another, it is descriptive contrary to an elaborate theoretical framework. This work was later expanded by other scholars who have investigated the feminist, postcolonial, and ethical viewpoints by highlighting complexity of women relationship and emotional work in Ladies Coupe. On the whole, the work by Agalya and Mahalakshmi is not only important in showing promising and healing characteristics in relationships within contemporary Indian English literature but also opens the spaces to the more detailed work on such variables as character development at an individual level and intersection factors such as caste, status, and age.

In his article, A Theme of Marriage and Extramarital Relationship in the Novel This Love That Feels Right by Ravinder Singh, Bhosle (2016) focuses on the peculiarities of the relationships in modern Indian English novels that depict romantic and marital relations. He takes into consideration the experiences of the protagonist in love, devotion in the marriage and extramarital attraction, the conflict between the requirements of the society and desires of the character. Bhosle states that the novel handles the relations in a realistic approach, demonstrating that the conflict of emotions, misunderstanding, and personal choices has an impact on stability and dynamics of love and marriage. His research underscores the exchanges between the Indian traditional values and the newfound individualism of the Indian society and how modern writers deal with the alterations in romantic relationship. The study helps us learn about contemporary emotional experience in literature though most of it is descriptive, and little theoretical explanation exists about the psychological or sociocultural determinants of it.

In On Love and Friendship in the Indian Context and Sigmund Freud, Dasgupta (2015) discusses the psychological aspects of a relationship in the Indian society through the Freudian approach. She explains how love, friendship and human relationships are folded by the unconscious wants, family pressures and cultures. Dasgupta underlines that the experiences of love and friendship in India are both universal and some particular to cultures, as they are affected by the tradition, social norms, and contemporary lifestyles. Her work is an interdisciplinary project that links psychology and literature where relationships are described in literature and the use of psychoanalytic theory helps to understand the relationships better. Although the work is theoretical, it gives a good idea to be used to explain emotional motifs, character motivation, and dynamics of personal relationships within the Indian English literature, and it is helpful to analyze love and friendship in the modern story, which is why the work is a good reference point.

In *Fire: A Queer Film Classic*, Ghosh (2010) focuses on the representation of same-sex relationship in Indian movies and sees queer relationships as contrary to the social conventions and family principles. Though film is the subject matter of the work, it gives much insight into how the non-heteronormative love is represented in the Indian cultural settings and the viewers can learn how love and emotional attachments are created in the contemporary Indian narratives. The work highlights the emotional, social and psychological aspects of the queer relations and as such it can fit in the analysis of literary works on aberrant love in the Indian English literature.

In the article *Family Relations in R. -K. Narayan novels* by Rai (2016), the author examines the family relations presented in the works by Narayan. Rai emphasizes the conflicts, romance and emotional duties in the family and how it allows relationships to influence the conduct and the social behaviour. The paper highlights the critical role of cultural and traditional expectations in informing family relationships and as such shapes it is an effective source when explaining relationship themes in Indian English fiction.

In his article about *This Love that Feels Right* by Ravinder Singh, Bosle (2016) restates the issues of relationships used among marital and extramarital, demonstrating the way the modern Indian authors portray the concept of love, see it as linked with personal desire, social forces, and emotional contradictions. This work will be an extension of previously conducted studies regarding the contemporary romantic relationships by focusing on the negotiation of traditional values and freedom as an individual in contemporary stories.

In the book *Love Rite: Same Sex Marriage in India and the West*, Vanita (2005) examines historical, cultural, and literary representations of same sex relationships, by pointing out that love and marriage are both social and cultural constructs. The book provides a superb structure to comprehend the queer relations in India and connects the literature, law, and cultural research and offers a background to explore the unusual love and friendship topics in modern Indian fiction.

In his writing in the choice of literary culture in Orissa, Satpathy (2009) sees the literary traditions of the region, underlining their role of revelling the social and cultural relationships within literature. The article provides valuable insights on the importance of social setting in the formation of character relationships, the expression of emotions, and relationships, which can be extended to the study of the Indian English literature in general.

