

**Unleashing the Spirit: Exploration of Youth Culture in Durjoy
Datta's Select Novels**

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I hereby declare that the data presented in this Dissertation report entitled, **“Unleashing the Spirit: Exploration of Youth Culture in Durjoy Datta’s Select Novels”** is based on the results of investigations carried out by me in the Discipline of English at the Sheno Goembab School of Languages and Literature, Goa University under the Supervision of Ms. Priyanka Verekar and the same has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of a degree or diploma by me. Further, I understand that Goa University or its authorities will not be responsible for the correctness of observations given in the dissertation.

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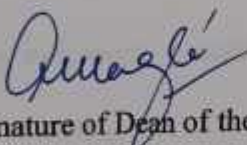
COMPLETION CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation report **“Unleashing the Spirit: Exploration of Youth Culture in Durjoy Datta’s Select Novels”** is a bonafide work carried out by Ms. Jurella Princy Da Silva under my supervision in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in the Discipline of English at the Shenoj Goembab School of Languages and Literature, Goa University.


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CONTENTS

Title.....	i
Declaration.....	ii
Completion Certificate.....	iii
Acknowledgement.....	iv
Contents.....	v
Abstract.....	vii
1.Chapter one	1
Introduction	1
1.1. Importance:.....	1
1.2. Scope:.....	1
1.3. Limitations:	1
1.4. Research Problem / Question:	1
1.5. Relevance and Necessity of the proposed Research:	1
1.6. Relevance to the society:	2
1.7. Objectives of the Research Proposed:	2
1.8. Literature Review:.....	2
1.9. Formulation of Hypothesis	5
1.10. Research Methodology	6
1.11. Research Design.....	6
Chapterization.....	6
1.12. Author's background	7
2.Chapter two	9
Insights into the youth culture	9
2.1. Youth culture	9
2.2. Evolution of youth culture:.....	16
2.3. Influences of youth culture on society	17
2.4. Complexities faced by modern youth in society:	21
3.Chapter three.....	25
Exploring the world of young minds in <i>You Were My Crush: Till You Said You Love Me!</i>	25
3.1. Benoy	25

Benoy's familial relationships	25
3.2 Eshaan	36
3.3. Diya	38
Diya's familial relationship and aspirations	40
3.4. Shaina	45
Shaina's relationship with Manoj and Benoy	45
4. Chapter four	59
A rollercoaster journey in <i>The Boy Who Loved</i>	59
4.1. Raghu	59
Raghu's familial relationship	63
4.2. Anirban	68
Anirban's complex relationships	68
4.3. Brahmi	77
Brahmi's love relationship with Raghu	77
4.4. Changing friendships	96
5. Chapter five: Conclusion	101
Reflections on youthful journeys	101
6. Bibliography	107
Works Cited:	107

ABSTRACT

The dissertation titled “Unleashing the Spirit: Exploration of Youth Culture in Durjoy Datta’s Select Novels” talks about the intricate portrayal of challenges, aspirations, and experiences of young individuals in the novels *You Were My Crush: Till You Said You Love Me!* And *The Boy Who Loved*. The study provides insights into the complexities of human emotions and complexities faced by young individuals like depression, peer pressure, and body image anxieties. We see how the young characters deal with their parents and seek for freedom. The novels also highlight friendships and toxic relationships of the young characters. Exploring the characters relationships, career choices, emotions, difference in opinions with parents and personal growth, this study examines how these resonate with the youth of today. The study has utilized qualitative, textual analysis research methodology for the selected texts with the concept of youth culture.

Key words: Challenges, Youth culture, Relationships

Chapter one

Introduction

1.1. Importance: Durjoy Datta's novels capture the essence of youth culture by portraying the challenges, aspirations, and dilemmas faced by young individuals. They delve into topics like relationships, career choices, and self-discovery, reflecting the experiences and mindset of today's youth. This makes his novels significant in understanding and analyzing the dynamics of youth culture in contemporary society and provide valuable insights into the complexities of human emotions making them relevant for research on modern storytelling and its impact on readers.

1.2. Scope: The scope of the research paper involves analyzing how his works portray the challenges, dreams, and experiences of young individuals. It explores themes like relationships, career choices, and personal growth, and examine how these resonate with the youth of today. The paper also delves into the cultural and societal implications of Datta's depiction of youth culture in his novels.

1.3. Limitations: For the purpose of the study one of Durjoy Datta's co-authored novels and one novel written only by Durjoy Datta is studied.

1.4. Research Problem / Question: How do Durjoy Datta's novels capture the complexities of youth culture, their challenges and aspirations through the young characters?

1.5. Relevance and Necessity of the proposed Research:

The study of the representation of youth culture in Durjoy Datta's novels is necessary in the field of languages and literature as it offers valuable insights into

the contemporary experiences, challenges, and aspirations of young individuals. By analyzing Datta's portrayal of youth culture, researchers gain a deeper understanding of the themes, writing style, and cultural relevance of his works. It also contributes to the broader field of languages and literature by exploring the evolving dynamics of youth culture and its portrayal in contemporary fiction.

1.6. Relevance to the society:

The relevance of youth culture lies in its ability to reflect the values, trends, and perspectives of the younger generation. It provides insights into the unique experiences and challenges faced by young individuals in various aspects of life, such as relationships, education, career aspirations, and social activism.

1.7. Objectives of the Research Proposed:

- To understand the concept of "Youth Culture".
- To examine the cultural and social context in which Datta's novels are set and exploring how they reflect the experiences of characters in the novels.
- To examine how Datta's novels have addressed important issues and challenges faced by young people.
- To study the personal growth of the young characters in the novel.
- To explore the relationships, dreams and aspirations of the characters in the novels.

1.8. Literature Review:

As I explored the interesting field of literature survey of different articles on Durjoy Datta's works one article that I found was 'Study on Durjoy Datta's Novel *The Boy with a Broken heart*. In this article the researcher analysed the novel *The*

Boy with a Broken heart. The researcher begins by saying that when we talk about Indian readership of romances we are not having in mind a homogenous group. India is far too varied, in culture, language, religion and customs, to make something like this possible. An axiom that understudies of Indian history are taught right from the start is that India displays a remarkable "unity in diversity."

The article goes on to introduce certain characters especially the female characters. The researcher has given his analysis on how he liked the characters. But however he did not like the ending of the novel because the climax ended in a cliff-hanger which the researcher thought was not required. The researcher talks about how the characters in the novels experience the ill effects of the culpability and how they are limited by responsibility. He says that they simply lead a coexistence because they are bound together by responsibility. He also talks about how Durjoy Datta has utilized an exceptionally basic and normal English style with general words to reach out to each and all.

In this article we can see how the researcher has given the portrayal of Durjoy Datta's characters and how they eventually don't have a happy life. I feel the researcher could have analysed the characters in the novel in more detail manner.

The next article was on Themes portrayed in Durjoy Datta's novel by Suyash T Kumbhar. In this article in the introduction the researcher has spoken about the author's (Durjoy Datta) background, the television shows that he has co-written and the awards that he has received.

The article discusses the themes which are: Modernism, Influence of Western Culture, Representation of young generation, Recent trend in youth. He

concluded by saying that Durjoy Datta has sensibly written about love, extra relationship, marriage, career, hopes, willing and struggle in the life of Indian youth. This research revealed that western culture has had a great impact on Indian youth.

The next article was on 'Exploring The Influence Of Western Culture On Youth In Durjoy Datta's Novel, "Of Course I Love You, Till I Find Someone Better"' by the researcher Suyash T. Kumbhar, Dr. Sunanda S. Shelake.

In this article the researchers talks about how in today's globalized world, cultural exchanges and influences have become increasingly prevalent, blurring the boundaries between different societies and shaping the attitudes and behaviors of individuals, particularly the youth. He states that in the novel "Of Course, I Love You, Till I Find Someone Better" serves as a compelling case study to explore the Western impact on young people, offering valuable insights into the complexities of contemporary youth culture. The primary objective of this research paper was to examine the multifaceted ways in which Westernization shapes the lives, identities, relationships, and aspirations of the novel's characters. By analyzing key themes such as Western cultural practices, lifestyle choices, and societal expectations, the aim is to unravel the intricate sociocultural dynamics that emerge when Western ideals intersect with traditional Indian values.

The article further discusses Westernization and cultural influences in the novel. Defining the term Westernization which has further depicted concepts such as: a) Fashion and lifestyle b) The use of English language, slang, and colloquial expressions, often borrowed from Western cultures, c) Individualism and Personal Freedom

Later it discusses cultural influence like how the western culture influences the characters beliefs, attitudes and relationships in the novel. It has also shown how the characters grapple to find their identities. They experience conflicts between their Indian heritage and the allure of Western culture, leading to a sense of cultural dissonance and internal conflicts.

Love, Relationships and gender dynamics and socio cultural implications are also discussed. The research paper concludes by emphasizing the significance of Durjoy Datta's novel in shedding light on the Western impact on Indian youth. Through an analysis of the characters, themes, and narrative elements, this paper highlights the complexities and challenges faced by the characters as they navigate the intersections of Indian and Western cultures.

From the literature review done the research gap that I have noticed is how Durjoy Datta's novels can be analyzed with the concept of Youth Culture through the selected novels. This research aims to address the gap by conducting a comprehensive analysis and providing insights into the selected novels of Durjoy Datta.

The texts selected are:

You Were My Crush: Till You Said You Love Me! - Durjoy Datta and Orvana Ghai

The Boy Who Loved – Durjoy Datta

1.9. Formulation of Hypothesis

To show how youth culture is portrayed through the young characters in the select novels of Durjoy Datta and study the real life complexities faced by youth in contemporary society.

1.10. Research Methodology

- For the research qualitative, textual analysis research methodology is used.
- Close Reading of the texts by applying the concept of 'Youth Culture' to the study in depth.
- Primary data is taken from the selected novels of Durjoy Datta.
- Secondary data is taken from library books and research articles.

1.11. Research Design

Chapterization

Chapter one: The first chapter 'An Introduction' includes the proposed research the aim, importance, scope, limitations, research question, objectives, literature review, hypothesis and research methodology. Along with the author's biographic account of Durjoy Datta.

Chapter two: This chapter named 'Insights into youth culture' explores the concept of Youth Culture, the complexities faced by youngsters in modern society, changing youth culture throughout the years and youth culture's effect on society and the complexities faced by youngsters like depression, body anxieties, love relationships and obsession with materialistic things.

Chapter three: This Chapter named 'Exploring the world of young minds' includes the analyses of Durjoy Datta's co-authored novel with Orvana Ghai that is *You Were My Crush: Till You Said You Love Me!* Bringing out the complexities and aspirations of the young characters.

Chapter four: This Chapter named 'A rollercoaster journey in *The Boy Who Loved*' includes the analyses of the second novel by Durjoy Datta which is *The Boy Who loved* delving into the emotions and experiences of the young characters.

Chapter five: This Chapter 'Conclusion' named 'Reflections on youthful journeys' includes summing up all the work. It takes an overview on the outcome of the research and the key findings.

1.12. Author's background

Durjoy Datta was born into a Bengali Hindu family on February 7, 1987 in Mehsana, Gujarat, and was brought up in New Delhi. After completing his education at Pitampura's Bal Bharati Public School, he enrolled himself in Delhi Technological University to study mechanical engineering. He completed his post-graduation studies at the Frankfurt School of Finance & Management in Germany and the Management Development Institute in Gurgaon, India. He left his position as a marketing analyst in 2011 to pursue writing full-time. He got married to Avantika Mohan, a travel blogger and an air hostess,

While still a college student, Durjoy Datta wrote his first book, *Of Course I Love You!*, co-authored by Manvi Ahuja which was published by Srishti Publishers in 2008. His second book, *Now That You're Rich!*, was released in August 2009. *She Broke Up, I Didn't!*, his third book, was published in the summer of 2010. *Ohh Yes, I Am Single!*, his fourth book, was co-written by Neeti Rustagi. He co-founded Grapevine India Publishers in 2011 following his graduation from MDI, Gurgaon. Grapevine India Publishers released his fifth book, *You Were My Crush!*, in September 2011. His sixth book, *If It's Not Forever!*, was published on February 1, 2012. *Till the Last Breath...* was released in the same year. Penguin India published *Someone Like You*, a book he co-wrote with Nikita Singh, on February 4, 2013. *Hold My Hand*, his tenth book, was published on August 5, 2013. On June 19, 2014, his tenth book, *When Only Love Remains*, was released. In 2015, his eleventh book,

World's Best Boyfriend, was released. In 2016, he released his twelfth book, *Our Impossible Love*, and his thirteenth book, *The Girl of My Dreams. The Boy who Loved* in 2017 followed by *The Boy with a Broken Heart* (2017), *The Perfect Us* (2018), *Pocketful of Stories* (2019), *Wish I Could Tell You* (2019), *A Touch of Eternity* (2021), *When I am With You* (2022), and *World's Best Girlfriend* (2023).

He has co-authored novels along with Maanvi Ahuja, Neeti Rustagi, Orvana Ghai, and Nikita Singh. Additionally, he has published blogs for Miss Malini and That's So Gloss, and has organized TEDx lectures and conferences in college. His has also written Television shows which include Ek Veer Ki Ardaas...Veera (co-writer Sumit Shahi), Sadda Haq- My Life, My Choice (co-writer Sumrit Shahi), Million Dollar Girl – From Banaras to Paris (co-writer Raghuvir Shekawat) and Never Kiss Your Bestfriend (Screenplay writer). His short stories include The English Teacher (2012) and Shades of Love (2012).

He was awarded Young Achiever by The Times of India in 2009. Young Achievers in the field of Media and Communications by Whistling Woods International. Youth Show in fiction category for Sadda Haq. Crossword Book Award, Popular Choice Award, fiction, for the novels *Our Impossible Love* and *The Boy Who Loved*.

Chapter two

Insights into the youth culture

2.1. Youth culture

Youth culture refers to the societal norms of children, adolescents, and young adults. Specifically, it comprises the processes and symbolic systems that are shared by the youth and are distinct from those of adults in the community.

Encyclopaedia defines youth culture as: "Youth culture refers to those processes and symbolic systems that young people share that are, to some degree, distinctive from those of their parents and the other adults in their community".

Youth are set apart from other age groups by their emphasis on popular culture, sports, dating, popular music, clothing and friendship. There are numerous, dynamic youth subcultures within youth culture that can be classified according to public appearance, race, ethnicity, economic status, or a variety of other factors.

There is debate over the existence, nature, and beginnings of youth culture. Some researchers argue that as young people's morals and values are not distinct to those of their parents, youth culture cannot be considered a separate cultural entity. Furthermore, they argue that it is challenging to identify a singular "youth culture" because peer influence differs substantially among context, gender, age, and social class.

Some researchers argue that certain aspects of youth culture are distinct from their parent's culture and make up young society. The terror management theory (TMT) was employed by Janssen et al. to argue that youth culture exists. They tested the following hypothesis: "If youth culture serves to help adolescents

deal with problems of vulnerability and finiteness, then reminders of mortality should lead to increased allegiance to cultural practices and beliefs of the youth." The findings indicated that youth culture is a culture and confirmed the concept and the findings of earlier research.

Merten and Schwartz used adolescent language to claim that youth culture is unique from the rest of the society. According to Schwartz, high school pupils used their vocabulary to create meanings that are different to adolescents.

Specifically the adolescent status terminology contains qualities and attributes that are absent in adult status judgments. Schwartz claims that this is a reflection of how adults and teenagers perceive social reality differently, as well as differences in social institutions. This distinction suggests that there are cultural distinctions between adults and youngsters, which lends evidence to the existence of a distinct youth culture.

Youth culture is something that has just recently become apparent in history. There are a number of widely accepted theories regarding the emergence of youth culture in the 20th century, including hypotheses about historical, economic and psychological influences on the presence of youth culture. According to one historical theory, the introduction of compulsory schooling marked the beginning of the rise of youth culture. Age segregation, according to James Coleman, is the primary cause of distinct youth culture. Before education became mandatory, a large number of kids and teenagers mostly engaged with adults. Modern children, on the other hand, spend a lot of time with other kids of their own age. Through these interactions adolescents develop shared experiences and meanings, which are the root of youth culture.

According to another theory, it says that some societies support the growth of youth culture while others do not. The existence of particularistic or universalistic rules serves as the basis for this distinction. Particularistic norms are guidelines for behavior that differ from person to person, universalistic norms, on the other hand, apply to every member of the society. Industrialized societies are more likely to have universalistic norms. Modernization over the past century has fostered universalistic norms since interaction in modern societies makes it necessary for everyone to learn the same set of norms.

Universalistic norms and modernization have fostered the development of young culture. It is not feasible for young people to receive their socialization largely from their immediate family due to the requirement for universalistic norms this would result in a large amount of variance in the norms that are conveyed. As a result, age grouping is a common strategy used by many countries to teach young children about social conventions and prepare them for adulthood. One outcome of this strategy is youth culture. Children create their own culture as a result of spending so much time together and learning the same things as other kids of their age.

Psychological theorist have seen how youth culture influences the development of identity. Youth culture may be a means of finding identity when one's path in life is unclear. According to Erik Erikson's theory identity versus role confusion is the central psychological conflict of adolescence. This phase of life aims to provide an answer to the question, "Who am I?"

