

Understanding the Suicidality of Working Women in Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa's *Brink*

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Abstract

Suicide among working women is a growing concern and a subject of research that is frequently ignored. The objective of this research is to highlight the challenges faced by employed women that drive them to contemplate suicide, as shown through the protagonist, Amrita, in Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa's novel *Brink* (2020). Characters function as a conduit connecting the observer to the narrative. This allows the audience to experience empathy for the characters. The process of creating a character is a form of artistic expression. This study aims to analyse the portrayal of Amrita's character in the novel *Brink* (2020). The main character, Amrita, is a single mother with a difficult past who fights to live a self-sufficient life with her sons. This study uses Meike Bal's Construction of Image to analyse Amrita's characterisation and transformation throughout the novel. It underlines the importance of connection and hope in moulding her into a happy, driven woman instead of a depressed and hopeless woman. The research concludes by underscoring the importance of literature delving into sensitive topics to raise awareness and stimulate dialogue.

Keywords: Women's Suicide; Working Women; Literary Character; Suicide Ideation; Construction of Image; Transformation

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Introduction

Approximately 40% of Indian women make up the global population of women who die by suicide (Safi, 2018). In India, the suicide death rate (SDR) for women is twice as high as the global average (Dandona et al., 2023). These statistics unmistakably highlight the vulnerability of Indian women, their unfavourable social perception, and the extent to which they necessitate aid. The National Crime Records Bureau (2023) in India recorded an estimated 48,172 female suicides during the year 2022. When the news of a woman committing suicide circulates, it reminds thoughts of homemakers.

Additionally, there are employed women who experience and cope with suicide ideation; however, their narratives frequently go unacknowledged by society. This is a growing concern that must be addressed and discussed to raise awareness among all individuals, particularly in India. Literature serves as a means to disseminate information and raise awareness regarding pressing societal issues. It frequently facilitates the initiation of transformation in the minds of its readers. There is a scarcity of Indian literary works that explore the issue of suicidality.

Do readers exhibit any reluctance in reading novels featuring characters who are contemplating or attempting suicide? There is a belief that books addressing the topic of suicide can hurt individuals, leading them astray (Gutiérrez-Jones, 2015). However, there are also literary works that provide hope and inspiration to readers. *Brink* (2020) by Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa exemplifies such fiction. The protagonist, Amrita, grapples with despair and suicidal ideation; the author similarly portrays her fortitude and frailty. The narrative of her experience closely mirrors that of several Indian working women who exhibit suicidal tendencies. Analysing Amrita's inclination towards suicide can aid in understanding the occurrence of suicide among Indian women.

Literary characters are creations of the human psyche and memory or recreations. It

contributes to the creation of an engaging and memorable story. According to Fortis Jannidis, a form of knowledge relevant to the narrative analysis of character is the encyclopaedic knowledge of people that underlies the reasoning that contributes to the process of characterising, that is, a store of information ranging from everyday knowledge to genre expertise (Jannidis, 2013). Jannidis asserts that extensive knowledge and comprehension of human behaviour facilitate the process of character creation.

Character creation is an art in and of itself. Along with the characters, the audience laughs, cries, resents, loves, loathes, and becomes enraged. For instance, every reader of Charles Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841) mourned Little Nell's demise. Dickens received numerous mails pleading with him to save Nell's life. People anxiously awaited Nell's fate at the beach in America. Nell's demise prompted people to write obituaries and construct graves and monuments for her. The connection between a reader and a character reflects the author's skill.

Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa, one of the most prominent contemporary Indian authors, is a recipient of a number of National and State honours, including the Sahitya Akademi Award (1975), the Nadoja Award (2011), the Padma Shri Award (2016), and the Padma Bhushan Award (2023). The majority of his works have been rendered in English and Hindi. In interviews, Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa stated that his goal is to compose immortal texts. He adds that all his works and characters must be relatable regardless of when or where they are read. *Brink* is one such novel published on Mental Health Day in 2020 and is a translation of the 1990 Kannada novel *Anchu*. The narrative and characters are still pertinent in *Brink* (2020), so readers can relate to them. The novel *Brink* (2020) is inspired by a true tale. In an interview with Firstpost, Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa states that the central figure, Amrita is based on "a woman who was betrayed by her own aunt and, unable to seek revenge or accept what had happened, vented all her anger on a

person who was close to her and comforted her” (Agrawal, 2020). Aarushi, the critic and interviewer, considers it a triumph of fiction that it can evoke such strong, conflicting emotions in a reader and so fully express an aspect of the human condition (Agrawal, 2020).