In his paper, the Tawade (2009) explores the issue of feminine sensitivity and psychological conflict focusing on the work of Anita Desai, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* The study puts a special emphasis on the influence of personal relations and social pressure on women in their emotional conditions and decision-making. This piece of work brings enlightenment on the Indian English literature concerning emotional issues, notably in love, family, and friendship.

As a writer on the subject of the same-sex love in India, Satpathy (2002) discusses literary features of same-sex relationships in Indian society that accentuate cultural, social and emotional aspects of this phenomenon. This set is a scholarly basis of the analysis of non-heteronormative types of love and friendship in Indian stories.

Vanita (2005) once more, in *Love Rites: Same Sex Marriage in India and the West*, highlights on the persistence and change in social attitudes between love, marriage and friendship in relation to both cultures and time. Through her work, her contributions to contemporary literary images of love are placed in somewhat bigger historical and cultural contexts, which have given a critical platform on which emotional and relationship themes in contemporary Indian English literature could be analysed.

### 3. Love

Love is a fundamental and eternal issue in the literature that may be seen as an intense emotional bond between two people. Love in contemporary English tales can hardly be described as being idyllic or romantic. Rather, writers delve into its multi facet, and how love is exultant and hard at the same time. Contemporary portrayals are usually characterized by conflicts like emotional misconception, individual insecurities, failed relationships and the stresses of the modernity. The definition of love is not just a feeling but it is a process of growth, communication and compromising which is true about the modern society. It also manifests in numerous ways in which the love in romantic relation, the love in family relation, and the love of self and even the love that is unreciprocated all add to the emotional dimension of the read.

### 4. Friendship

Friendship is regarded as one of the most significant and persistent themes of the contemporary English literature. It is a non-obligatory, reciprocal, supportive relationship between people, which is based on emotional trust, experience, and personal knowledge. Friendship is one of the unique characteristics among other relations, unlike those founded on romance or family relations, in which people develop friendship with their own choices and maintain friendship with respect and loyalty. The relationships under friendship are complex, developing and very human as the English contemporary stories develop friendship as an aspect of personal development and emotional wellness of the character under discussion.

#### 4.1. Friendship as Emotional Support

Friendship is also a common theme in literature nowadays as a psychological and emotional stabilizer. Friends provide comfort to the characters when they are stressed, confused, or when they are experiencing a loss. Tales often demonstrate the way friendships deliver:

- An open and trustworthy atmosphere.
- A feature of emotional outlet.
- Reassurance in problematic situations.

Contemporary authors dwell upon the fact that companionship can be understood by friends when family members or beloved ones are not able to as the value of friendship is irreplaceable in the contemporary life.

#### 4.2. Friendship and Identity Formation

Friendship is a significant concept as it is depicted as a main factor in defining individual identity in the modern English stories. Friends manipulate the beliefs, interests, the self and life choices of one another. Characters through meaningful friendships, possess:

- Discover new perspectives
- Acquire knowledge regarding social and cultural dissimilarities.
- Become confident and self-aware.

In most of the modern stories, especially the coming-of-age ones, friendship often turns into a mirror with the help of which the characters understand who they are and whom they desire to be.

#### 4.3. Diversity and Inclusivity in Modern Friendships

Contrary to the traditional literature where the friendship mostly involved similar characters, the stories written in modern English portray cross-friendships based on:

- Gender
- Race
- Class
- Culture
- Sexual orientation
- Age

Such varied relations are characteristic of the new and modern world, which is multicultural and interconnected. These friendships widen the horizons of characters and betray the social norms, which makes the modern literature occupied of emotions and cultural nuances.

## **5. Modern English Literature**

Modern English Literature is a term used to describe the literature produced since the end of the 20 th century. It also contains novels, short stories, poems, and plays, which mirror the life, feelings, ideas, and issues of modern world inhabitants. As compared to the other older literature in which it was mostly based on traditional values or historical events or idealised characters, the modern literature attempts to demonstrate life in its real, complex and sometimes difficult sides.

### **5.1. Focus on Real Life and Real Problems**

Modern English literature talks about real situations that people face today, such as:

- Relationship issues
- Mental health
- Career pressure
- Family problems
- Social media influence
- Identity and self-discovery

Writers try to show characters who feel real to the reader.