In many societies adolescents are expected to behave like children and take on adult positions. According to some psychologists, adopting an identity that

balances these two opposing expectations is a necessary first step in building young culture. Talcott Parsons, for instance, proposed that adolescence is when young people transition from reliance on parents to autonomy. Dependency on the peer group takes the place of parents in this transitory stage. In 1970, Burlingame reiterated this theory. He wrote that, teenagers look to their peers to replace their parents, and as they grow older and take on adult responsibilities, their dependence on their peers decreases.

Fasick connects the simultaneous elongation of childhood and the demand for independence in adolescence with youth culture as a means of identity development. Fasick claims that teenagers face contradictory pull from society. While mandatory education makes children economically and socially reliant on their parents, young people must gain some degree of independence in order to engage in the market economy of contemporary society. As a coping mechanism for these contradictory aspects of adolescence, youngsters create independence through behaviour, particularly through leisure-oriented activities they engage in with peers.

Adults have been concerned for decades that moral degradation and changing ideals in younger generations are caused by youth subcultures. Youth culture is characterized by researchers as embodying values that are "in conflict with those of the adult world". Common concerns about youth culture include a perceived lack of interest in education, participation in risky behaviors including substance use and sexual activity, and engaging a lot in leisure activities. As a result of these perceptions many adults now consider that youth culture as an attack on the morals of contemporary society and that adolescents have different values than older generations. This have prompted the creation of parenting websites like The

Youth Culture Report and the Centre for Parent Youth Understanding, whose mission is to instill in young people the values of older generations.

Scholars cannot agree on anything regarding whether youth subcultures have different beliefs than adults do. Researchers have noticed a correlation between the rise in age segregation and issues related to adolescent adjustment such as premarital pregnancies, delinquency, and suicide. The majority of the data, however, points out that these teenage issues are not a result of different morals held by younger generations. However several surveys, show that the majority of adolescents share similar views to those of their parents.

One study found that the adolescent cohorts had become less peer-oriented and had more issues between 1976 and 1982, which contradicted the assumption that the cohorts had grown apart from their parents. Sebald's conclusion is supported by the results of a second survey, which showed that in the 1980s, teenagers' values were closer to those of their parents than in the 1960s and 1970s. Although attitudes between parents and teenagers were found to differ in another study, the differences were found to be in the degree of belief rather than the actual behaviour.

When young people compare their attitudes to those of their parents and peers, they can also be exhibiting pluralistic ignorance. College students were asked to compare their views on several subjects with those of their parents and peers in a study conducted by Lerner et al. The majority of students said that their views were in the middle of those of their friends, who had more liberal views, and those of their parents, who had more conservative views. According to the authors, this is because the students thought their peers were more liberal than they actually were.

Although one can adopt sports, language, music, fashion, and dating without compromising one's views or ideals, these activities are typically superficial means of demonstrating autonomy. Adolescents' assertion of autonomy can have long-term effects in some areas, such as substance abuse and sexual activity.

It's arguable how youth culture affects sexual behaviour and deviance. In America, it is reported that about 70% of high school students have consumed alcohol. Similarly, by the time they graduate from high school, almost two thirds of teenagers have engaged in sexual intercourse. Many scholars include drinking and having sex as part of youth culture because these behaviours may be frequent in adolescence. Engaging in these risky activities can have negative effects, on the youngsters which they fail to realize during that time.

Youth culture may have negative impacts such as addiction, pregnancy, incarceration, and other negative outcomes. Research has shown that many factors may influence youth to engage in high-risk behaviors such as weakening emotional ties between parents and their children, increased family stress, lowered levels of family investment, decreased levels of social capital and social control, and a lack of hope for one's future.

Research also states that adolescents may also benefit from peers of their age. The well-being of adolescents can be positively impacted by peer influence; for instance, teenagers claim that peer pressure prevents them from using drugs or having sexual relations.

The fields of sociology, psychology, and anthropology have produced the most research on youth cultures; this is evident in studies of ritual, family and adolescent social development, juvenile criminology, and demographic analysis.

The youth cultures discussions and analytical frameworks that arose from the three main disciplines have been extended to other fields of study, such as history. Youth studies, like most humanities and social science subjects, is characterised more by a series of long running debates than by the certainty of its knowledge.

The youth can be considered to have its own culture because of their unique fashion sense, language use, musical tastes, participation in sports and hobbies, characteristic behaviour, and manner of living. The youth's distinct culture is characterised by this collective representation of their social experiences. The hippie generation, motorbike gangs, college culture, working class youth culture, etc. are a few examples.

Within the young culture, there are subcultures as well. Scholars have disagreed about whether there is a single, uniform youth culture. Several factors such as gender, class, caste, ethnicity, and so on influence young identity and contribute to the emergence of distinct youth cultures. For example Girls and boys both have different way of socializing. Adolescents living in impoverished areas interact and behave differently from their peers in urban or rural environments. Therefore, one must consider the social background in addition to the young culture in order to fully comprehend it.

Young people's experiences and identities are shaped by the interaction of historical, cultural, and social factors in each particular society. Understanding youth culture is essential because it provides us with insight into the experiences, viewpoints, and aspirations of young people as well as the broader social, economic, and political trends that impact their lives.

Youth culture has garnered more attention from sociologists, educators, politicians, and the media in recent years. Part of the reason for this is the fact that youth represent the future of society and that the values, attitudes, and behaviours they exhibit have a significant influence on the development and transformation of society. Youth culture is a dynamic and complex phenomena that captures young people's diverse identities, experiences, and strategies for achieving social acceptance. Youth culture is a complex and dynamic social phenomenon that is shaped by a multitude of social, cultural, historical, and economic factors. Understanding youth culture requires examining its many components as well as how they interact to shape the identities and experiences of young people.

2.2. Evolution of youth culture:

Throughout history, youth culture has evolved and changed in reaction to various social, cultural, and historical circumstances. Here are a few notable turning points in the history of youth culture.

The post-World War II era, which saw great economic prosperity and freedom, is when the baby boomer generation was born. Consequently, a unique youth culture that disapproved the traditions and values of their parents' age started to emerge. The 1960s decade saw the emergence of the counter culture movement, which was defined by a dislike for traditional consumer culture, and characterised by drug usage, alternative lifestyles, and social and political activism. This movement has a big impact on youth culture since it gave them new ways to express and define themselves.

The 1970s saw the rise of punk rock as a response to the social and financial struggles that the youth of the time were experiencing. The DIY style, rebellious

mindset, and rejection of conventional cultural norms characterised the punk movement. The 1980s decade saw the rise in popularity of hip-hop culture, which originated in the African American and Latino neighbourhoods of New York City. Hip hop culture, which was characterised by its dance, fashion, and music, expanded over the globe and continues to influence young people's culture today.

Grunge was first popularised in the 1990s and was distinguished by a despise for traditional consumer society, a DIY style, and an anti-establishment position. Youth culture was greatly influenced by grunge, which resulted in the emergence of new forms of self-expression. New forms of young culture emerged in the 2000s as a result of technological and social media breakthroughs. Through the creation of online communities or the use of hashtags and memes, young people are always coming up with new ways to express themselves and engage with others.

All things considered, the evolution of youth culture has been influenced by social, cultural, and historical factors. Understanding these factors is essential to gaining insight into the experiences, values, and aspirations of young people as well as the broader social and economic trends that impact their life.

2.3. Influences of youth culture on society

Youth culture has a significant influence on society at large since young people are usually at the forefront of social and cultural progress. Here are a few instances of how youth culture influences society.

Social and political activism: Youth culture is often a motivation for social and political activism, as young people use their cultural identities and expressions to advocate for social justice and change. For example, youth-led initiatives such as

Black Lives Matter and Fridays for the Future have had a big impact on policy and public discourse.

Cultural diversity and pluralism: Through cultural forms like music, fashion, and art, young people from diverse origins and identities express their own opinions and experiences, which contributes to the growth of cultural variety and pluralism. This diversity improves society as a whole while challenging established cultural norms and assumptions.

Consumer Culture and materialism: Youth culture, on the other hand, has the potential to impact both consumer culture and materialism since young people are more susceptible to the effects of marketing and advertising. This could lead to harmful societal trends like overconsumption and environmental harm.

Technology and digital culture: Since young people usually adopt new platforms and technologies early on, there is a direct relationship between youth culture and technology and digital culture. In addition to encouraging social interaction and creativity, this can lead to issues like addiction and cyberbullying. Consequently, it has impacted society in both beneficial and harmful ways.

Intergenerational relations: youth culture has the power to alter intergenerational dynamics as young people navigate their connections with elder generations and challenge established power structures. This could lead to conflict, but it could also present opportunities for understanding and communication between generations.

Fostering social and cultural change that is consistent with the goals and aspirations of youth and society at large requires an understanding of these

processes. The influence of youth culture on society is intricate and multidimensional.

One of the most important relationships in a youngster's life is that with their parents. Many changes occur in the parent-adolescent relationship during this phase. Differences in opinion can occasionally make conflicts between youngsters and their parents worse. While youngsters feel controlled, parents wish to protect them from harm. In addition to increase in conflicts, youngsters report reduced parental support during the early to middle adolescence.

Over the course of growing up, parents likewise progressively relinquish power and authority. Young people typically turn to substance abuse and addiction for the same reasons that adults do that is stress relief and enjoyment although youngsters may also have other motivations, like the urge to risks, show that they are independent, peer pressure, curiosity, and the need to prove to adults that they are capable of making their own decisions.

Youngsters due to all these changes, in their quest for autonomy, less parental supervision, and their sense of belonging frequently get caught up in substance misuse. In an effort to set their children up for success and assist them in developing into responsible adults, parents attempt to instil discipline in their children. On the other hand, these acts of discipline have adverse effects, which may even increase the risk of youngsters using substances.

Even while striving for and seeking more independence, youngsters still require a loving, intimate relationship with their parents. The parent-adolescent relationship may be significantly impacted by the biological and emotional changes that occur during adolescence. Youngsters and their parents have to work hard at

this phase to understand and acknowledge new roles and dynamics in their relationship.

Furthermore, as youngsters strive for more freedom and independence during this transitional period, they spend progressively less time at home with their parents. They start to question the expectations, guidelines, and restrictions set by their parents. Strong peer pressure makes family values and customs more questionable, giving rise to more conflicts. As they struggle with a sense of inferiority they are in constant search of a sense of belonging. As they make space for solitude and privacy leading to more arguments with their parents. With these changes they begin to question who they are, and what they want. It's possible for parents and teenagers to have greater communication difficulties and relationship-building challenges during this time. A good and open family communication can contribute to the development and self-esteem of the adolescent as well as their relationship with parents.

Youngsters believe they are developing to the point where they can make independent decisions. Parents must exercise greater caution when raising them as teenagers are more likely to obey their parents' regulations if they are treated with love and respect. Some teenagers find it difficult to discuss specific issues they are having at home, at school, at work, or in their relationships with their parents.

Relationships between parents and adolescents can be difficult because, as their child enters adolescence, parents may believe that they no longer require as much guidance. During this phase, parents mostly struggle with their adolescent's emotional instability because they occasionally fail to fulfil their duty of providing for and guiding their adolescent.

Adolescents desire greater autonomy and the ability to make their own decisions as they mature and enter the adolescent era. Fascinated by the concept of independence, they begin to struggle for increased power and freedom.

While youngsters are struggling with self-discovery during this transitional period, parents are also adjusting to the changes their adolescent is going through—such as bodily changes, emotional ups and downs, and so on. Concerns about their young child growing up and the various challenges this stage presents might cause anxiety in parents. Rebellion is detrimental to the parent-adolescent relationship. Friendships become increasingly important for youngsters. Sometimes parents feel ignored or abandoned by their children in favor of friendships.

2.4. Complexities faced by modern youth in society:

Peer Pressure: Today's youngsters frequently deal with this problem, and can't handle the pressure. The development of unrestrained social media combined with technological advancements has raised the problem of peer pressure to a whole new level having witnessed to the worst case situation. Youngsters can overcome peer pressure with the guidance of their parents and coaches who educated them about making healthy choices and build self confidence.

Depression: Depression among youngsters is more common than ever before as the growth rate is concerning, and immediate action is required. While some experts blame this to rise in technology, others blame psychological factors like "fear of missing out." It's important to focus on the symptoms and get the professional help if the youngster seems withdrawn from others, doing poorly in academics, not getting proper sleep and showing eating disorders.

Body image Anxieties: Many young people's lives are impacted by body image issues during puberty. The rise of social media apps like Instagram and Snapchat has led to a constant sharing of images content. Some images are said to be illustrating the #BodyPositivity movement depicting the realities of bodies. However, others merely display the edited versions and filtered images of bodies that social media users are used to seeing. Young individuals may receive conflicting and confusing messages about how they should look and how to interact with their bodies as a result of this. According to YMCA research, 52% of young people regularly worry about their appearance.

Materialism: Our culture encourages materialism, and young people are taught to define happiness and success in life in terms of the amount of possessions they own. A materialistic perspective on life can have a negative impact on a person's life and lead to discontent when one doesn't have enough.

Love Relationships: Teens who are in love for the first time usually experience extreme passion and may behave impulsively. One reason for this could be the fact that Teenagers' developing brains, which prevent them from making entirely reasonable decisions. Furthermore, as this is probably their first time experiencing such intense feelings, they might not know how to appropriately communicate or handle them. Teens who are in love could therefore act rashly or partake in risky behaviors without considering the repercussions. When an adolescent falls in love for the first time, for instance, they might ignore their other obligations, like work or school, and spend all of their time with their partner. They might also exhibit other controlling behaviours or develop intense jealousy and possessiveness. Thus, it's vital to keep in mind that there are a range of potential

behaviours when considering the subject of how youngsters behave when they're in love.

In this study we want to gain deeper insight into the thoughts, feelings, opinions, experiences, challenges, and aspirations of the young characters in the novel.

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Chapter three

Exploring the world of young minds in *You Were My Crush: Till You Said You Love Me!*

The novel *You Were My Crush: Till You Said You Love Me!* By Durjoy Datta highlights many important aspects of youth. This novel is a true story based on the author's cousin— Benoy Roy. In this novel we will be looking at the main protagonist named Benoy and the other young characters in the novel.

You Were My Crush: Till You Said You Love Me! By Durjoy Datta follows the story of Benoy, a young boy who navigates the complexities of love and friendship. The novel explores themes of relationships, love, dreams, aspirations, misunderstandings, personal growth, and the challenges the young characters face at this time in their life which to some extent resonates with the young people of contemporary society. As the plot unfolds, Benoy's journey of self-discovery and the dynamics of his relationships are portrayed, offering insights into the intricacies of human emotions and connections. The novel also highlights some of the important issues that the youngsters face during this time of their life. In this novel the theme of relationship plays an important role.

3.1. Benoy

Benoy's familial relationships

In this novel the main protagonist named Benoy is a college going youngster. On the face of things, Benoy's life is perfect. He lives alone in a big house drives a Bentley and has all the riches one can only imagine. To people around him, he is a spoilt – a rich brat, the quintessential college-stud and a heartbreaker.

"Ever seen the guy who drives like a maniac in a ridiculously big car? The guy with the powerful dad? The big house? Well, I am that guy" (Datta 7).

These lines in the novel show that Benoy was born into a rich family who had all the luxuries with a big house. Whose father was rich and powerful enough to afford and give him everything that he wanted and wished for. He was somebody who was not flashy (impressive or attractive) but someone who had a big car and a big house. Though he belonged to a rich family, he would often hear people saying that he didn't belong to a rich family. He had a Wheatish complexion, slim, with short, neat hair. He however does not blame the people for having that perception about himself. Benoy says, *"I was never impressed by what I saw in the mirror either"* (Datta 7).

This statements made by Benoy about himself show how adolescents when they are at the youth stage in their life want to look like a certain way, dress up like a certain way to have a good impression about themselves in the eyes of others. They feel the people around them are always having their eyes on them, that they are being judged by others in the society which makes them conscious about themselves and this can be seen in Benoy himself. This highlights the common issue that revolves around many youth with regards to beauty standards that want to fit into that category of a good looking girl or a boy.

Benoy was least bothered or concerned about what was going on in his college life. This can be seen when he says, *"I was in no hurry again. Life was awesome. I did not have to worry about the early morning lecture, shouting professors or pending assignments"* (Datta 7).

He comes across as a student who cared less and had no idea as to what was happening in the college world. As the novel unfolds through this youthful journey of life we see how Benoy has struggles and deals with a lot of problems with regards to his college world, his relationship with parents, professors, friends and love relationship and his identity. We also see in the novel how the other young characters Diya, Eshaan and Shaina in the novel also go through the same challenges and struggles like Benoy.

In the novel Benoy has a strained relationship with his father. As the novel unfolds the plot of the novel we see how Benoy's relationship with his father turns from a hatred one to love relationship of father and son. As Benoy's father was a wealthy businessman his bank accounts were always loaded, he had a car and a house of his own which although was from his father's money he claimed all belonging to him.