The novel explores a variety of emotions, including joy, rage, agony, misery, sorrow, and resentment, which, when combined, comprise the characteristics or personalities of the novel’s characters. When readers connect to the characters, they are exposed to the characters’ emotional roller coaster. Using Mieke Bal’s *Construction of Image* as a framework, this paper examines the character Amrita through the lens of its four guiding principles: repetition, accumulation, relations to other characters, and transformation. It also accentuates the role that ‘connection’ and ‘hope’ play in Amrita’s life, contributing to her character’s transformation. The transformation of Amrita from a despondent and desolate woman to a joyful and optimistic woman provides the readers with hope. Through the literary character Amrita in Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa’s *Brink* (2020), this study aims to highlight the struggles faced by Indian women, especially working women who are pushed to commit suicide.

The research begins with the introduction which addresses the less discussed subject, suicide among working women in India along with its purpose and significance. Furthermore, it provides an analysis of the craft of character development and presents the novel *Brink* (2020). The literature review investigates two sections: Indian Women and Suicide and Character Construction, which identifies the research gap regarding the suicide of working women in India. The methodology of the research demonstrates how ‘Construction of Image’ by Mieke Bal is utilised to examine the literary character. The analysis centres on the character development and suicidal ideation of Amrita. The research reveals, through the character of Amrita, the obstacles encountered by employed women and their latent struggles against societal and cultural prejudices. Moreover, it underscores the significance of

literary works in confronting sensitive subjects like suicide.

Literature Review

The literature review is structured into two distinct sections: Indian Women and Suicide and Construction of Character. The initial section specifically concentrates on research exclusively related to Indian women and suicide. The second chapter provides a summary of research pertaining to literary characters. The literature review incorporates a selection of texts, including research papers, books, newspaper articles, and reviews.

Indian Women and Suicide

An in-depth study by Ramesh et al. (2022) states that India stands out by a significantly high suicide rate, specifically, among high-income countries. Additionally, the study conducted identified a dearth of research concerning the correlation between gender and its implications for suicide prevention. “India accounted for 36% of global female suicide deaths” (“Indian women a third of world’s female suicides”, 2018). Authorities speculate that this troubling data “may arise from a disconnect between women’s ambitions and societal expectations” (Smith, 2018). The incidence of “morbidity and mortality” attributable to suicidal behaviour is considerably greater among women than men. Suicidal tendencies are much more prevalent among women, which can be attributed to their heightened susceptibility to psychopathology and psychosocial stressors (Vijaykumar, 2015). Rahul Shidhaye discerns two patterns: firstly, there was a positive correlation between the suicide mortality rate among females aged 14–15 and 17–18 and their educational attainment up to and including the 9-12 grade; secondly, this trend ceased to exist among women who had graduated or completed their higher education. Furthermore, a substantial disparity was observed in the suicide mortality rate between married and unmarried women, in which married women had a higher suicide rate (Shidhaye, 2023).

Zadey (2022) and Dutta (2022) report that over half of Indian women who die by suicide are

homemakers. Married women in poor households who experience violence, control, and limited independence from their spouses are at a higher risk of committing suicide (Radhakrishnan, 2023). In this context, Arora and Rege (2022) argue for the establishment of healthcare facilities specifically designed for women who have experienced violence and elucidate the potential of mental health assistance to dissuade such individuals from taking their own lives. In a survey on working women, Begum and Khokhar (2019) reported that the incidence of suicidal ideation is more prevalent among women employed in the private sector compared to those in the public sector.

Recent years have seen an increase in the prominence of the investigation of female suicides in India, which is an emergent field of study. Significant importance is attributed to sociodemographic variables, particularly the higher suicide prevalence among homemakers than employed women. This research, however, aims to gain insights into the suicidal tendencies exhibited by the working mother character Amrita, and the determinants that contributed to her contemplation of suicide, and the strategies she employed to surmount her suicidal thoughts.

Construction of Character

A historical precedent exists for the examination of biblical characters as the practice of analysing or scrutinising the characters in a text. A compilation of literary character-related books, articles, and reviews provides a detailed overview of some of the numerous categories of research conducted concerning the study of character.