### **5.2. Modern Themes**

The themes in modern literature are very different from older works. Some important themes include:

- Love and friendship
- Loneliness and confusion
- Freedom and individuality
- Cultural differences
- Social justice and equality
- Technology and its effects on life

These themes help readers relate the stories to their own experiences.

### **5.3. Simple and Natural Language**

Unlike older literature that often used heavy or complex language, modern writers usually use:

- Simple words
- Natural conversations
- Everyday expressions

This makes the stories easy to understand and more realistic.

#### **5.4. Diverse Characters and Settings**

Modern English literature includes characters from different:

- Cultures
- Countries
- Ages
- Backgrounds

The action of the stories can be in large cities, small ones, or even in the internet. This variety demonstrates the extent to which the world is global and interconnected.

#### **5.5. Psychological and Emotional Depth**

Modern stories explore the inner thoughts and feelings of characters in detail. Writers focus on:

- Emotions
- Fears
- Memories
- Conflicts
- Personal growth

This helps readers understand the characters' motivations and struggles.

### **6. Relationships**

The modern English literature is all about relationships. They demonstrate the relationship amongst people, communication as well as how they influence one another in their day to day lives. Relationships are not depicted as being perfect or ideal in the new stories. Instead, they are represented in the realistic manner, being rich with emotions, challenges, misunderstandings, and personal developments. Authors employ the use of relationships to understand the nature of humanity as well as to demonstrate how individuals evolve in the course of their interaction with other persons.

#### **6.1. Different Types of Relationships**

Modern English stories include many types of relationships, such as:

##### **1) Romantic Relationships**

These involve love, attraction, trust, and emotional bonding between partners. Modern writers show:

- Joy and happiness
- Conflicts and misunderstandings
- Breakups and healing
- Long-distance relationships
- Love affected by career, technology, or personal goals

Romantic relationships are shown as real and sometimes complicated, just like in real life.

##### **2) Friendships**

Friendships are highlighted as important emotional bonds. Friends offer:

- Support
- Advice
- Comfort
- Shared experiences

Modern stories show how friendships can be strong, fragile, or change over time.

### **3) Family Relationships**

Family relationships include parents, children, siblings, and extended family. Writers explore:

- Generational gaps
- Family traditions
- Emotional conflicts
- Care and responsibility
- Love mixed with misunderstanding

These stories show how family shapes a person's identity.

### **4) Social and Professional Relationships**

Modern literature often includes relationships between:

- Teachers and students
- Bosses and employees
- Colleagues
- Neighbours or community members

These relationships show how people interact in social or work environments.

## **7. Emotional Themes**

Emotional themes refer to the feelings and what is within the heart which the writers use to build their stories. Emotional themes are extremely important in the contemporary English literature as they assist a reader to have a deeper perspective on what is happening to characters, on a personal level. Such themes demonstrate the way people are in various circumstances and how feelings influence their decisions, behavior, and connections.

Common emotional themes include:

- Love and affection
- Loneliness or isolation
- Fear and anxiety
- Happiness and hope
- Guilt or regret
- Jealousy
- Confusion and self-doubt
- Loss and grief

Emotional themes are employed by modern writers to make their story reflections fit into reality and be relatable. They demonstrate how characters have hardships with feelings, how they conceal them, or how they come to realize them. The use of emotional themes assists the reader in tapping into the emotion world of characters and make sense of their internal world.

## **8. Contemporary Stories**

The current stories are stories that are being written nowadays. They talk about the contemporary life, contemporary issues and contemporary relations. The stories are applicable in the contemporary world and touch upon the problems that people encounter in real life.

Features of contemporary stories include:

- Real environments such as urban areas, small cities, and educational institutions, workplaces or virtual worlds.

- My contemporary themes will include technology, social media, identity crises and challenges, mental health, cultural diversity and individual liberty.
- Characters that are understandable and go through authentic situations of career strain, relationship issues, family misunderstanding or social pressure.
- Existing social problems, such as gender balance, climate change, Internet addiction, and globalization.

