



RESEARCH ARTICLE



THE COMPLEXITY OF HUMAN DESIRES IN SELECT WORKS OF KIRAN NAGARAKAR'S Gandhi Babu Shanampoodi

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ABSTRACT



"Pain may be the only reality but if mankind had any sense it would pursue the delusion called happiness. All the philosophers and poets who tell us that pain and suffering have a place and purpose in the cosmic order of things are welcome to them. They are frauds. We justify pain because we do not know what to make of it, nor do we have any choice but to bear it. Happiness alone can make us momentarily larger than ourselves"

-Kiran Nagarakar

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Nagarkar is a renowned Indian writer who has explored various philosophical themes in his works. His characters often grapple with a sense of dissatisfaction and yearning for something beyond material pleasures, highlighting the complexity of human desires. He portrays characters who undergo immense trials and tribulations, and through their experiences, he explores how pain can lead to personal growth, self-discovery, and spiritual enlightenment. Nagarkar's philosophy offers thought-provoking insights into human existence and the complexities of life. Here is a brief overview of Nagarkar's works highlighting the complexity of human desires.

Keywords: *Happiness, Pain, Philosophy, Personal Growth, Self-Discovery, Spiritual Enlightenment.*

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Nagarkar was born on July 7, 1942, in Mumbai, India, and passed away on September 5, 2019. He studied at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, and later pursued a career in advertising. However, his true passion lay in writing, and he eventually turned to full-time writing. Kiran Nagarkar often presents happiness as an elusive and transient state. He questions the conventional notions of happiness and explores the limitations and contradictions inherent in its pursuit.

His works often present characters faced with moral dilemmas and ethical choices. He delves into the complexities of decision-making and the consequences that arise from these choices. Nagarkar's exploration of ethics invites readers to contemplate the nature of right and wrong, and the moral responsibilities of individuals. Nagarkar's writings delve into existential questions about the purpose and meaning of life. His characters often grapple with existential angst and engage in introspection to find a sense of meaning amidst the chaos and uncertainties of existence.

Nagarkar's works are often critical of societal structures and norms that impede happiness and personal freedom. He highlights the ways in which social constraints and injustices can undermine individual well-being. Through his narratives, Nagarkar encourages readers to question societal norms and strive for a more just and fulfilling existence. Overall, Nagarkar's works provide profound philosophical reflections on happiness, pain, and the human condition. His writings challenge conventional wisdom and invite readers to engage in introspection and critical thinking about life's fundamental questions. Kiran Nagarkar was a

prominent Indian writer and playwright. He holds an important place in contemporary Indian literature for his contributions to both fiction and drama. His works are known for their innovative storytelling techniques, blending elements of history, mythology, and social commentary.

Nagarkar gained widespread recognition with his novel *Cuckold*, published in 1997. The book explores the historical figure of Maharaj Kumar, the husband of the legendary Meera Bai, and delves into themes of love, sexuality, and power. *Cuckold* received critical acclaim and won several prestigious awards, establishing Nagarkar as a significant voice in Indian literature. Nagarkar also authored several other notable works, including *Ravan and Eddie* (1994) and its sequels, *God's Little Soldier* (2006), and *The Extras* (2012). These novels reflect Nagarkar's unique narrative style and his exploration of various social and political issues in Indian society. Apart from his novels, Nagarkar also made significant contributions to Indian theater. His play *Bedtime Story* (1978) garnered attention for its unconventional structure and bold portrayal of human relationships. He continued to write plays throughout his career and was known for his thought-provoking and socially relevant works. The novel delves into the complex dynamics of relationships and the consequences of political intrigue within a patriarchal society. Maharaj Kumar finds himself trapped in a loveless marriage to Mirabai, a woman who is deeply devoted to Lord Krishna and is unable to reciprocate his affections. This leads him to seek solace in other women, particularly in the company of Jiji Bai, a courtesan known for her beauty and wit. Through these



relationships, Nagarkar highlights the exploration of sexual desire and the limitations imposed by societal expectations.