When Eshaan his closest friend stated that his father cannot buy everything, Benoy felt that Eshaan was not quite right. As for Benoy when he thought he would fail his 12th boards and wouldn't get admission in Delhi University College. It was Benoy's father who had gotten him the admission from his influence through the sports marks quota by making him a Delhi squash champion. Benoy states that he didn't hate studying but he is of the perception that when one has a wealthy father and has got everything in life money is never the top priority.

His parents got divorced when Benoy was 8 years old and he lived with his mother. His father was a stranger to him and he was brought up fatherless. His mother suffered from cancer and till the point his mother was alive his father had some point of contact in the family. When his mother lost the battle to cancer his

father had no one left. This is the time when Benoy's father gave him everything a car, house, gym. According to Benoy all these were attempts of his father to buy him and he was greedy enough to let him buy the things, but not as much to sell himself.

The thing Benoy hated the most was when he had to call up his father when he was in need of help or wanted money. Benoy truly thought his father had a better appearance than him and secretly felt good when relatives said he looked exactly like his dad. His father didn't have the middle-aged paunch and did not look like a father of a 20-year-old instead, he appeared quite young.

His father like every other business man had never been to college and had taken 3 attempts to clear school. He had started as a minor steel trader in Sadar Bazaar, but slowly and steadily, he rose to become one of the biggest manufacturers of heavy machinery in India. His mother was a double doctorate in contemporary literature, who told Benoy that she was dejected because the man she was getting married to did not even understand the language she spent so many years studying. In the course of time his father had mastered the language when he had to interact with high profile clients and mastered the language.

Benoy states that he did not really hate his father nor did he like him either. He would only meet him only once a month. He would call him up to sign some papers since every business that was under his mother's name was transferred to Benoy's name and his signatures were required when there were major decisions to be done of the company.

It was hard for Benoy to grow up without a father. Specially when he knew he had a cool dad. What Benoy hated the most about his father was his British accent and was way more cooler than he was.

Benoy hated to attend the meetings with his father because of the fact he was drawn towards the charm of his father. The apologetic look on his father's face and his compelling words would make Benoy forgive his father. For Benoy forgiving his father meant he was betraying his mother and forgetting all the tough time that his father gave her. Benoy has contradictory thought about forgiving his father.

The novel also shows how if one's parents are rich they can afford to do anything for their children. This is shown when Benoy's father keeps tabs on Benoy and tracked wherever he went. Benoy comes to know about this truth when one of his father's employee accidentally comes up to him when his car broke down.

Growing up to become adults, youngsters really have a lot of struggles in making decisions in their life from simplest to the complex decisions. In this novel Benoy struggles while making a decision regarding his internship in the college. He contemplates whether to take up the internship at his father's office or elsewhere. Benoy was surprised when his father offered him to do the internship at his office. Benoy states that the more he thought about it the more he was being drawn towards working in his father's office. On the other hand it was becoming tough for him to forget what his mom had to go through while bringing him up alone. Benoy says, *"I am too young to have to take these decisions, I thought"* (Datta 25).

Datta also portrays how the young people are obsessed with certain things in their life. How young people are materialistic and obsessed with brands, clothing

and want to show off their wealth and what they have or own among the friend circle.

In this novel Benoy has an obsession with cars. He always dreams of driving the Bentley his father's has he says, *"I looked at it and wondered if there was anything that a man could want more. I walked past it, trying not to drool"* (Datta 50). Even though he barely talks to his father he does not deny even once when his father offers him lift in his grey Bentley car which he offers him to drive. Benoy and his father had the longest conversation ever when they were driving in the car. It was never before that he talked to his father so much.

In the novel it is shown that Benoy's father had bought another Bentley car for Benoy as well, but his mother had restricted to give it to him. Benoy also gets to know through his father that his mother also drove the car. Through what Benoy knew about his mom was that she hated his father. Benoy almost felt like as if he was getting sold when his father offered him to keep the car for himself and felt like he was betraying his mother. Benoy's hatred towards his father was the continuation of his mother's hatred.

Benoy's mother was suffering from cancer, at the time when his mother's health had gotten worse and chemotherapy treatments had begun Benoy made sure to be with his mother all the time. She had to quit her job, as the doctors had not given her much time to recover.

Benoy wanted to be with her all the time that time he was awake. It was unbearably difficult for Benoy to see his mother lose herself to cancer who had raised him as a single mother, managing job and a useless kid. Benoy had always thought of her mother as a strong woman and observing her in that state frail, feeble,

losing hair and weight daily, throwing up, and crying was agonising. He could feel his mother hiding her pain behind her smile. Benoy was so dependent on his mother that he could not imagine his life without her. He wished she would go away peacefully rather than going through the excruciating pain. He thought to himself that his mother had done nothing to suffer from the pain and she deserved better.

Benoy goes through a very tough time after he loses his mother. He stops going to college although he was prepared for the loss but was not prepared for death and absence of his mother. He had lost a part of him with his mother's death and was in denial. He would think of her as someday she would wake up to find her caressing his hair.

Benoy found it impossible to live alone in that house. The silence would drive him crazy. Even months after his mother's death he would go downstairs after a good night's sleep and search for her in the kitchen. He left water bottles everywhere thinking that she would put them back in the fridge and shout at night asking for dinner only to realize that she no longer was there.

He remembers and regrets all the times when his mother wanted to talk to him after a long day at her office and he was busy on the phone with his friends. The uncelebrated mother's day, the birthdays that he was not there with her. He remembers how he felt embarrassed when his mother would hug him public but when she was no more he wished he would get all the time back with his mother. Benoy says, *"However, in that empty house, and in my empty life, I could have done anything to have her rest my head on her shoulder and put me to sleep. I loved my mom and I missed her every day. She left a huge void in my life. She was everything to me, my only family"* (Datta 13).

It is only when Benoy loses his mother he realizes that how much she meant to him and the times he had not given his mother the time she ever wanted. Youngsters frequently take their parents for granted and don't appreciate and value them. There are communication barriers between them. They feel that if they share their thoughts and emotions with them they will most probably not understand them. When they are at this stage they somehow get self centered and just consider their own needs. It is important for young people spend time with their parents, talk to them, and express their emotions. It is only when something precious is taken away one realizes the value of it.

Benoy undergoes therapy after his mother's demise and Deb his cousin's mother started to take care of him. He started to drink and smoke heavily over this period of time. He thought engaging in these type of activities would fill up the emptiness in his life but nothing had worked. It took him some months to get back to normal. This highlights yet another issue among the young that when something similar situation occurs like this how young people turn to alcohol and substance use without thinking of other alternatives like seeking therapy, communicating with others and expressing one's emotions.

A turning point in the novel comes when Benoy gets to know the truth about his parents relationship. This truth helps Benoy in his overall personal development as he goes from an irresponsible youngster to become a responsible young person. It also changes his perception towards his father while mending his relationship with his father.

The truth of his parents relationship is revealed when Benoy out of curiosity opens the envelope he discovers in the glove box of the car. The envelope had

pictures, tickets and letters of the vacation that his father and mother had taken to Sikkim. Benoy surprised and shocked at once recognizes the pictures were not old but recent pictures of his parents a year before his mother died.

Deb's mother tells him the truth behind his mother and father's relationship. Benoy's father at the beginning was a very nice person to his mother and as he got involved in his work his mother had a tough time dealing with him. He became very strict towards Benoy and beat him so as to make Benoy like him when he was small. It is revealed to Benoy the reason behind his parents separation was not because his father cheated or didn't give enough time but because his father was a very bad father to him.

Benoy's father was the first one to know about his mother's illness and that is when Benoy's father begged her to take him back in their live. However though Benoy's mother forgave him she punished him by never allowing him to come close to Benoy. For his mother, Benoy was her 1st priority.

After the revelation Benoy was no more sad or angry listening to what his aunt had told about him having a terrible childhood. Contrary to that he had a strange feeling of happiness and was happy that his father was there besides his mother during her last days. It is Diya who makes Benoy realize that his car breaking down, and his father offering him lift in his car and the envelope in the glove compartment was all planned by his father. This shows how Benoy's father was desperate to get his son back and live with him.

In the first year Benoy had joined college with much fanfare. He clashed with the professors and his seniors, drove fancy cars to campus, and rapidly was

infamous in the college for his actions and shameless misuse of the authority he held. After a few days, everyone forgot about his existence.

Benoy would hardly attend any lectures. There are certain incidents in the novels which shows how Benoy bribes the professors into clearing his exams papers by offering them money. The first incident is when the professor calls him in the office for not submitting the assignment. Benoy initially thinks the professor would probably blast at him for offering money and bribing him. He was surprised when the professor does not do so. Through what Eshaan had told Benoy the professor had a record of being nasty with the students. Just as youngsters are very soon to judge others Benoy had also described the professor as, "*short stature, small paunch and unintelligent looks*" (Datta 14) guessing him to be a government clerk than a professor.

After a lot of inquiry as to why Benoy had left the paper empty the professor brings to Benoy's notice that he would fail the subject if he didn't do really well for the finals. Benoy was annoyed at the professor for just not accepting the money. He had the perception that professors were poorly paid and wondered why would the professor turn down the offer. After a lot of observation and discussion with the professor Benoy could figure out something that the professor wanted and all he wanted was more money from Benoy's father. At this point he had lost any respect for the professor and walked out of the room. The professor however wanted more money from Benoy's father for his kids who were studying abroad.

The second instance in the novel is when Benoy thinks that he can bribe the professors but however refrains from doing so as to avoid talking to his father. There is a conflict between Benoy and Diya who was the group leader gives the

names to the professor without adding Benoy's name. Benoy initially thinks he would get through the presentation without much effort by giving money to the professor like how he did the last time he had failed. This time however his attempt to bribing the professor with the money goes unsuccessful as his old skinny professor was replaced by a new younger one who was very strict with his principles, ethics and rules. The professor even complains about the students project which he felt was just copy pasted from the internet.

Benoy gets no chance of skipping the presentation with Diya his classmate as the professor him self warns Benoy that he cannot call up his dad and solve the problem by bribing him. This shows the professor was not at all interested in the money that Benoy's father would offer him if he decides to do away with the presentation. The professor informs the two of them that failure of anyone to not perform well would result in both getting a zero which was a full proof plan the professor comes up to teach them a lesson.

The novels also throws light upon friendship and shows how friends can boost one's confidence, and give a sense of belonging. Youngsters specifically feel good to be accepted by others. They may feel more confident when they are surrounded with individuals who accept them for who they are. All of us have insecurities, therefore it's important to have friends that embrace one despite all the insecurities. Friends are frequently one another's greatest sources of support. With a friend, one has someone to laugh with, confide in, ask questions, seek advise from, or just have a shoulder to cry on.

It is said that friends can help one celebrate the good times and provide support during bad times preventing isolation and loneliness giving the needed

companionship. In this novel as well we see how Benoy's friendships with his friends help him grow in becoming a better person in life.

3.2. Eshaan

In college Benoy had a single buddy Eshaan and as Benoy hardly attended lectures he barely knew who his classmates were. Eshaan being a best friend of Benoy's made sure he calls up Benoy every day to ask him if he would come to college and there wasn't a single day Eshaan missed to let him know about the scheduled lectures, the extra classes, the extra notes that would be needed. Both were studying at the Hindu College Delhi University.

Benoy's ground rule for Eshaan was to never answer his call until Eshaan calls him for the sixth time. Which meant only if Eshaan calls him for the sixth time the call was important for Benoy and would instantly pick it up. Benoy's default state was to ignore Eshaan which somewhere shows, that he was a little ignorant to his friendship with Eshaan. Eshaan always complained to Benoy about not picking up his calls.

Eshaan is the one who calls Benoy to inform him about the tax-planning professor who was not impressed with the money being offered by Benoy's Dad to correct his papers leniently. When Eshaan tells Benoy that his father cannot buy everything he was trying to tell Benoy that he had to work hard to get some things in life and he cannot get done away with everything in life by bribing the professors. Eshaan contrary to Benoy was a studious boy and would constantly make notes in the class, always took interest in others things and went out of his way to help others.

Eshaan was full of motherly advice and Benoy certainly could not ignore him. As it was because of Eshaan that Benoy knew something about B.Com. Eshaan was more concerned about Benoy's assignments and projects than Benoy himself. We can see how Eshaan even speaks to the professor on behalf of Benoy when he was in trouble and asks for forgiveness from Benoy when the professor tells Eshaan that he would only speak to Benoy. All the time when Benoy was talking to the professor Eshaan was the one who had called him 13 number of times to see if everything was alright. Benoy treated Eshaan as his cute little younger brother.

Benoy disliked Eshaan's girlfriend Sonil who in Benoy's eyes was extremely toxic for someone like Eshaan. In the novel we see how Sonil and Benoy get into an argument regarding government jobs and business. Sonil aspired to take IAS exam after her honours degree in Math. Benoy is of the view that government servants get good salary than businessman. Sonil disagrees with this point of Benoy's and taunts by saying that it is businessmen like his father who buy the honesty of the government servants. Benoy gives it back to Sonil saying why do the government servants get themselves sold with the money that businessmen offer.

Sonil feels that Benoy only uses Eshaan for his benefits like talking to professors, getting his assignments done and nothing else. Diya as a good friend stands by Benoy during the argument with Sonil. Benoy was very happy that she had found a good friend like Diya who had her back and was ready to fight with anyone. Benoy says, that in the moments when Diya fought for Benoy he thought that Diya would just drive a fork in Sonil's eyes. Being guilty Eshaan apologizes to Benoy for his girlfriend's rude behavior towards him. Benoy states that Eshaan was just the guy a girl would like to tell her friends about or even her mother, for that matter.

Datta in his novel also show youngsters today have toxic relationship with their partners which makes it difficult to them to come out of it due to various reasons. In this novel Eshaan underperforms in the exam by having a tough time with his girlfriend he was not able to concentrate on what was going on in the class. Benoy being the one to put the doubt in Eshaan's head regarding Sonil blames himself for the reason behind the fight between Sonil and Eshaan. Eshaan wanted to break off with Sonil who was very dominating and manipulative and was not letting Eshaan break the relationship.

Benoy in order to take Eshaan out of the toxic relationship comes up with an idea of telling Sonil that Eshaan and Diya are dating. The moment Sonil finds out about it she calls Diya and gets into a furry of calling her a whore, a housebreaker and so on. Diya being very strong and fierce gives it back to Sonil in equal measure, hurling at her a long trail of Hindi expletives that even Benoy would think twice about.

3.3. Diya

The other character Diya in the novel portrays how youngsters deal with their dreams and aspirations in life. Diya was the topper of the class however she was disappointed when she could not make it to the toppers list of the University. Her only dream in life was to make it to the toppers list and had an aspiration of going to the London School of Economics with a full scholarship. Through her attire she is described as a typical Scholar of the class, *"geek queen and she looked like it—dull clothes, big spectacles and her curly hair all over the place, the perfect picture of a full-scholarship student"* (Datta, 20).

We can see how Diya does not agree when she is asked to take Benoy in the group project. As Diya gives the list to the professor without adding Benoy's name, Eshaan even volunteers to take the blame on himself by being the group leader. She rejects the idea of Eshaan being the leader and accepting the mistake for Benoy. She comes across as somebody who would not let others take credit for her work. Diya pounces on Eshaan and says *'I did all the work and what if sir asks questions? I will not put the whole group at risk just for you'* (Datta, 20). This shows how strong, brave and adamant she was on her decision.

Benoy irritated by what Diya says he goes on to describe her as a lizard and says, *"You can take the project and shove it up your tight ass for all I care"* (Datta 20). These sentences in the novel show how Datta has used the youngsters appropriate language which they use in their daily conversations while taking to their friends or classmates. The argument between Diya and Benoy leads the professor to make Diya and Benoy work on their project together. As Benoy and Diya's friendship start with conflict regarding the project however to give a good presentation both Diya and Eshaan start off their presentation on a good note. Both were given the task to read a very thick book of Economics and analyse it giving their own suggestions. This task seemed easy for Diya who was a Scholar in studies and difficult for Benoy who hardly attended any lectures.

Benoy could figure out the sarcasm with which Diya had told him that their task was to just read the book, analyse and give suggestions on it. Reading the book was not a task for Benoy had it been a novel. It was a thousand pages book on economics which was not even in the course that they were studying. Benoy took up the challenge to complete reading the book to show it up to Diya that he can do

it. He was also in two minds of whether to call up his father and sign a big cheque and get away with the presentation.

Diya unlike other girls in the college was not so much into fashion, or dressing and this is evident in how she dressed wearing pyjamas and a faded loose t-shirt. Her dressing sense conveyed the message that, "*I-come-to-college-to-study-and-not-to-walk-on-a-ramp attitude*" (Datta 32) who also carried a big bag. This implies how Diya didn't care about what others had to say regarding her fashion sense and what she wore as she believed she came to college to study and not to put a fashion parade.

For Diya, Benoy was a spoilt rich brat from the high class unlike her who belonged to the middle class. Diya said that she was helping herself out when Benoy thanked her for the notes. Diya very well remembered what Benoy had said to her the 1st day when they had an argument and said the same words, what Benoy had said earlier when Benoy asks Diya's notes to borrow. Taken aback to what Diya says to him he at once apologizes for being rude to her. To start a good bond with Diya, Benoy searches for Diya's profile on Facebook and adds her. As the novel unfolds we see how Diya plays an important role as a friend in shaping Benoy's personality and his behaviour towards academics.