Modern narratives experience an attempt to present life in the way it exists in the modern world, and this is alternatively known as authenticity and human experience. They enable the readers to comprehend how the contemporary life and relationships are influenced by the society, culture and technology.

## 9. Character Development

Character development can be described as the way a character develops, transforms or alters during a narrative. Characters in contemporary English literature are not that one-dimensional or perfect as they are depicted as people that are real with their strengths, weaknesses, fears and dreams.

A character's development is shaped by:

- Life experiences
- Relationships with others
- Conflicts and challenges
- Internal thoughts and emotions
- Decisions they make

In modern stories, we usually see characters who get some valuable lessons, they are learning some new truth about themselves or they face some personal issues. The expansion of the story makes it interesting and significant.

For example:

- A character afraid of love learns to trust someone.
- A confused young person discovers their identity.
- A lonely character builds strong friendships.
- A selfish person becomes more understanding and caring.

Character development helps readers connect with the characters and understand their journey.

## 10. Narrative Techniques

Narrative techniques are the various ways that authors are able to narrate their stories in an efficient and entertaining manner. Contemporary English literature is frequently liberal with new and innovative methods used by writers to define characters, feelings, and events. It is the use of flashbacks, which is also one of the most popular methods as the story comes back to the past in order to make the readers comprehend the background or emotional predicaments of a character. The stream of consciousness technique is also popular among many authors who show the ever-present stream of thoughts and emotions of a character and provides their readers with a first-person access to the inner world of the protagonist. The second significant method is a multiple narrator in which the narration is delivered by various characters sharing different sides of the story giving multiple perspectives and better insight into the events. Contemporary narrations are usually designed in a non-linear fashion and the events of the story are not recounted in a chronological manner; this creates a sense of suspense and it gives an author the opportunity to



concentrate on the emotional or psychological aspects. Internal monologues also help writers to show to their readers the personal thoughts and fears of a character and make the emotional themes more overwhelming. The other device is symbolism where the reader can see something more profound in the story, the objects, the colors or the actions that are interpreted as the deeper meaning. Also, there is realistic dialogue which gives the conversations a natural and authentic sound which is in touch with modern life and minimalist writing- the words used to communicate the depth are very simple. All these tricks make the modern narratives richer, more significant, and being closer to the experience of the contemporary reader.

### **11. Final Conclusion**

To sum it up, the contemporary English fictions reflect love and friendship as influential and indispensable aspects of human existence. These issues are brought out in a realistic yet emotion-laden way and the way modern relationships are complicated. Love is also presented not only as a romantic emotion but also as a strong emotional bond and identity that makes decisions and can both bring happiness and torment. Friendship is revealed as a nurturing, transforming relationship that aids in the development of the characters, their self-realization, and acceptance of obstacles of the contemporary society. Writers emphasize the idea of love and friendship as the main theme of individual happiness and emotional stability through a variety of characters, real-life scenarios, and emotional nuances.

As well-advanced narrative devices (e.g., flashbacks, stream of consciousness, multiple voices, etc.) are also employed in the modern literature to show relationships in new interesting meaning. Those methods enable the reader to know various relationships in different perspectives and feel the inner world and the thoughts and feelings of the characters. The modern tales also extend the actualities of the present-day world to the social transformations, cultural dimensions, technological impact and mental difficulties. Consequently, the contemporary English literature has been able to give a vibrant and alive image of human interrelations.

All in all, the analysis of the theme of love and friendship in the twentieth century modern English stories demonstrates that emotional ties are still able to direct human actions and to provide sense to life even in the hyper-evolutionary world. The themes are eternal, universal and extremely relatable, which proves their significance in literature and in life in general.

### **12. Outcomes of the Study**

- The paper has shown the way in which contemporary English literature discusses the idea of love and friendship in a realistic and meaningful way.
- It underscores the way authors create characters and stories to portray relatable and real relationships.
- The study reveals that emotional aspects are important to captivate the readers and provide an enhanced involvement into the narration.
- It stresses the fact that the modern stories mirror the realities, challenges, and values of the contemporary existence in the environment of human relationships.
- The paper demonstrates that narrative techniques can be useful in strengthening the image of love and friendship and making the themes more striking and interesting.

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