Nagarkar skillfully weaves together historical events, myths, and legends to paint a vivid picture of the Mughal court and the political landscape of the time. He presents a nuanced portrayal of the conflicts between the Rajputs and the Mughals, depicting the tensions and dilemmas faced by Maharaj Kumar as he grapples with his duty towards his kingdom and his personal desires. The novel also delves into themes of masculinity and power dynamics. Maharaj Kumar's inability to produce an heir fuels his insecurity and emasculates him in the eyes of the court and society. Nagarkar explores the notion of masculinity as a social construct and challenges traditional ideas of what it means to be a man. Furthermore, Nagarkar's prose is rich and evocative, transporting readers to the opulent world of the Mughal court and immersing them in the psychological depths of the characters. His storytelling is layered and intricate, blending historical facts with fictional elements, creating a narrative that is both engaging and intellectually stimulating.

However, *Cuckold* is not without its flaws. Some readers may find the novel's length and intricate narrative structure challenging to navigate. The abundance of historical and cultural references might overwhelm those who are unfamiliar with the era or the Indian context. "Let nobody fool you, most couples are conjoined on earth. The mismatches, now they are a different story. They are made in heaven"(Cuckold: 56). In summary,

Cuckold by Kiran Nagarkar is a compelling exploration of power, desire, and identity set in the Mughal era. It offers a nuanced portrayal of complex characters and delves into the tensions between personal desires and societal expectations. While it may pose challenges for some readers, the novel's thought-provoking themes and evocative prose make it a worthwhile read for those interested in historical fiction and the intricacies of human relationships.

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"Where do songs go when you cease to hear them? Where does the turbulence of the air disappear after thousands of birds flap their wings homeward at eventide? Where are the cries of the Rajput women who spatter their red palm prints on the wall and leap into the flames of johar? Where is my childhood, my catapult, my broken slate, my first parrot, my youth and first sin and all those that followed, where is my old age and the first time I saw the woman from Merta? Ask Gambhiree. She knows it all"(Cuckold:127).



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Ravan and Eddie is a novel (1995) set in the bustling city of Mumbai (formerly known as Bombay). The book tells the story of two young boys, Ravan and Eddie, who grow up in the same chawl (a housing complex) in the 1950s. The novel explores the themes of friendship, identity, and the challenges faced by individuals in a rapidly changing society. Ravan and Eddie come from different religious and cultural backgrounds, with Ravan being a Hindu and Eddie a Catholic. Their friendship develops despite their differences, and they navigate their complex

surroundings together. One of the central conflicts in the story is the rivalry between Ravan and Eddie's families. The families live in adjacent flats and have a longstanding feud, which adds an extra layer of complexity to the boys' friendship. As they grow older, their lives take different paths, and they face various obstacles and struggles.

The narrative is infused with humor, satire, and social commentary, highlighting the disparities and contradictions in Indian society at the time. Nagarkar skilfully depicts the challenges faced by the working-class families, the influence of religion and superstition, and the impact of social and economic inequality on individuals' lives. Through the characters of Ravan and Eddie, the author explores the aspirations and dreams of the youth in a changing India. Both boys have their own ambitions and desires, and they strive to break free from the limitations imposed by their circumstances. Their journeys are shaped by their relationships, their families, and the larger social fabric they are a part of. "What did she think about behind that tranquil face of hers? Whatever the provocation, she never clenched her jaws, swore or got angry. Did she watch everything from a distance, as if even her own life was happening to someone else? Nobody could see it but instead of a face, she wore a mask. No, Ravan wanted to rephrase that. What he and everybody else saw was the mask, not what went on inside" (*Ravan and Eddie: 98*). Overall, *Ravan and Eddie* offers a critical and engaging portrayal of the lives of two boys growing up in a diverse and complex city. It delves into the challenges of identity, friendship, and societal pressures, while also



providing a nuanced perspective on the socio-cultural landscape of Mumbai in the 1950s.

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