Diya's familial relationship and aspirations

Diya's parents were very strict who had certain rules for her and her sister Shaina. This can be seen when Benoy invites Diya to come at his place at night to do the remaining project, Diya says, "*My parents will, like, literally kill me. Like they would actually chop me up and feed me to the dogs*" (Datta 36). These statements made by Diya portray how her parents were so strict about them. Benoy

states that Diya always had trouble getting permission to go out of the house whose parents were a nightmare. *No guys. No late evenings. No night-outs* (Datta 53).

When Benoy goes to drop Diya at her place, his perception of being happy in life with the little thing changes for the good when he sees, "*decrepit government flats that seemed like they would fall apart any moment; the buildings were stained from the water that seeped through their walls, the paint was wearing off and the walls were scaly; they were a wreck. 'This is where you live?'*" (Datta 36).

This makes Benoy realize how she was content with her living lifestyle and happy with whatever she had. Benoy thinks how he has everything and all the luxuries to enjoy in his life yet he was alone and cribs about not getting certain things. He could not remember the last time he had smiled looking at his house after a long day which had a fully functional gym and central heating, while Diya's had leaking pipes and stained walls, and yet, she was smiling and Benoy was alone.

As Benoy and Diya work on the project their friendship also strengthens and they become best of friends. For Benoy, Diya was like a breath of fresh air who enjoyed every moment and made others laugh with her jokes. Diya and Benoy were successful in giving their presentation which makes the professor quite impressed with the two of them as they had surpassed his expectations. When Benoy notices that Diya is nervous he smiles and gives Diya the confidence and strength to put across her points during the presentation. This also demonstrates how friendship gives confidence and the fact how youngsters take a lot of pressure of studies even though they seem carefree.

Having conservative and very strict parents, Diya's parents wanted her to get married after her graduation. When Benoy asks Diya about her future plans she

tells him, *"It's so unfair. Benoy, I have not dropped out of the top five in any grade. In ANY grade, and I didn't study hard all these years to be a housewife at twenty-one. It's just not fair"* (Datta 40). This demonstrates how Diya struggles with difference of opinion with her parents with regards to studies. Diya wants to study further and complete her post-graduation. To not be a burden on her parents she studies very hard to get to the toppers list for a scholarship to fulfill her dream of going to the London School of Economics.

Diya's parents would have not spared them if they knew of their children's dating life. Diya went against the norms of her parents who were very conservative and had dated 2 guys. Benoy never thought that Diya could ever date anyone because of her looks and Diya describes herself as a James Bond for having done so. Diya had two relationships one when she was in the 10th and her second relationship lasted for a month which Benoy describes as a fling. Diya's perception towards relationship changes and sets a rule of no time for relationships as she solely wants to focus on her studies at that point in her life.

This point of view is somewhat related to some of the youngsters of today. They get more focused on their career and aspirations they have in their life and have the zeal of accomplishments in them and show their parents what their capabilities are. As Diya's focus becomes very strong of getting admissions in the London School of Economics she doesn't see herself dating anyone and that she had been a fool to date and had made some wrong decisions in her life earlier.

Datta has also portrays the concept of Long distance relationship when Benoy had one with her girlfriend in school which doesn't work out when she goes to Australia for graduation.

Datta portrays how it bothers Benoy when Diya says, "*Benoy, you are okay looking in spite of your stupid shoes and the big cars. You look like you must be dating many girls at one time. Girls like Palak—they must be falling all over you*" (Datta 45). Which Diya meant that he might have had flings with girls. Like others Diya also misunderstood Benoy as a casanova who would have had many relationship with the girls from the way he was rich and the way he looked. Benoy wanted to have a good impression about himself and drive out the bad image that Diya had in her mind about Benoy being a flirt and dated many girls at a time.

Getting pissed off he asks Diya why she has the kind of opinion she has even though it was not the first time when somebody thought of him so. His cousin Deb, Avantika and even Diya made him feel that the only reason a girl would ever date him was because he was rich and connected.

Over the course of time Diya and Benoy become best of friends and he describes her like a mini mom and his girlfriend who was non-fussy and nonsexual one, which meant no possessiveness, no jealousy and no obligations who was always there when Benoy needed her. Benoy gives the full credit to Diya for him doing well in studies. Diya was someone who would never leave the hall until the last minute. It was because of Diya's help that Benoy had answered his exams very well and was confident to even score higher than Diya. Diya wanted to be in the toppers list to get in to London School of Economics which was her dream.

As per the college requirements the students were asked to do an internship in any company they wished to. Diya had started giving interviews for the internship so that her profile does not look empty. We see the bond of Diya and Benoy only getting stronger when she calls Benoy to accompany him to buy clothes for the

internship as she had no one to go with. Benoy even suggests Diya to buy clothes that are fashionable and not the ones that aunties wear. He tells her if not for anyone not than try to dress up for Eshaan at least.

Benoy always felt that Diya and Eshaan should be dating each other. He wanted to set up Diya and Eshaan together as he thought they made a great match for having same interests, who loved books and economics. After much of coercing from Benoy, Eshaan asks out Diya to be his girlfriend but Diya turns him down by saying that her goal in life was to get to London School of Economics and that relationships could come later. However both of them remain to be good friends to each other without hurting each other feelings.

Benoy contrary to Diya feels that careers and relationships can go hand in hand. While Diya thinks the opposite and says she has no time for relationships. When Benoy questions her what's the hurry about the internship she reminds Benoy saying she does not have rich father like him. This highlights the fact Diya tries to say to Benoy that he would get into any company for the internship because of his father's influence and he can do it in his father's office as well which would not require him to give any interviews.

Diya and Eshaan get the opportunity to do the internship at BMR Advisors after giving several interviews. As Diya also wants Benoy to join him in London she helps him out by contacting a source of hers from LinkedIn who studies at LSE without a scholarship. Looking at Diya's motive of making to the London School of Economics (LSE) Benoy reminds her that there are still two years for them to finish their college. This shows how much Diya was future oriented and would not

wait for the last minute unlike other students who do not have a proper goal or vision as to what to do.

3.4. Shaina

Shaina's relationship with Manoj and Benoy

Romantic and teenage love are impossible to generalise their relationships as "good" or "bad" for the development of adolescents. It plays a crucial role in the social and emotional growth of teenagers. There are possibilities that the relationship created at this stage will prepare them for romantic relationships as adults. Adolescent relationships have advantages and disadvantages, and it's common for the two to coexist. The novel also shows love relationships of youngsters another aspect of youth culture through the character Shaina, who is Diya's younger sister who falls in love with Benoy.

Shaina Gupta was studying BA Honours English at Miranda House, Delhi University. She was a very artistic child who was into writing, reading books on Byron and Keats unlike Diya who calls her boring for this. Benoy comes across Diya's sister Shaina on Diya's Facebook account when he sends a friend request to Diya. He stalks Shaina's account and instantly falls in love with her. This shows how in modern society social media has an impact on teenagers life and how quick youngsters modern day love can be.

Through stalking stalks Shaina's Facebook account page Benoy gets to know that she writes blogs on social media. The portrayal of blogging by Shaina in the novel shows how in contemporary society as well youngsters take up social media to express their thoughts, emotions and feelings.

In the novel the way Shaina wrote poetry portrayed as if she was some depressed alcoholic or a pretentious prick. Benoy who takes an interest in reading Shaina's poems says they consisted of twenty lines had a tinge of tragedy sprinkled in them which were honest and beautiful like her. Benoy had not even met Shaina but he had already developed a liking towards her by only reading her poems.

Benoy gets another reason to score good and do well in studies so as to impress Diya's sister Shaina. When Benoy sees Shaina's poems on the blog he realizes that they are getting longer and tragic day by day and some were even 100 lines. The time when Benoy and Diya decide to pick up Shaina at her college, Benoy puts perfume to have a good impression on her when he was in the car. Benoy describes his first meet with Shaina as an old sick lover boy, Benoy says, *"She was in a bright yellow T-shirt with a SpongeBob graphic on it, and bright green skirt-pants below, looking brighter than the sun. She resembled the girls in her sketches, beautiful and complex; the world seemed like it would end every time she blinked, hiding her big, brown eyes"* (Datta 60)

Benoy describes how his heart thumped as Shaina got inside the car, his breaths were heavy and deliberate, and he trembled. Benoy says there was a certain happiness in Shaina's prettiness, he feels her smile would make as if everything in the world would be okay. Benoy just to impress Diya tells her that he likes reading poetry however it was only because of Shaina that he had started reading them. Benoy had been stalking Shaina all the while he saw the first time.

Diya and Shaina share a very strong and good sister relationship with each other. There is a fun banter between them when Diya calls Shaina a pretentious show off when she tells Benoy that Shaina knows Spanish and French. Shaina gives

it back to Diya saying that she does not call her a pretentious show off when Diya talks about the fiscal policies.

As the three of them decide on watching a movie together Diya made sure that she sat between Benoy and Diya like a protective sister. Diya who is also very possessive about her sister Shaina warns Benoy that she does not want boys like him hovering over her sister and that she is too simple for all this. Even though Diya refrains Benoy from adding Shaina on Facebook he does exactly the opposite.

Shaina's tells Benoy about her first impression towards Benoy was she thought he would be arrogant, haughty and a lot more uglier, to not show he is hurt Benoy eventually laughs at Shaina's comment. Both the sisters run home after the movie because of the time constraint given by the parent to come home.

Benoy could not remove Shaina's thought out of his mind. He daydreams about her, constructed fake dates with her, where he would just sit and listen to her poems, and talk about her favourite movies. The only time Benoy would not miss Shaina is when he reads her blogs. He feels so illiterate in front of her who was very well versed with poems and literature and all Benoy could do was roam in around with his car.

As Shaina and Benoy start talking to each other on Facebook and through phone calls their bond gets stronger. On Shaina's Facebook account Benoy comes across a guy named Manoj who has liked all of Shaina's pictures on Facebook. Benoy finally confronts Shaina about Manoj who Benoy thinks is quite old and if he is to like Shaina it will be a situation of paedophilia wherein older adults are interested in younger boy or girls.

So as to be liked by Shaina, Benoy tells her that he has already started watching French movies and if required he will also start reading poetry of Byron and Keats, Neruda and frost to fall into the category of Boys Shaina likes. They talked to each other on the phone without her sister Diya knowing about it.

When Benoy goes to meet Shaina near her college he initially thinks Shaina would be hesitant to meet him without her sister. Shaina tells Benoy that his car attracted everyone's attention and asks him to come with a smaller car the next time. As they meet and talk Benoy asks Shaina if he does not look dateable. To which Shaina replies that he looks more like a heartbreaker than a lover. This is another incident in the novel when Benoy is misunderstood by Shaina as well whom he likes and want to have a good impression on.

The late-night talks with Shaina became a daily routine. As they talked to each other time and again Shaina reminded Benoy that he is cute and also that they had to maintain a distance and stop calling her every night. At this time Benoy becomes really curious about the reason why Shaina drove him away from her. It was distressing for Benoy sometimes as he had to fight for her time with Manoj Nagpal, the guy in her friend list.

As Benoy gets involved with Shaina, Diya notices Benoy's absence from her life his, phone being always busy, always out with his friends and hardly ever available for her. When Diya suspects Benoy of liking Shaina she yet again warns him by saying there are millions of girls in the world for him to date and stops him from dating Shaina. Benoy had still not told Diya about his feelings towards Shaina and he had already gone on three dates, he had to lie to Diya every time they went

out. For Benoy it wasn't the best feeling in the world to hide something from her best friend Diya.

Benoy and Shaina kept meeting even after Shaina tells him that it is wrong meeting him. Benoy was very careful about what he said to Shaina that might put her off. Every time Benoy meets her he feels nervous, confused as to what to wear, the insecurity about his hair, his pimple all of this made him feel like a little girl.

When they meet Benoy tells Shaina that Diya doesn't even want him to be in the same universe as Shaina. To which Shaina tells him to stop flirting and trying on her. When the times Shaina and Benoy meet each other she refrains Benoy from taking anything about Manoj, she even request Benoy to respect her privacy. Shaina once again reminds Benoy that they have to stop secretly meeting and talking to each other. Her words felt as if Benoy's heart was breaking into million pieces. This shows that Benoy truly had started loving Shaina. He felt like he was in one of her poems, conflicted yet happy, confused yet clear, sad yet infinitely happy confused yet clear. He says, maybe that's what being in love means.

Shaina goes to Benoy's place one day when it was raining heavily. They start watching a movie and Benoy had a lot of questions to Shaina regarding them and Manoj. But at the moment he didn't want to upset or lose the moment by asking her any questions. Right before the tearful climax of the movie, Shaina and Benoy kiss. Shaina guilty about what had happened feels it is wrong and leaves Benoy's place hurriedly without giving proper clarity to Benoy about her and Manoj's relationship and apologizes to Benoy for whatever happened between them. This shows Shaina's guilt upon kissing Benoy when she has a boyfriend. Shaina says,

"This is wrong, Benoy. I don't do this. I don't kiss guys I hardly know." Her voice was desperate now" (Datta 79)

As Benoy is still trying to understand what had gone wrong between them Benoy receives a text from Shaina saying, *"Benoy, I am sorry. We can't be in touch any more. Please don't call or text me. Please understand. This is my last text. Take care. Best of luck in life. I am sorry"* (Datta 81). After seeing the text Shaina sent him, Benoy is shattered. Not knowing what to do Benoy gathers courage when he meets Diya and narrates everything that happened between him and Shaina. Knowing the truth Diya is disappointed and shattered and feels betrayed by both his sister and his best friend Benoy.

At this point Benoy goes through all the emotions of being hurt, he was so broken from inside and feels angry about himself for hurting the two people who were so close to him. He tries to console himself by saying they would come back to him. Benoy breaks down more when Diya informs him that Shaina had been in a relationship with Manoj for two years about which even she had no clue about it.

We see how Shaina's parents react when they come to know about her daughter's relationship with Manoj. Shaina's Dad almost beats Shaina to death when Manoj comes and tells her father about their relationship. He only stops when Manoj says that he is ready to marry Shaina. Shaina's parents do not even consider that Shaina is too young to get her engaged to a boy. They do not think about her education but are only concerned with what that society will say about their daughter.

It is revealed later in the novel that Manoj does this purposely as Shaina tells him about her liking towards Benoy. So as to take revenge he tells Shaina's parents

about their relationship knowing that they are very strict. Not once Shaina's parents ask for her consent into the marriage and start with the preparations of engagement with Manoj. There is a lot of societal pressure on them as they do this as they don't want the society to think their daughter was dating someone.

During this phase of life Benoy's and his father's relationship get better and stronger as a father-son relationship. Benoy was surprised as to how his father knew about the internship when his father offered him to do the internship at his office. Benoy after much contemplation and thinking takes up the internship in his father's office. Benoy shifts to his father's place as they worked together. Benoy had started to find peace in his company. After which Benoy's father makes some major changes in himself. He had sold off some of his businesses so that he could spend time with his son. Though Benoy never spoke to his father about the envelope through which the truth about his parent's relationship is revealed. His father could make out from Benoy's behaviour that Benoy had forgiven him.

Not having anyone to speak or tell about his emotions Benoy calls up his father to talk to him. Even before Benoy starts telling about what he is going through, his father comes to know the reason he had called him up. Benoy's father had tapped his phone and that is how he comes to know about Benoy's relationship with Shaina. We see how Benoy's relationship with his father changes over the course of time. Earlier Benoy hates talking to his father but during this phase of Benoy's life it is his father who reaches out to help him. This shows Datta's portrayal of how parents stick by their children during the dark or any phase in their lives.

When Benoy's father speaks to Shaina's parents they tell him how uncultured his son is and that he was brought up into a broken family. They even threaten him by saying they would file a complaint against Benoy's Dad and Benoy if he ever tried to call any of them. Shaina was pressurized by her parents to tell that she did not love Benoy and was happy to get married to Manoj. Shaina does not speak about the injustice that was done to her as she had lost the strength of fighting her father.

Benoy could not get over Shaina and had to remind himself time and again that she was just a crush. Deb and Avantika help Benoy to come out of his depressed and sad state. They come to his place to cheer him up with Diya who starts believing in Benoy as some one suitable for her sister and it is the only reason she comes to see Benoy. She tells Benoy how Manoj does not even know how to talk to them who remains shut all the time. She says that Manoj isn't half as good as Benoy is.

Deb tells Benoy that Avantika feels his relationship with Shaina was a fling and that Benoy will get over with it. Benoy acted normal and tried to be funny near them when he actually was not. He did not want anybody to worry too much about him as he felt it was not worth it. This shows how youngsters hide their emotions and feelings so as to not portray themselves as weak in front of others.

It was only when Benoy was working in the office he could stop thinking about Shaina. Benoy's father makes him understand that he just cannot expect Shaina to break her two year long relationship knowing the kind society she lives. But having said that Benoy's father also thinks that Shaina does not deserve what she was going through.

Diya had set up Shaina's meet with Benoy saying that it was sisters day out. To her surprise it was Benoy sitting in place of Diya. On that day Shaina makes it very clear to Benoy that she does not want to meet or talk to him ever again and she is happy with Manoj. Shaina on the other hand was pressurized into saying what she had said to Benoy's father that day. Even if Shaina loved Benoy she would never tell it because of her parents who had already stopped talking to her.

Her parent's concern was that every relative knew about Manoj and Shaina's relationship which pressurized her more to not leave Manoj, thinking what they will think. Family and societal pressure does not let her back out from the relationship as it would be very humiliating for her family.

Through Benoy's father's finding Manoj turns out to be an extremely toxic guy who doesn't let Shaina talk to any boy nor meet her female friends, who even called her a prostitute when Shaina uploaded a picture of hers wearing a skirt which Manoj asks her to delete it. He also blocked every guy friend of hers on Facebook. Yet another incident in the novel where Datta portrays toxic relationship where the partner is over possessive and shows extreme jealousy.

Benoy had lost all hope on living his life without thinking about Shaina. Benoy only hoped that studies would keep him busy and he eventually would forget about Shaina. But somewhere he knew that it would not be possible. In class Diya tried distracting Benoy by showing him some new girls in the class. Diya had tried convincing her parents against getting Shaina engaged so soon but they did not budge.

They felt their daughter had disgraced them and they wanted to arrive at an engagement date sooner than possible. They came from a very conservative

community and the news of a girl's affair travelled far and wide in a matter of days. For them a roka, or a formal union like an engagement, was the only way they could have stopped people from talking dirty about their daughter.

A turning point in the Diya's life comes when she meets with a tragic accident while coming home in a rickshaw which gets knocked over by a truck. The rickshaw puller dies on the spot. Though Diya was out of danger the doctors had asked for forty-eight hours. Benoy holds himself responsible for Diya's accident as it was because of him that Diya had attended the Career launcher class. He holds himself responsible for the bringing pain to both the sisters. Diya's dreams and aspirations of going to London School of Economics shatter when the doctors announce that she has been paralyzed waist down.

It is Benoy's Father who was doing all the running around, taking care of everyone in the hospital and calls the best of doctors to treat Diya. He made sure everyone ate on time and slept at some point but he himself dint sleep for 3 nights. When they went in to see Diya she was wrapped in bandages and tucked inside a white blanket, her face was swollen and there were needles sticking into her skin. Diya could hardly react when she saw anyone of them. Shaina kissed Diya on her cheek and that is the only time Diya smiled and looked at Benoy. Benoy hoped she would feel better with them around.

Diya cries, and sobs a lot when she gets to know that she would not be able to walk. She felt that it would have been better if she had died than being crippled alive confined to a wheelchair chair for the rest of her life. Shaina hugs Benoy and cries who assures her that things would be fine.

In the hospital Diya's parents hardly looked the way Benoy had heard about them from Diya and Shaina. Mrs Gupta Diya and Shaina's mother comes up to Benoy as he was sitting on the bench, fiddling with his phone. Benoy describes her as an elegant woman, hardly looked like the two sisters had described her to him but due to the past few days being hard on her she was in a terrible state. Diya's mother asks for forgiveness from Benoy for what she had done and said about him.

The doctor tells that Diya is lucky to not suffer from paraplegia a condition where the person becomes paralyzed from the waist. Since satisfactory care had been taken in the first thirty minutes of the trauma she has been saved. There was a strong chance of Diya improving with the right therapies and do things which most people could do. The thought of Diya getting to walk even with the crutch gives Benoy relief as earlier it was told she would not be able to walk at all. People around him broke down into tears, and hugged each other and talked about gods and godfathers they could go to in order to get her cured.

Shaina herself also asks for forgiveness from Benoy for the way she behaved with him earlier and tells him the truth that Manoj wanted her to stay away from Benoy and her parents as well. She feels maybe it was God's way of punishing her for behaving rudely with Benoy. Manoj had tried influencing Diya's parents with regards to Benoy being held responsible for Diya's accident. To make Benoy comfortable Diya's mother assures him to not blame himself for the accident. Benoy had started to feel that her parents liked him and his father and realized their mistake by judging them.

Diya's treatment had already cost her parents a lot and Despite Benoy's father's protests, her parents had paid for a part of her treatment. They paid

whatever they could afford. However, Diya was not going to the London School of Economics any more. We see how Shaina's parents develop a liking towards Benoy, but for Benoy that was not enough he wished it was the same from Shaina, too. Manoj was trying his best to cut Benoy off from the family. He hires a taxi service for Diya, but it did not work as the taxi driver took many days off and she could not have afforded to miss a single day. Benoy's father being rich gets a Land Cruiser for Benoy to take Diya to hospital everyday.

Like how Diya had helped Benoy earlier in making her a good person. It was Benoy who was taking care of her during her difficult times making notes and making sure that she attended her therapy session regularly. Manoj's parents were slowly drifting away from Shaina and her family, the main reason was Diya being crippled. They thought they would have to take care of Diya once Manoj gets married to Shaina. As they did not want to take Diya's treatment expenses of on them and hence Manoj breaks off with Shaina.

Benoy not having any idea about Shaina and Manoj's relationship goes to meet Shaina when she calls him up to tell something important. He still thinks Manoj and Shaina are getting engaged to each other. At this time when they meet each other Shaina and Benoy have a sexual relationship with each. Through the depiction of sexual activity in the novel Datta tries to portray how youngsters do not think twice before engaging in sexual activity. Towards the end of the novels we see how Shaina tells the truth about Manoj to Benoy that she broke up with him two week ago the day she had met him and cried. Shaina confesses her love toward Benoy and lets her herself free from the toxic relationship with Manoj.

We see how Durjoy Datta has portrayed the complexities of these youngsters in his novels through young characters who have dreams, aspirations, different personalities and encounter challenges in their life. We see how Datta has portrayed youth culture from their relationships to friendships, clubbing their aspirations and slangs used by the young characters in the novel.

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Chapter four

A rollercoaster journey in *The Boy Who Loved*

The novel *The Boy Who Loved* is written in the form of a journal by the protagonist of the novel named Raghu Gangly. The journal is dated from 1st January 1999 to 24th March 2000. The novel is dedicated to Avantika by the writer Durjoy Datta. The novel follows the emotional turmoil, their journey and challenges of the young characters in the novel.

4.1. Raghu

Raghu the protagonist of the novel starts writing a journal as a form to express his emotions and thoughts. He believes that everyone in this world lies and it's healthy to lie as there is no harm in lying if one wants to survive in this cruel world but he believes lying to one's self is difficult and shit hard. Therefore to not lie to himself Raghu starts writing the journal entry which he had been dilly dallying for a while. This portrays how youngsters resort to writing journal, diary entry and other forms to express their emotions and feelings.

For Raghu hiding the journal from his mother whom he calls Maa is difficult who has a sensitive nose and since he didn't live in palatial house he decides to hide it in the empty suitcases, behind the broken toaster, and the defunct singer sewing machine. Raghu wants to see if writing in the journal would help him say the truth which only he knows and help him survive the darkness.

Raghu's parents had changed his school just two months before his 10th standard. The reason for the same was Raghu's friendlessness. They thought the lack of friends in his life was because of the school but the real reason for Raghu's friendlessness was because his four years of best friend Sami was found dead,

floating in the still waters of the school swimming pool. Raghu fakes his happiness over joining the new school when asked if he was excited to join.

Raghu's parents never liked Sami his best friend. His father whom Raghu calls Baba did not like that his parents had chosen to give the boy a Muslim name. His mother had more valid reason to dislike him for his poor academic performance, him getting caught with cigarettes in his bag, and Sami's brother being a school dropout. They thought that Sami was a bad influence on Raghu. This portrays how youngsters like Sami turn to substance use as shortcuts to relief themselves from negative emotions like feeling depressed, upset and anxious.

It also shows how parents are always concerned and protective about their children when they are at the youth stage in life. They want to know who their friends are and refrain their children from getting into bad company of friends. Raghu's parents were concerned about Raghu's friendship with Sami as they fear Sami would influence Raghu in taking cigarettes and other bad habits.

Youngsters being very emotionally invested with their friends get depressed whenever a tragic incident happens. In the novel we see how Raghu is affected by the death of his best friend Sami. After his death Raghu is almost always sad, depressed as he could do nothing to save his friend and after which Raghu has suicidal tendencies to end his life.

Raghu was his mother's favorite child. We see this when even though Raghu is so grown up she goes to drop him off at the school bus. He loved the fact that his mother loved him so much and hopes to be the best son till the time he can. In his new school as well Raghu on the first day sits on the first bench and shows no

efforts in making new friends. His new school was little less, lenient with rowdy students.

Raghu finds it extremely difficult to cope up to just being his previous old self. However much he tries to be happy he still finds himself being sad and depressed. By finding a flaw in someone Raghu finds an interesting way to not like someone or be attached to anybody. For Raghu the flaw can be anything ranging from a crooked finger, to religion or social class. This was his way of dealing with sadness and so likewise to not like Brahmi his classmate he decides to find a flaw in her to hate her. This strategy of Raghu's worked with everyone except for his mother, father and brother.

Sami's death has a profound impact on Raghu. He says there's no point in lying about the truth after he starts writing everything down in the journal. At the end of some journal entries Raghu writes detailed information of the buildings he finds suitable to jump from and end his life. This shows that Raghu has suicidal tendencies after the death of his best friend. He also counts the number of days he has to spend in the new school, his college and finally he thinks he will die. He feels he has no purpose and hope in life to live.

Raghu is usually not happy on his birthdays and on his 13th birthday as well Raghu was not excited. He feels there is nothing great in being born. This was the time when Raghu underwent major changes on his birthday. Bengali culture is portrayed in the novel when Raghu's mother prepares the mutton biryani, kosha mangsho and muri ghonto and his father makes paesh with jaggery which are Bengali dishes.

His brother Anirban whom Raghu calls Dada gifts him a PowerBook which he borrows from his boss. Inside the PowerBook was a CD with a media file his brother wanted him to watch. The reason why Anirban gets this is because he wants Raghu to grow up and come out of his grief and be a little happy.

For Raghu his brother is a like an insurance policy and he feels if anything happens to him in future at least his brother should be there with his parents to take care of them. To not worry other about himself he fakes his happiness on his seventeenth birthday and yet again is not happy on his birthday.

As Raghu's board exams were approaching he stops writing in the journal as he wants to do well and keep up to the pretense to show that he is happy studying. After a month he starts writing again on 7th March. The person that Raghu disliked the most was Didimaa his mother's, Maa. This is true of some youngsters, who hate their grandparents or elderly people and care very less about them. Raghu's grandmother was 83 and bedridden for 2 decades following a massive heart attack who spent all her day on the sofa soiling her diapers even though she was capable of walking around and rebuking all her five children, especially Raghu's mother.

It is because of Didimaa that Raghu knows how to curse in his mother tongue and hates old people. Didimaa was the only one who knew how Raghu was wholly responsible for Sami's death. Raghu feels only mad people can keep secrets as no one believes them and goes on to tell her that he likes a girl.

Raghu's neighbours Kanika who is seventeen and Richa who is sixteen were studying at the Kendriya Vidyalaya. Raghu describes both of them being darker than him; the younger one the color of his elbow. He states how Richa had accepted him as the love of her life when he had inadvertently walked into the bathroom

while she was bathing. Ever since that day she shies away from him whenever he is in the room, and blushes excessively. Raghu describes her as beautiful with her thick black hair and who has the body of a grown woman, but Raghu feels nothing for her. He believes that if human beings were intended to live their lives with partners than they should have come into the world with the name of their soul mate printed on their hearts.

Raghu's familial relationship

The novel shows Raghu's how Raghu's relationship with his parents turns from a healthy one to developing hatred for his own parents. Both Raghu and Anirban, Raghu's brother had a good relationship with their parents till the time when Anirban tells them about his relationship with a Muslim girl and they develop hatred towards Anirban.

Raghu's father had been working in a bank for 20 years who takes Sanskrit and English tuitions for tenth-standard students. His mother is a lecturer of mathematics at Shaheed Bhagat Singh College in Delhi University for as long as Raghu had been in the world.

Datta in his novel portrays how parents want their children to be like them and follow their footsteps. One day Raghu's father takes him to his office to show him that he is still relevant in his office. This show how Raghu's father wanted Raghu to be like him respected and recognized by others. Raghu's father did not like how Anirban had taken up a private sector job and how he works for somebody else's company. Raghu's father wants Raghu to take up a government job and to work for the country instead of working in a private sector. He also suggests Raghu that he can take up the UPSC exam just as an option if required later.

Datta has also shown how parents have an influence on their children's decisions and how they want them to do things of their choice. Raghu starts preparing for IIT exams well in advance as he wants to fulfill his father's dream who wants Raghu to do IIT. The only worthy enough colleges for the Ganguly's, Raghu says were IIT and AIIMS. Their parents wanted both their children to either go into Engineering or Doctors profession.

Raghu's Maa burns Raghu's trump cards as she feels he is playing with them all the time neglecting his studies Raghu cried as the trump cards belonged to Sami his best friend. After his best friend's death he tried to be normal by pretending to obsess over Bret Hart, the Hitman, and Hulk Hogan like his other classmates used to be but nothing works for Raghu to be normal.

After burning Raghu's cards we see how his parents heart melt easily when Raghu's mother goes to call him to eat food after an hour and his father gets a new set of WWE cards for him. They sit together and analyze his chemistry question paper. They also comfort him by saying to do well the next time. This emphasizes on the fact that however much parents scold they want the best for their children.

When Raghu does not perform well in his chemistry paper he hides it from his mother who finds it hidden in the letter box of uninhabited flat 14B. She is disappointed in Raghu for doing so and also shouts at him for loosing his sweater in the school and coming home late. She says, *"One brother does god knows what in Bangalore and the other one is falling in bad company"* (Datta 48). This statement by his mother shows that she much is concerned about what her sons are doing, she does not want them going in any wrong direction or going into bad

company of friends. When Maa starts crying Raghu comforts her by saying he will do better the next time, though she refuses to listen to him.

As Raghu's Baba wants him to do IIT this one mistake of Raghu's leads him to say that Raghu has wasted his five thousand money investing in buying his IIT material. For Raghu his parents have always been good at worst case scenarios. They were so protective about him and his brother Anirban so much so that if they did not see their kids for an hour it meant that someone kidnapped them, if they get a cut on their knee it meant they had to get tetanus, and if at all they went running to catch a bus meant their skulls were crushed.

We often see parents comparing their children to others be it in marks or other performance which to some extent demotivates them. Instead of telling to perform well the next time they start comparing them to others who has done better than them. The same thing happens with Raghu when his mother is eager to know who got the highest marks in class and how much that person scored and if Raghu does not perform well she gets upset and starts comparing him to the one who scored good marks in the subject.

To keep both Raghu and Anirban away from engaging in any bad habits like smoking or drinking their mother would tell them that cigarettes and alcohol were refuge of the weak and strong people don't require them. His father explanation would be that they are forbidden in the shastras which Raghu knew was a blatant lie. Raghu believes that if people were really bhakts, they too would be living in a happy daze of smoke and soma, still be hunters and gatherers with no EMIs to pay or pollution to worry about.

The above incident in the novel shows how parents and youngsters clash with each other due to difference of opinions. We even see how Anirban and his father have difference of opinion with regards to religion and their views about the same are completely opposite.

The novel also shows how parents want their children to work and get married to the girl or boy of their choice. According to most parents the only way they think their son or daughter is settled in life is only when they are married. In this novel Maa wanted Raghu and Anirban to marry someone of her choice and within their community only. The question to marry outside would never occur as their father was very strict in these matters. She tells Anirban she would find a Bengali girl for him to get married after he gets a job and is settled. Maa who only wanted a Bengali get to get married to her sons says, "*In our times, long hair and the ability to pick out the right fish was all that was desired in a girl, and Bengali girls have them both!*" (Datta 41).

Over the course of time Raghu's relationship with his parents changes drastically. When one of the days Raghu reaches late home from school she accuses him of smoking. She snatches his bag to see if she can find any cigarette box or matches only to find a puppy whom she names Mina which was actually the name of her second born girl child.

When Raghu's performance was very low in academics his parents are called by his teachers. Raghu had always thought the most humiliating thing that could happen to one was when the class teachers berate somebody in front of the entire class and complain to their parents in the PTA meeting. The same thing happens with Raghu when three teachers show his parents his half-yearly answer

sheets. The teachers tell his parents how Raghu had dropped from the top three to the middle position and it was very unlikely of Raghu who always scored good marks.

Angered at Raghu's performance in exam Maa tells Raghu that she has left her purse in the class and to get it. When Raghu comes to the parking lot without the purse he realizes that his parents have left him and gone as a punishment for scoring less in exams and humiliating them. His father then goes on to say that how he can get just 78 marks in mathematics. This show that how his parents had a lot of expectations from him. He also states how the other parents were looking at them as if their son is an alcoholic or drug addict.

His Maa goes on to tell Raghu if he does not want to study he can let them know but not to make them spend unnecessarily on him. His Baba tells him he could have taken up Humanities if he didn't want to study. Raghu zoned out a bit after hearing this and feels that if it was two years ago the very same comments were passed to him would make him cry but this time he was surprised at his own self for being very indifferent.

His mother says if Raghu can lie to Sami's parents about his death than he can lie to anyone. Maa tells Raghu that he also does not love them anymore and if he had loved he would not have written down all his emotions in the diary than letting it out to them when she discovers his diary.

When Raghu sneaks out of the house his parents come to know about it. On one of the days Raghu's mother tells him that they know his sneaking venture which makes it difficult for his father to sleep as he stays awake until and unless he gets back home. She tells him that she knows how he and his brother think that they

come in their way but because they don't want to interfere they hadn't said anything and that there's no point in telling them their boundaries as they would not listen.

She tells him that he is free to do whatever he wants to do but there is one thing which she tells him to stay away from. She shows him sachet which she finds in their dustbin and tells him that he is too young for all that. Raghu in his defense says that he does not do anything of that sort which his mother believes to be a lie. Raghu gets to know that it was a plan of his neighbor Richa Mittal's to take revenge on him put him in bad light in front of his mother.

There is also another incident in the novel when Raghu raises his hands on his mother when she calls Brahmi petni. He tells them that it is the last time they would say anything about Brahmi or Zubeida and henceforth will not tolerate any of their bullshit. He even tells his Maa-Baba that school was a waste of time and he needed more time at home to complete his IIT modules.

4.2. Anirban

Anirban's complex relationships

Raghu's brother Anirban whom he calls Dada had taken a private-sector software job over a government position in a Public Sector Undertaking which would have guaranteed a lifetime of unaccountability for him. He always had arguments with his Baba regarding religion. When Raghu was 12, Anirban went to hostel and found friends outside the family and therefor their mother loves Raghu more than Anirban.

It was because of Anirban that Raghu's seat was changed in the class because Anirban who meets his teacher tells her how Raghu was still traumatized from the incident in his old school and he needed new and intelligent friends. We

see here how Anirban was trying to get his brother out of his depressed state. He wants him to make new friends and be happy and enjoy his life and to move on from the incident that happened. Anirban was only trying to make things better for Raghu.

We see a lot of youngster want to try or engage in risky behaviors like drinking alcohol or smoking. In the novel Anirban feels that he can share everything with his brother and feels he can trust him. However when Raghu sees him smoking he immediately tells his parents who then blackmail him into stopping it. Raghu feels that his brother has to learn to be twice as good a son and make up for his absence who can't afford to be careless.

The second incident in the novel is when Anirban gets free alcohol from minibar hotel to home. Raghu tells Anirban the consequences of substance abuse, the deaths caused because of it and how wrong it is to do something against their parents will. Anirban hides the alcohol bottles behind the headboard of the bed when he hears the knock on the door.

Raghu at once spills it to his mother about Anirban's miniature alcohol bottles who was offering him to drink. This incident shows how Raghu did not want his brother to drink or smoke and ruin his life. Like any mother Anirban's mother would always get worried whenever Anirban went on business trips. She would start crying when there was no call from him and when he called his mother he would make her anger go away just by saying I Love you. This words worked like magic on his mother. This shows how youngsters often forget to keep their parents informed about how they are or if they are doing well. Contrary to his brother,

Raghu had stopped saying these words to his mother as he felt that he would leave his parents soon and he didn't want to have that attachment with his parents.

Raghu's mother would wait for Anirban till he gets home at 11 a.m. to eat food with him, his father also tries to wait for him but he finds it difficult to wait that long and goes to eat by 10 p.m. Because of the long hours of work Raghu is concerned about his brother and wonders what toll the high-pressure job has taken on Anirban's heart. He feels he has to remind his parents to goad him into getting a full-body health check-up.

After Anirban tells Raghu that he likes Zubeida Quaze a Muslim girl, Raghu thinks of all things that will happen when his parents come to know about it. Raghu reminds Anirban that she is Muslim and that he can't marry her and their parents would accept anyone but not her. To this Anirban says that they haven't decided if they are going to get married and says they need time to think about their relationship. Raghu annoyed at his brother says, *"so you think about a relationship after you tell someone you love her? What do those words mean if you are not staying together forever?"* (Datta 44).

Raghu like his parents did not want Anirban to marry someone outside their community and slams Anirban for not once thinking about their parents. When Raghu warns Anirban of telling their parents about the truth, Anirban tells Raghu he will inform their parents when the time's right. Raghu feels he and his brother are a pursuit of happiness for their parents; who certainly cannot break them.

Raghu is shocked when Anirban says he is not yet sure of marrying Zubeida. For Raghu saying I love you to someone is sacred and means the person wants to get married to whom he loves. He cannot understand his brother as to what he wants

to do. Raghu thinks to himself whether love relationship have no meaning in today's world. He says, "*Is nothing sacred any more?*" (Datta 74). For Raghu saying something like love is a matter of lifetime and not just throw the words in air if one does not mean them.

Anirban shows a picture clicked from a digital camera of himself and Zubeida Quaze. Raghu shoves off the Power Book and emphasizes on the fact that she wears a burqa. Anirban angry on his brother slaps Raghu when he goes to tell their parents about Zubeida and quickly takes him into a hug and to keep it as a secret. Raghu goes on to remind Anirban that his responsibilities should be towards his family and not towards anybody else.

Raghu had been counting on Anirban being perfect and taking upon himself the care of Maa-Baba, giving them the perfect bride and grandchildren they have always wanted, who makes them happy but Anirban had crashed all his hopes. Raghu could not stop thinking about his brother's decision of dating a Muslim girl which leads him to score less in his test.

Anirban feels that Raghu is more matured than him and when Raghu scores less Anirban reminds and tells Raghu that his parents are expecting a lot from him and he should not disappoint them. Anirban tells how his parents were not happy when he had scored only just a lousy 1650 rank in IIT JEE and 89 per cent in boards.

Anirban accepts his company's offer to shift him to Bangalore for work for three months whose expenses the company would do. His father initially refrains Anirban from going to Bangalore for work. He tells Anirban that his mother has not worked so hard day and night only so he could leave them one day and go. He does not want Anirban to leave them and go to work in Bangalore. We see how his

parents come between Anirban's desire to work in Bangalore and refrain him from going to work.

To make up for his betrayal Anirban sends a 25 inch Videocon television home. His parents who initially had not agreed about Anirban's transfer to Bangalore then flaunt the new TV to their new neighbors which was bought by their son. They wanted to show that their son was earning much to buy the television and to show how hardworking he is was.

Anirban wants Raghu to meet Zubeida at least once and they decide to meet at a coffee shop. Raghu wants to know whether his brother really likes Zubeida as he never acknowledges that he will get married to her. Raghu asks a lot of questions to Zubeida regarding her and Anirban. He wants to make sure if Zubeida is the right girl for him. He goes on to ask her why she did not choose to love someone from her own community. Zubeida replies saying that love just happens and that one possibly cannot choose whom to love.

Raghu's mother gets a doubt about Anirban having a girlfriend from the telephone bill. She even calls on the number having received it by a girl named Zubeida. It's is always seen that Anirban defends the Muslims when his father says anything against them who had warned Raghu not to make any Muslim Friends.

"Baba has always had his prejudices against Muslims and Christians and Jews and anyone with a Holy Book but Maa had often made an earnest request to both of us. To let her choose our wives. Often she would call us to the living room and point to a Bengali actress on screen and say, 'This is how your wives should look.'" (Datta 105)

The novel also highlights the theme of religion when Anirban marries a Muslim girl which the family and society does not accept. Anirban finally gathers the courage and tells his parents about Zubeida. Raghu is sent inside his room and not made a part of the conversation his brother and parents would have. They curse the girl and don't want her in their son's life and they try to convince Anirban to leave her as he is just 21 and have his full life ahead of him. His mother asks Anirban to convert Zubeida to their religion and his mother's worst nightmare comes true. They place a condition in front of him to either choose her or his parents. They remind Anirban saying they had not grown him up and pay for his education only to show them this day.

His parents stop talking to Raghu as well for hiding such a thing from them. Raghu's mother comes to know about the diary that he is writing and how he is trying to hide his true self and emotions behind it. Datta is portraying here how youngsters feel more comfortable to share their emotions and feelings. Maa had expected Raghu would not hide anything from her and share whatever happens with him and his brother.

His parents don't approve of Anirban and Zubeida's marriage and state that they will never let a Muslim girl be a part of their family. Being adamant on his decision to marry a Muslim girl Anirban leaves his parents house. His mother even keeps jewelry in his bag which she had kept for her future daughter-in-law. Datta portrays how Anirban leaves his parents without giving a second thought or thinking about his parents. He shows how youngsters at this stage sometimes take hasty decisions in their life without knowing the consequences.

It was to Raghu whom Anirban first reveals that Zubeida is going to have a child. Raghu tells him how his parents were planning to do a havan at the house to make things all right. This also emphasizes on the extent they were not ready to accept Anirban's marriage. At this time their neighbor Bhattacharya uncle come to console them, with a whiskey so they can drink. He even says how inter-religious and interacted marriages are the ruin of mankind and adds to their misery.

When Raghu tell his parents about Zubeida's pregnancy she cries beating her chest and his father curses her. She says, *We are ruined, Our lives are over. Is this why we carry our children in our wombs? So they spit on our faces when we are old?* (Datta 135). Raghu's mother decides to go and call back his son Anirban and Zubeida. She could not live away from his son for so many days and goes to Bangalore to get them back. At this time Raghu's father starts talking to him and things were slowly turning normal. Raghu had about ten comebacks for his father but he quickly melts and starts cooking fish with his father. Datta portrays how Raghu's mother forgives Anirban and wants him home back. She says, *"What happened has happened. Your Dada broke our hearts but what kind of parents will we be if we don't forgive him?"* (Datta 149).

Anirban's father was not ready to let Zubeida even inside his house. While Maa says that she does not want to loose his son. When his father helps Anirban in doing the tax reports his father says, *"Walking out of the house like he knows everything! Now see what he is doing. Making his father file his tax reports"* (Datta 158). This statement by Anirban's father shows how he thinks Anirban moved out of the house as if knowing everything about the world and could live alone without his parents support. This shows how youngsters want their parents help at some

point in their life. His father being an expert eventually rectifies Anirban's tax report and is in talking terms with him.

"With a Musalman daughter-in-law at home he said it was embarrassing for him to be among his friends" (Datta 170). From this statement we come to know that Anirban's parents were ashamed of his son getting married to a Muslim so much so it was embarrassing for his father to be with his friends. Who all his life hated the community. Anirban and Zubeida come to Delhi and Maa and Raghu go to pick him up at the railway station. His father does not accompany them giving an excuse of having to attend the committee meeting which Raghu finds is a lie as he had bowed out of the committee a month ago.

When they have decided to bring Anirban back to Delhi. His parents search a new house for him to live in and according to Raghu it was not because their house was small but because his father's heart had not opened up for a Muslim girl to come and stay. His father sees to that the flat gets ready in time before Anirban comes to stay.

Anirban's father had in advanced asked the gateman to take their bags to their apartment, he shows his love toward them indirectly. They were staying at a different apartment from their parents. They had still not come to accept Zubeida to live in their house only because she is a Muslim. Raghu decides to call Zubeida Boudi which means brother's wife and his parents decide to call Zubeida, Mamoni a Bengali name which means a little girl as her name Zubeida would remind them time and again that she is a Muslim.

That particular year when Anirban's birthday was celebrated it was a grand affair with a huge celebration and with rituals of Hindu Bengali Culture. Raghu's

Maa tells him that it was done to remind his brother that he is a Hindu and that his son would grow up being a Hindu and not under Zubeida's influence.

When Raghu was listening to his songs on the Walkman he overhears his parents conversation and hears his mother speaking about acting to love Anirban and how much she hates Zubeida. The thing which shocks Raghu is when his mother says she was acting to love Zubeida and Anirban all the while only so she could get her grandchild. Raghu gets taken aback by his parents act of being of nice to his brother and Zubeida on face and he thinks, everything is a lie. He says, *"It's like all these years some hateful creatures lived in a little shell buried inside Maa-Baba which broke forth and took over their minds and their hearts the minute Boudi walked into Dada's life"* (Datta 229).

Raghu could not believe his parents could be this hateful to someone. He feels he would have fallen into his parents charade had he not hear their conversation the other day. Raghu hates it how his mother thinks of the life inside Zubeida as Anirban's alone.

On the 29th of February Anirban dies of LPG blast in their rented house when he goes to get the charger of the PowerBook which Zubeida had asked for. This has a very strong impact on Raghu who had thought his brother would take care of his parents after he is gone from their life.

Relatives come to console them who over the years, had envied their relative prosperity, but their grief over the death was real. Their grief was not because they loved Anirban as much but because they felt the loss. They have imagined losing someone close, they have put themselves in their shoes and then cried a little inside.

Raghu holds himself quite responsible for his brother's death and feels if he was not wallowing in his own pain, he would go to get the charger and die instead of Anirban. He blames his father as well for the death who had accompanied him but preferred to stay down and not go upstairs. Raghu also feels if his Maa had not acted about how concerned she was about Zubeida, Anirban would have still been alive, counting days backwards to the birth of his first child. Raghu's mother shifts blame from one person to the other for Anirban's death. The last person she finds to blame was Zubeida.

4.3. Brahmi

Brahmi's love relationship with Raghu

The novels also shows how friendship and love plays an important role in a youngster's life. In this novel Raghu develops a bond with a girl named Brahmi Sharma in his new school. She comes at a phase in Raghu's life when he was depressed from the death of his best friend. She helps him overcome his sadness and eventually saves him from ending his life and giving up upon her own life.

Brahmi Sharma was the class monitor of Raghu's new school. Raghu describes her as whose hair was long and shiny, tied into a scruffy, untidy pony, and absolutely un-hateable, face with an odd pimple, athletic body, with perfect round mounds, bursting with puberty at the cusp of turning into a young woman. The one thing that Raghu notices are her bony wrists which had cut marks zig-zagging the entire length of her wrist like a child's drawing.

As she was a bright student no teacher bothers to ask Brahmi when she misses lectures in the class. Initially Raghu tries to ignore Brahmi as he feels a

strong connection with her. Brahmi and Raghu's friendship starts from his birthday when she takes his tie to staunch the blood flow of the pimple she got on the nose.

Brahmi was lonely like Raghu who notices that her classmates didn't look at her because she is beautiful or smart or like the warm sun on a winter morning but because she sits alone, eats alone, and stays quiet until required, not because she is intimidating but because she has no friends and Raghu feels this is the best thing one can do to one self. Brahmi was also a part of few academic and extracurricular activities which she headed.

Raghu feels the only good thing about the new school was that he had a new competition with regards to academics. Brahmi was oblivious of the academic competition that was going on between Raghu and her. Both of them were equally competitive with regards to academics. Even though Raghu does not want to make friendship with Brahmi he searches her number on the telephone directory. This reminds Raghu of his last dialed number to his best friend Sami who would call him everyday after school.

Brahmi would not care about anyone in the class. She would leave the class whenever she wanted and would come back like nothing had happened and mark her missing attendance in the register. Observing how lonely Brahmi is Raghu feels that unlike him Brahmi must have decided how she wanted to die as Raghu could sense the same thing in Brahmi which he was going through that is wanting to die someday.

Brahmi lived with her uncle and aunt (her father's brother and his wife whom she calls Tauji and Taiji). Raghu asks Brahmi if she wants to do Engineering to which her answer was that her aunt will decide about it and not her mother who

does not participate in such decisions. Brahmi tells Raghu even though her mother doesn't participate in her decision making she supports her in whatever she does.

Raghu counts the number of ridges on Brahmi's wrists when she was solving the crossword which he describes as deep, straight and longish. To distract Raghu from looking at her wrists she jokes by saying she fell on the knives. The words BLEED AND GREIF which Brahmi solves on the crossword convey to Raghu how broken she is from inside.

It is Brahmi who takes Raghu to Connaught place by bunking the class and all the way in the bus Raghu was trying not to freak out as they didn't have any ticket to travel. Brahmi on the other hand was clam, staring outside the window. She assures Raghu not to worry about the teacher as she would give an excuse of arranging books in the library again assuring that teachers don't doubt her integrity as somebody who has never stood second in the class.

When Raghu insists Brahmi to ask him anything she wants to know about him Brahmi says, *"I know everything about you. Your friend died, you think it's your fault, and you have been sad ever since"* (Datta 34). This comment by Brahmi makes Raghu angry on her oversimplification of his friend's death. He feels she does not know anything about his grief and what all he had to suffer and go through. Sami's mother had not smiled since the time he had gone and it breaks Raghu's heart to see that. Raghu was angry at Sami's brother who did not take care of his parents after what had happened.

However Raghu enjoys Brahmi's company, all the time his heart thumped and throbbed with fear and whatever he felt towards Brahmi. Raghu says, *"For whom, I couldn't help think, I was like an accessory, like a handbag, or a bracelet,*

there but not necessary" (Datta 34). He felt like a handbag or bracelet which is an accessory but not necessary. After a few days Raghu feels disheartened when Brahmi not even once calls him on her school adventures.

When Raghu bus meets with an accident he feels he will die from the bus accident which takes place for a brief moment. He feels happy about it but the very next moment reality hits him and he wants to live. In those moments he wants to stay alive and thinks of Brahmi and not about his parents. In those seconds which he thinks he will die, he thinks of a possible future with Brahmi, scoring well in IIT and graduating and eventually marrying Brahmi.

Raghu and Brahmi score the same in their board exam 91.2 percent. Raghu being very competitive in academics wanted to score more than Brahmi. To celebrate Raghu's no.1 position in school his family organizes a small party for him. Contrary to Raghu, Richa his neighbor scores 43 percent and due to this there was a gloom in their house.

After Anirban's revelation about Zubeida to his parents, Raghu could not concentrate and shows disinterest in studies. The time when Raghu scores less in the test Brahmi tells him to do well the next time and advises him to leave all his struggles and pain at home whilst answering any paper. As Raghu does not want to share his pain or struggles he defends himself by saying he is not struggling with anything. Brahmi who suspects Raghu's lie tells him not to lie and he should not spoil the only reason why school is fun.

Raghu from the beginning was very inquisitive about Brahmi's ridges on the wrists. Raghu asks Brahmi, if he wins the bet of beating her in studies would he get to know another story regarding her ridges on the wrists. Both were getting into

a dangerous territory of talking and discussing about the possible ways to die, jumping from the building, train tracks, and etc.

Brahmi states if they were serious about ending their life then they would have done it irrespective of the means. This shows how the two of them have suicidal tendencies and know that each of them is going through a difficult phase in their lives. Both have their own reasons for feeling the way they were feeling which eventually they get to know.

There is also another incident in the novel when Raghu and Brahmi save a dog which was on the verge of dying. It signifies how both Raghu and Brahmi are suicidal and want to end their lives and have no hope. In the same way the dog also had no hope of living till the time Brahmi and Raghu treat and take care of her. Like the dog, both of them are longing for hope to live and embrace their lives. Brahmi feels every time she falls she wants to live a little more.

Brahmi's Taiji shout and scold Brahmi when there are calls on the phone as she thinks Brahmi circulates her phone number to boys in school. It was Raghu who had called Brahmi three times but did not speak a word. When he called her he imagines her in a yellow T-shirt and a skirt. According to him that is probably something that everyone does if someone is not used to seeing the person you fantasize about them being in one and vice versa.

To make her aunt believe that Brahmi does not circulates phone number to boys Raghu agrees to Brahmi's request to call on the landline and assure her aunt that it was he who had called. Brahmi does not know who called but she thinks it must have been somebody who is her secret admirer or someone who wants to see her in trouble.

Brahmi's Taiji who already knew Raghu was calls him a rascal and 'Saala Bangali' warning to beat him up in front of his parents if he calls again. Raghu who had never been abused by an elderly woman is shocked by her abuses. Brahmi gets embarrassed after hearing some of her aunt's abuses to Raghu. To have a good image of her aunt's Brahmi says that her Taiji has temper issues but otherwise she is nice.

Unlike Raghu's lunch which consisted of chapattis, daal, paaner and raita, Brahmi would bring a lone, dry sandwich. When Raghu notices this Brahmi says that her mother remains busy and does not get the time to cook for her. Raghu offers her his food, as half of his food goes waste. To this Brahmi says that her mother would shout at her if she wasted any food. We see two opposite personalities here, one who does not like to waste and the other who cares least about it.

Raghu notices the little welts on Brahmi's upper arms, behind her ears, on her back. He realizes that she had been hit at home and thinks if it is because of the calls he had made. When inquired about the injury she lies to Raghu stating she fell down from the stairs.

Both Raghu and Brahmi go to meet the dog during school hours bunking the class once again and sees that it was way healthier than before as if Brahmi's love had healed her. They named the dog Shahrazad after the queen's name. The way the dog goes swaying its belly to Brahmi shows how Raghu and Brahmi both wanted love in their lives and wanted to be cared for.

When their teacher comes to know that they were missing in the class Brahmi and Raghu tell her the reason. In spite of shouting at them the teacher marks in the attendance saying both Raghu and Brahmi were on sick leave because of food

poisoning, asking them to say the same thing if someone questions them regarding the attendance.

When the dog dies Raghu consoles Brahmi by saying it might be in a better place. But he knows that it won't be since the last thing the dog saw was its puppies whom the dog was abandoning which is not a good thought to die with. They decide to take each of the puppies home. Brahmi names the puppy of the died dog Adolf and Raghu's mother name it as Mina. In the course of time Brahmi's puppy dies. Raghu feels there was no point in saving Shahrazad as out of the three lives that they saved two of them already died. Raghu feels Brahmi is just being delusional who hopes the puppy will come back. For Raghu hope is the worst thing that one can keep. He thinks that there is nothing as such as hope and everything is delusional. He says this to Brahmi when he feels the puppy won't come back.

We see how Raghu gets jealous when someone in the class keeps a chit in the desk saying Brahmi loves Sahil which does not go well with Raghu. He feels that Brahmi should complain however Brahmi brushes the matter off saying it's just a prank by someone. The fact was that Raghu wanted his name written in place of Sahil. Yet again Raghu feels a sense of jealousy when he sees Brahmi and Sahil working in the lab. One day when Raghu sees Brahmi and Sahil together at the swimming pool he gets flashes of Sami's death which shows he is still not over the trauma.

Raghu sets a plan to make Brahmi and Sahil believe that he had a heartbreak with Arundhati his pretended ex-girlfriend. By keeping a letter in the diary which he gives to them and makes them to believe he is heartbroken. However Sahil comes

to know that this a planning of his to keep Brahmi away from him and assures him he won't tell her.

Sahil also lets out the secret of him keeping the chits of I Love You written on it. He says he did it just so that he could to be friends with the two of them. This portrays how youngsters want to fit into a particular group. From the above incident in the novel we see how Sahil plots by keeping chits in the desk only to be accepted by Raghu and Brahmi. So also we see Raghu lies about his relationship with Arundhati only to make Brahmi jealous. These incidents show how this is very much common amongst youngsters to be accepted in a group and to be liked by someone else.

Some of the days Raghu feels extremely delightful talking to Brahmi and does not think of killing himself. To be in each other's company and keep themselves busy Brahmi and Raghu had opted for extra assignments during the vacation. Their bond grows so much that Brahmi accompanies Raghu when he goes to meet Zubeida his brother's girlfriend for the first time.

Brahmi finally tells Raghu the reason she had cut her wrists, which was because of two boys she was in a relationship with. The second time she cut her wrists was because of how she kept lying to herself that the boy she was in love with would change overtime, however Brahmi was proved wrong.

When things are not normal at Raghu's place he narrates the events to Brahmi which takes place in his house and tells how his parents have avoided him since the day when Anirban tells about Zubeida to his parents. He tells how his parents tell him they will let him out of their sight if he turns out to be like his brother who has left the house. At this time Brahmi tells Raghu that one shouldn't

hide anything from one's parents as they are the ones who love unconditionally and the only people who will forgive their children for everything. When Raghu asks what Brahmi's parents are doing, she initially refuses to tell but later says that they both are engineers.

Brahmi and Raghu's friendship goes through a rough patch when Brahmi stops talking to Raghu as she knows that Raghu had lied about Arundhati being his girlfriend. It was Richa Mittal who reveals the truth to Brahmi about Raghu and Arundhati.

Eventually Brahmi and Raghu sort out their differences and talk to each other. They even confess their love for each other and the truth that both have been secretly coming to each other's apartments. Raghu even tells Brahmi that after meeting her he has stopped being suicidal and wants to live his life. Raghu asks Brahmi to promise her that she too won't end her life but Brahmi refuses to promise him by stating he hardly knows anything about her. This again shows how Brahmi had still not got the hope to live her life.

When Raghu's relationship with his parents is bitter he confides in Brahmi and tells her that Zubeida feels more like a family to him than his own parents. Brahmi agrees to him and says even she feels the same with her uncle and aunt. At this point she reveals to Raghu how they beat her and how initially she would rationalize saying she deserved. When Raghu asks why her parents don't say anything to them she tells him they don't know anything about it and since they travel a lot because of work she did not tell them about the abuse as she knows they cannot do anything about it.

Raghu plans to teach Brahmi's Tauji a lesson by knocking a rod on him whilst he is riding his scooter but gets unsuccessful and in return get two blows from him. When Raghu gets home his parents take him to the doctor to get his wounds treated. His father maintains indifference towards Raghu when they were eating and on their way back home.

Every night Raghu goes to see Brahmi at her place, stealing money from his father's wallet. Raghu says there is nobody else who he can trust other than Brahmi, as his own parents don't care about him anymore. Brahmi calls up Raghu at night to tell him that it's her birthday the next day and tells that the register has a later date. She asks him if it's possible for him to call her at twelve since she has the permission to stay up as it's her birthday. Raghu wanted himself to be the only one who Brahmi has shared the information with. He calls her up at 11:50 and wishes her in advance.

When Raghu asks Brahmi why she sounds sad to which Brahmi replies that she has been wished for the first time in ten years and goes on to tell him that her parents are never home on her birthdays. Every time Raghu inquires about her parents Brahmi lies to him saying they are working in a particular state.

Brahmi tells Raghu to cut the call and call her again so that her uncle and aunt don't think it's a long call. Raghu cuts the call and calls her for fifteen times and every time Brahmi calls him with a new girl's name. Raghu goes to see Brahmi near her apartment at 2 am on her birthday as well. Raghu and Brahmi spoke at night, while Raghu stayed down with Brahmi at her window ledge and talked to each other in Morse code.

Raghu's mother sees him one night when he comes from Brahmi's house and warns him to not to go out at night from the next day. As a concerned mother and somebody who was always concerned about what society will say she tells him she does not want people to talk about his son sneaking out at night to meet a girl and gossip about him.

When Raghu asks Brahmi don't her parents shift somewhere else, to this Brahmi says it is impossible and moving out would mean partitioning the house because of her. Brahmi later goes on to tell Raghu that she has been trying to find a way to leave the house. She tells him there is a cousin of hers living in Gurgaon who would let her live in his house.

Brahmi tells Raghu that she will move out of the house once Vedant gets her a job. Yet again Raghu tells Brahmi to ask for help from her parents. Brahmi states that her parents could have helped her when there was still time. When she says those words Raghu notices a tinge of disappointment Brahmi had in her parents for not reaching out to help her.

Vedant, Brahmi's cousin had failed in the 12th standard. So as to not work for his father in the paint shop he moved out of his house. Working at a call centre in Gurgaon which paid him 8000 though Vedant calls it a shit place to live in. Seeing Vedant so positive Raghu thought that engineering is pointless. We see how Raghu is enthralled by Vedant working in the call centre and living his life on his own terms. At this time Raghu even imagines how Brahmi could have stayed at his brother's place which they were living in and not leave Delhi and go to Gurgaon but refrains from telling Brahmi as she was someone who would not take favors from anyone or ask for help.

Raghu and Brahmi when they get a chance steal from their family member's wallet and buy things which she would require so as to not be a burden on Vedant who Brahmi felt was already doing a lot for her, by finding a job for her. Raghu's feelings towards his parents completely changes and at that point he hopes that his parents don't warm up to his brother and things only get worse and expresses his desire to run away from home so that he could stay with Brahmi.

Vedant finds a job for Brahmi and tells Raghu how much she will miss him. Raghu is happy that she will not be a subject to her uncle and aunt's assaults. When Raghu decides to figure out buses to Gurgaon Brahmi does not want Raghu to come there very often as she wants him to focus on his academics who has the ambition of doing well in the entrance and getting an admission in the IIT.

Raghu and Brahmi's friends give Brahmi a farewell party as she was leaving the school. Brahmi was also present at Rishab's house wearing a red and black saree. Brahmi assures Raghu by telling him that he is the only one who knows why she is going to Gurgaon and their friends only know she is shifting there and would study through an open school.

For Brahmi's farewell Rishab's parents allow them to take the 1st floor of the house and do whatever they wished doing besides breaking the showpieces. This shows how Rishab's parents were liberal in allowing their child to do whatever he wishes to. At Rishab's house they talked, smoked, coughed and laughed. Brahmi smiled all through and telling her how they would miss her. The farewell turned quite emotional for Brahmi.

As Raghu and Brahmi reach Brahmi's place after the farewell Brahmi's aunt and uncle spot them, dragging Brahmi home and locking her in the room. They find

out Brahmi leaving the home and running away from the house from the bag that was packed in her room. They suspect her of running away with Raghu.

They drag Raghu to the house to inquire where Brahmi was going. Raghu being very angry with rage refuses to tell them and states he wants to speak to his parents. When Raghu says this her uncle and aunt reveal that her parents were long dead ten years ago and she makes up stories of them being alive.

Raghu gets a shock listening to this and does not understand why Brahmi lied to him, he feels cheated by Brahmi. He then realizes why Brahmi would never ask for help from her parents and also lie about them working at far away places. Pieces of the jigsaw puzzles fall into place her parents were dead, that was irrefutable. They were not alive with shifting geographical locations. Raghu had not once suspected her of lying.

The daze of mixed emotions leave Raghu and he realizes that he had done the same thing which Brahmi did that was keeping Sami his best friend alive in his head, in his behaviour, in the way he felt and interacted, in the way he lived and the way he loved, till he meets Brahmi and everything changes.

After the incident when Raghu spots her in the balcony she looked like absolutely nothing's wrong with her life which explains a lot of things to Raghu. Grief and Brahmi had been with each other for so long that suffering silently was second nature to her.

Raghu finds out that Brahmi has left, without telling him at this point he felt helpless he thought she didn't need him as she had helped herself. To divert his mind he watches a TV show which showcases eleventh and twelfth graders and Raghu states that none of them behave the way the students do. When there is no

sign of Brahmi for eleven days Raghu checks the newspapers for any suicides. He feels that Brahmi might have probably ended her life.

On the fourteenth day Raghu sees Brahmi with her uncle's scooter which makes him realize that she had ran away with it. Brahmi tells her how her work is going on in the call centre and how her trainees are teaching her to speak American accent. After the training she would no longer be called Brahmi but Becky.

She tells him how lucky she was to have Vedant as a brother who was showing her the world. Raghu notices her eyes glinted with hope as did Raghu's with mad envy. The only thing that Raghu wants to ask Brahmi when they meet is why she lies to people about her parents.

When Brahmi is away from Raghu, he tries to divert his mind and not think about Brahmi very often. So he decides to be interested in the things his friend Sahil had to tell him about coding or hacking or whatever he does with the PowerBook, and be more involved in the fights Rishab and Arundhati often find themselves in. He takes out time to volunteer Zubeida for a scan at the nursing home which made his brother suitably impressed by him. Whenever Brahmi calls Raghu he made sure that he speaks only the most important things as they would get little time. She tells Raghu how her works hectic and her sleep schedule is all topsy-turvy as she has to be up the entire night for her duty.

To know about Brahmi's whereabouts her taiji and tauji go to Raghu's house, Raghu refuses to tell them and blames Brahmi's aunt and uncle for abusing and beating her. Looking at Raghu's behavior his parents berate him for talking rudely to them after which Raghu tells them that Brahmi is with Vedant. Raghu says, *"All four adults in the room nodded in sympathetic affirmation. This was*

society. Four fully grown adults believing in and agreeing to something absolutely stupid" (Datta 202). This statement is significant and tells how Brahmi's aunt and uncle were not bothered about Brahmi but were more bothered about by what the society would say to if Brahmi does not come home.

Raghu's parents feel as if they had been slapped when Brahmi's aunt and uncle state to them that they would understand them as even their son had been run away. Raghu tells them that if they are so bothered by what society would say then Brahmi can come and visit them with Vedant to show that relationships still exist and then go back.

After not seeing Brahmi nor talking to her on call, Raghu gets anxious and wants to know if Brahmi goes missing for three years and comes back equally in love, what should be the ideal course of action. These are the questions that go on in Raghu's mind when Brahmi does not show up to him.

When they meet the next time Brahmi treats Raghu with her first salary. While Raghu goes on to tell her the events of her family, he turns the conversation to her and asks if she has made any friends. Raghu could feel that Brahmi had changed to some extent by the way she talked very less very unusual of Brahmi who loved to talk. Raghu had many thoughts regarding Brahmi and his relationship. Raghu says, *"She could change as a person and so could I. And it was possible for us to like someone else"* (Datta 204). He thinks Brahmi would make new friends and eventually forget him.

Raghu felt miserable when Brahmi tells him that she gave half of her salary to her taiji and tauji. Raghu felt that the least thing Brahmi could have done to them was report to the police about them for physically abusing her. Every time Brahmi

meets Raghu and goes to Gurgaon, Raghu waits to meet her next time like a love struck Romeo. Not being able to talk or meet Brahmi, Raghu goes to meet her Tauji and Taiji to ask them if they have any clue about her. They give him the address, company name and phone number written on a paper. Raghu feels betrayed as it was not he to whom Brahmi had given her address but to her uncle and aunt.

Raghu feels that Brahmi would stop loving him and eventually find someone else. Brahmi's coldness towards him was wrecking his heart. He wanted Brahmi to confess the truth and tell him it's over, that she feels nothing for him. Only when Raghu is with his family he stops obsessing over Brahmi's absence, and over her possible boyfriend which he thinks Brahmi would have.

He states at least then he can start mourning and make a fresh start. Raghu just needed to hear it from her. He say, "*The world's a shitty place and we have got to accept it*" (Datta 232). Raghu says this statement when he feels that Brahmi is not the person he fell in love with and it becomes impossible for him to accept that. He tells her that he will continue loving her till the time he can and it's unfair on both of them to be in an unrequited relationship. He states that just as it was Brahmi's prerogative to stay away, this was his.

Raghu feels that Brahmi does not feel the same way as she once did. Brahmi listens to what Raghu says and later asks him why he hasn't been talking to any of his friends. Raghu tells Brahmi that they are not his friends and he never felt the need to make friends, all he needed was her. Brahmi replies to Raghu saying she needed him with her the most.

After listening to what Raghu had to say Brahmi starts crying and looking at her state Raghu feels like stopping her but refrains himself and thinks that Brahmi

never opened up to him and would always talk in riddles and only make him sadder. Raghu thinks of how Brahmi had shown signs from the very beginning by lying to him about her parents, by hiding things about her past even though she told she loved him.

Brahmi reaches out to Arundhati, Sahil and Rishab to talk to Raghu, and make sure he was fine. It hadn't ended well for anyone as it angered Raghu that Brahmi could call them but not him. When they turn up to see Raghu they tried cracking jokes and make Raghu feel better which does not help him so he just leaves the house. When Rishab tries to stop Raghu he throws a stone at Rishab's and Sahil's forehead looking at this Arundhati screams at Raghu stating that both he and his girlfriend Brahmi are mental.

Raghu's mother observes his behaviour and gets to know that Brahmi is not with Raghu anymore and tells him that "*At the end of the day it's only family that sticks around with you, is it not?*" (Datta 200). Here Raghu's mother emphasizes on the fact that at end it's only family helps during troubles and nobody else, trying to make Raghu understand to stop running and obsessing after Brahmi.

Brahmi goes to meet Raghu after she gets the news of Anirban's death. Raghu asks her if this is what made her to speak to him and he starts smoking not knowing what to do exactly after meeting Brahmi. This a common alternative that youngsters now a days choose to do. It is Richa who conveys to Raghu that Brahmi cried for nearly two hours sitting near their apartment.

This makes Raghu to finally confront Brahmi and asks her the reason she agreed to leave him. Having nothing to say she finally shows him the cuts on her hands, that's when Raghu realizes that she only wore full sleeves shirts while

meeting him. She reveals that the cuts were because of Vedant who had kept a hidden video camera in the bathroom which Brahmi finds out about. Brahmi made sure she put the towel on the camera while bathing so that nothing gets recorded. Brahmi narrates the events that take place with her while living with Vedant and how he made her living difficult. She tells Raghu how Vedant tried to break the lock of the bathroom and come inside and since then Brahmi stopped bathing when Vedant was awake.

When Vedant goes home drunk one day with his friend Brahmi knew what they wanted from her. The minute Brahmi sees them at the door, she runs, locks herself in and put cuts on her hands while they banged at the door. When Vedant saw the cuts on Brahmi's hand he thought that she would kill herself in his apartment and hence stayed away from her. She would sleep with her door locked with a knife under her pillow. Raghu was shattered to hear how much Brahmi suffered.

Raghu tells Brahmi to leave Vedant's apartment and offers Brahmi to live in her brother's rented apartment to which Brahmi agrees. With her savings, she had bought a stove on which she would cook for her. She says, *"If these are going to be my last few days, I'd rather live like a queen"* (Datta 252).

Brahmi then tells Raghu that she knows why he is waiting to end his life. That he is waiting for Zubeida's son to come to life. After Zubeida delivers, Raghu packs his bag and tells his parents that he would never see them again and leaves the house. His parents do not take Raghu seriously and say he would stay at a friend's place for a few days and would come back home.

Both Brahmi and Raghu decide to end their lives as they felt they had no reason to live. Brahmi tells Raghu to see his nephew for the last time and both of them go to see him. He sees junior Anirban when Maa comes back home with him.

Brahmi and Raghu cleaned the apartment in which Brahmi was living and walked up to the terrace from where they decide to end their lives. Raghu knew they both were thinking of the motion of events their deaths would unfold. Raghu only hopes that his parents find his diary in which he had written all the events and see how wrong they and Brahmi's aunt and uncle were.

For the last time they both decide to write a letter to each other before jumping off the building. When Brahmi is on the edge Raghu is still writing his letter. After he is done writing he opens Brahmi's letter to read. By the time he reads her letter Brahmi jumps off the building leaving Raghu behind.

The novel ends by Brahmi's letter to Raghu which says, *"You have a lot of time. You're not going to die today. You have a long, fulfilling life to live. You have to live. For my sake. And some day, you will find someone who will love you more than I ever did, and that day you will thank me. Now it's time for me to go. When I jump, don't follow me, don't try to save me. Save yourself instead. If you have ever loved me, don't come after me"* (Datta 263).

She prevents Raghu from jumping off the building with her. She even tells Raghu she does not have the strength to live anymore like him. The book ends with Brahmi dying and leaving Raghu to live his life. We see how this connects with the death of his best friend Sami. Raghu who sees Sami dying in front of him and could not reach out to help both his best friend and Brahmi. This shows his helplessness

in both the times. Raghu's love and friendship with Brahmi made him realize that unlike her he wants to live with even the little hope that he gets in his life.

4.4. Changing friendships

In the novel we also see Raghu's friendship with Arundhati Bhattacharya who is his new neighbour, his classmate Sahil and his new class mate Rishab Batra.

Sahil Ahuja was Raghu's class mate and Raghu had never seen Sahil talk to anyone except the teachers whom he terrorized. Sahil always took the last seat of the class which was a point for audacious behaviour from where he routinely threw good and crude jokes at the teachers, little paper bullets at students, and frequently got expelled from the class. Sahil had failed twice in the fifth standard. Being two years older than all of them gave him three extra inches of height, making him the only person in the class who was not taller than Brahmi.

Arundhati was Raghu's new neighbour. When Raghu meets Arundhati the first time he was very shy to talk to her. When she comes to Raghu place for the first time she had carried a thick book with her which makes Raghu's Maa's eyes lit up when Arundhati walked in as she thought Arundhati was a studious girl. Raghu described her as a studious-looking, bite-sized, feet-touching, nice Bengali girl.

Arundhati mentions how her parents were devastated when she had taken humanities and tells Raghu that her parents would adopt him and his brother and would love to have them as their sons who are scholars. Her parents think she will ruin her life by taking up humanities. We see here how parents think that their children should only do Engineering and not take up humanities they only want her

to become an engineer or a doctor. Somehow they feel there is no scope in humanities.

At the beginning Raghu's mother was very happy to see Arundhati, she thought she was a studious girl but her opinion changes once she gets to know she has taken humanities. Raghu's mother goes on to describe how Paula aunt's son who had taken up humanities works in an advertising firm for just rupees five thousand. This shows how Raghu's mother have a liking towards somebody only if the person fits into her category of being smart and studious.

There is an incident in the novel when Raghu and Arundhati talk about how she has not fulfilled her parents wish by scoring less Raghu tells Arundhati that she could have put in more handwork and that he got 91.2 percent only because he put in extra hours of study. When Arundhati asks him what he wants to do or pursue he responds saying no one will approve of what he really wants to do. Here he means to say that he wants to end his life and if he tells about this to anyone no one will approve of it.

After the board exams Arundhati's parents were disappointed with her performance in the exams though they do not show their disappointment when they went to celebrate to the Ganguly's house for Raghu's no.1 position. Arundhati is someone who loves listening to English pop music unlike the slow songs and when she plays them in the morning it helps Raghu with his morning anxiety. Arundhati talks about how her school in Kolkata was stricter whose teachers would knock their knuckles if they dress untidy than in Delhi.

Arundhati made sure she visited the temple every Tuesday. Unlike Raghu who said his prayers in Sanskrit, Arundhati said her prayers in English. She even

asks Raghu to teach him some of the chants and asks Raghu if this is how he impresses girls in his class by saying mantras. Arundhati thanks Raghu for teaching her the mantras by giving a mix tape of English songs.

During Raghu's breakup with Brahmi Raghu feels disappointed by Rishab and Arundhati when she tells him they are dating each other. He couldn't find it in his heart to be happy for them. Raghu feels how his friends could decide on pursuing a new relationship, fall in love, when a friend of theirs was going through such a difficult phase of their lives. He fakes a smile and congratulates her. This makes Raghu to say that they were not really his friends and would just fill the hours in his day.

When Raghu goes to talk to Arundhati to share what happened between Brahmi and him, Arundhati stops him from entering inside as her boyfriend Rishab was at home and refuses to talk to him. Raghu disappointed at Arundhati's behaviour thinks that such people cannot be his friends. He also thinks that it is only because of him that Arundhati and Rishab could be together. Datta portrays here that when you need someone the most to share your feelings, the person does not get anybody. Here since Raghu had nobody to share his feelings goes home to write down a letter to Brahmi not knowing how it will reach her tearing it apart.

Rishab Batra was a new student in Raghu's class who had transferred from G.D. Parekar School, a school for children who cannot live without central air conditioning. The reason for Rishab shifting his school was that he drove himself to school being the son of a rich business man. According to Rishab this might have influenced his classmates causing their parents to complain against Rishab and expel him since they didn't want a bad influence on their children. This shows how

some youngsters get influence by their peers in the class and want to imitate them. Raghu describes Rishab as handsome, like a movie star, and his heart shrank when Brahmi was staring at Rishab who looked like the kind of boy who would hold a girl's hand and make her fall in love with him.

Looking at Rishab, Raghu thought that he might be a threat to his love story with Brahmi. Rishab Batra was a wealthy boy who wore a watch with a metallic band, his hair was a well-made puff and his posture that of a rich, spoilt kid. Sahil and Rishab became friends laughing and backslapping each other like long-lost friends, just after their first meet which irritated Raghu to no end.

Sahil had a very different perception about Rishab and was disappointed when Rishab tells him he never had a girlfriend, didn't smoke, hadn't ever been to a club, hadn't stayed overnights at a friend's place, hadn't travelled abroad or had a passport, or banged his car into a hawker, all things Sahil expected rich kids to do. Their group was now of four people in it.

Raghu was uncomfortable and didn't like when Rishab and Sahil talked about other girls, their skirt lengths, the imagined boyfriends of their classmate. Raghu thought like Sahil and Rishab others might be discussing about Brahmi and him too. Raghu was someone who had never smoked and initially refuses to smoke when Rishab and Sahil offer him. However Rishab and Sahil somehow get him into doing it saying there is always a first time. This yet again shows how peers can force and influence each other and make them do things they don't want to.

Raghu would believe when his parents would tell him Stories of men dying of smoking, in motorcycle accidents, through bad marriages, which later his brother tells him were fictional. This was his parents attempt to indirectly tell Raghu and

Anirban to not do or try any of the things. Raghu also feels envious looking at Rishab's family eating together he somehow feels going back to time when his family were that way and wanted to be like Rishab's family.

Chapter five: Conclusion

Reflections on youthful journeys

Durjoy Datta through his novels has portrayed a wide range of emotions through the young characters in his novels. The complexities they face like social media influence, career expectations, relationship dynamics and mental health. Datta writes about experiences, emotions, and challenges that young people face in today's world as he gets the inspiration from his own college life. Datta creates stories that resonate with youth in contemporary society who are navigating similar situations in their own lives.

My study which aimed to study the youth culture through young characters in Durjoy Datta's selected novel that is *You Were My Crush: Till You Said You Love Me!* and *The Boy Who Loved* shows how Datta has portrayed youth culture through the young characters their complexities and nuances by delving into their emotions encouraging and helping the readers to reflect on their own emotions, experiences and perspectives making his books popular among young readers.

Chapter Two has discussed the definition of youth culture which says how the youth have processes and symbolic systems that are distinct from those of adults in community. The debate over the existence of youth culture, theories on emergence on youth culture and how youngsters seek for autonomy at this stage in their life, some aspects of youth culture like, changes in youth culture, youth culture's effect on society and the complexities faced by youngsters like depression, body anxieties, love relationships, obsession with materialistic things are discussed.

In Chapter Three which includes the analysis of the novel *You Were My Crush: Till You Said You Love Me!* By Durjoy Datta we see different young

characters. Benoy who is a college going youngster who has to deal with a lot of ups and downs in his life. Benoy's behavior after his mother's death causes him to resort to alcohol and smoking instead of seeking therapy or letting out his emotions to his loved ones. We see how his strained relationship with his father only gets better when he starts communicating with him after his mother's untimely death which signifies how communication is the most important thing which youngsters miss out in today's generation.

Diya another young character who aspires and dreams to study in London School of Economics whose dreams remains unfulfilled due to an unforeseen accident. Shaina grapples with toxic relationship in life and expressing her true emotions. It also shows Benoy's personal growth as an individual who turns from an irresponsible boy to a more responsible and mature one.

In Chapter Four which includes the analysis of the novel *The Boy Who Loved* is realistic on several grounds, it starts with a depressing note and the tone of the whole book remains the same. Several elements and social issues that are plaguing our world even today are discussed. Raghu who is grief stricken with the death of his best friend, goes through a depressive state and develops suicidal tendencies and feels that there is nothing remarkable about his life.

The novel has shown the prejudices people towards certain section of the society or towards any religion. This is depicted through Raghu's brother Anirban who falls in love with a Muslim girl and elopes from his house due to disapproval of his parents on inter religious marriage.

On the other hand, Brahmi, who is an orphan is a victim of physical assault from his aunt and uncle and has to go through a painful experiences. There is some

ray of hope in between the book but it does not stay till the end. Although suffering from a lot of pain, Brahmi gives Raghu the hope and courage to live his life and ending her own life by committing suicide. We see the emotional turmoil of Brahmi that leads her to take such a drastic step in her life.

One of the similar thing in both the novels of my study is how the characters Shaina in the first novel and Raghu in the second novel rely on other means like social media blogging and journal writing to express their feelings. We see a lot of youngsters doing this now a days from their social media accounts being influencers and documenting their life through vlogs. On the face of things their life seems very attractive and many youngsters yearn to be like them. Similarly youngsters who engage themselves in writing journal entries in turn giving them an opportunity to introspect on their journey of life.

The author has depicted a variety of topics such as the importance of family and friends in life, the necessity of love, a perspective on conservative Indian society, and an unconventional love relationship between parents and children.

He has portrayed how dynamics of youth culture change by passing each generations and how youngsters think differently from their parents. Engage themselves in risky behaviors like smoking, drinking alcohol and taking drugs which they feel gives them pleasure.

We can see how Durjoy Datta has written the novels using simple language understandable to everyone. One important feature about Durjoy Datta's novels is that he uses a very simple, conversational language. While his language may not be overly complex he writes by connecting with readers on a personal level with

relatable dialogues, everyday vocabulary and a straight forward narrative style making his books best sellers specially among the youth and other people.

We can see how Datta makes use of slangs in the writing. Datta believes his books are popular, particularly with college going students, because they portray their carefree lifestyle which has some slang words which is very common among the youth of today. Datta uses slangs in his novels to make the dialogues and interactions between characters more realistic to the readers.

By incorporating slangs, Datta creates a sense of authenticity in the way his characters speak, reflecting the language and expressions commonly used by young people in everyday conversations. This use of slangs adds a layer of familiarity and modernity to his writing, making his stories feel more current and engaging for his audience.

In an interview when asked about youngsters language on social media apps he says, "I don't understand why people find it such a hassle to type a few extra letters when they text," he says. "Using abbreviations is understandable but what annoys me most is when the new spelling has more letters than the original word. Replacing 'my' with 'mah' doesn't make you popular. Calling cool 'kewl' certainly perturbs me."

Datta has also co-written some of his novels to bring a diverse range of perspectives, writing styles, and ideas to his books. Collaborating with other writers allows Datta to explore different storytelling techniques, develop more complex characters, and create unique narratives that blend the strengths of each co-author. This collaborative approach can result in richer storylines and more dynamic characters, enhancing the overall reading experience for his audience.

Overall Datta's novels provide a realistic depiction of youngsters their challenges, dreams, aspirations, relationships, friendships in the society. It depicts how youngsters grapple with these aspects of their life to build their identity to become mature individuals or adults in society.

As rightly said by Samuel Ullman, "*Youth is not a time of life; it is a state of mind*". A quote which resembles with the characters in the novels of Durjoy Datta and the youth in contemporary society.

the first of these is the fact that the first of the three
 main groups of the population, the "white" population,
 is the most numerous, and the second, the "colored"
 population, is the least numerous. The third group,
 the "mixed" population, is the most numerous of the
 three, but it is not as numerous as the "white"
 population. The "white" population is the most
 numerous of the three, and the "colored" population
 is the least numerous. The "mixed" population
 is the most numerous of the three, but it is not
 as numerous as the "white" population.

The second of the three main groups of the population
 is the "colored" population, which is the least
 numerous of the three. The "white" population
 is the most numerous of the three, and the
 "mixed" population is the most numerous of the
 three, but it is not as numerous as the "white"
 population. The "white" population is the most
 numerous of the three, and the "colored" population
 is the least numerous. The "mixed" population
 is the most numerous of the three, but it is not
 as numerous as the "white" population.

The third of the three main groups of the population
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 numerous of the three. The "white" population
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 "colored" population is the least numerous of the
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 is the most numerous of the three, but it is not
 as numerous as the "white" population.

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