In his book, *Why Do We Care About Literary Characters* (2010), Blakey Vermeule explains that literary authors use literary devices and characters to captivate readers by appealing to their innermost reading faculties. Drawing parallels to other forms of media, the author concludes that literary authors exploit the human propensity for rumour to attract attention to their works and characters by analysing the impact of various characters'

qualities and traits. Whereas narrative characters possess a great deal more to offer viewers, according to Currie (2009), due to their abundance of narrator prompts and the assumption that each character action serves a purpose. Exposition, a phase in the process of character development, is defined by Varotsi (2019) as the communication of hidden meanings within a text. Tiwari (2016) conducts an analysis of Sashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), which supports the perspectives of Currie and Varotsi. Through the three mythical figures from the Mahabharata: Bhishma, Dhritarashtra, and Duryodhana in the novel, *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), Tharoor illustrates how individual desires have impeded the progress of the nation. These characters and the historical events resemble the three prominent leaders of the Indian independence movement: Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Indira Gandhi (Tiwari, 2016).

Elizabeth Fowler's *Literary Character: The Human Figure in Early English Literature* (2003) offers a fresh perspective on character analysis by arguing that an individual's identity is socially constructed and contextual, both in real life and in literary works. The study investigates the interpenetration between literary texts and the discursive practices of social groups (Quitslund, 2004). As an illustration, the enduring persona of Robinson Crusoe inspires individuals to persevere through "in surviving whatever separates us from others, whether it be an exile, abandonment, isolation, disguise, or the abuse of power by or toward ourselves" (Kraft, 2007: 54).

According to Gerrig (2010), a correlation exists between the reader's personality and the characters' actions. A literary character may elicit both admiration and hatred from readers, contingent upon their individual perspectives, understanding, and life experiences. Additionally, Šušić (2020) highlights that in the traditional interpretation of literary works, moral attitudes and actions were often used to assess the quality of the characters. However, he emphasises the constructive methodological approach adopted by modern literary character

analysis, which underscores the significance of the 'characterization process' in literature education (Šušić, 2020).

Based on the analysis presented in this section of the literature review, it is evident that the characterisation process has frequently been neglected within the domain of character analysis. Bal's construction of the image is employed to analyse the character of Amrita and her suicidal tendencies in Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa's novel *Brink* (2020).

Methodology

The research aims to elucidate the difficulties faced by employed women, particularly those experiencing despair, by analysing the portrayal of the character Amrita in the novel *Brink* (2020) who contemplates suicide. *Brink* (2020) is among the limited number of Indian literary works that candidly depict the true nature and susceptibility of a suicidal working woman. The study employs Meike Bal's Construction of an image framework to assess the character. In his 1997 book *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, Meike Bal attributes repetition, accumulation, relationship to others, and transformation to the 'construction of image' to a character. Bal elucidates the principles: repetition is the recurrence of data to accentuate a character's characteristics. The accumulation of data facilitates comprehension of the significance of disparate data. The relationship between a character and other characters contributes to developing the character's image and characteristics. Indeed, every character undergoes transformation, which sometimes modifies the character's entire appearance (Bal, 1997). Therefore, he states that "[r]epetition, accumulation, relations to other characters, and transformation are four different principles which work together to construct the image of a character" (Bal, 1997: 125-126).

This research aims to analyse the factors that influence suicide ideation and explore the role of "connection" and "hope" in the transformation of Amrita's character in Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa's novel *Brink* (2020). The study highlights the undisclosed narrative of a

working woman, Amrita, and her susceptibility to suicidal ideation. Additionally, it incorporates illustrations from both fictional and real female figures to emphasise the challenges faced by women in the workforce and their susceptibility to suicidal thoughts.

Brink: An Overview

The novel *Brink* (2020), a translation of the 1990 Kannada novel *Anchu*, is about the complicated love story between Amrita, a single mother separated from her spouse, and Somashekar, a widowed architect. Ranganath Prasad, the translator, mentions that paradoxically 'Amrita' means 'ambrosia', 'Soma-shekar' is another name for Lord Shiva, and in a mythological event, Shiva ingested poison to save the universe (Bhyrappa, 2020: 3). The protagonists' names foreshadow the novel's plot, in which Somashekar risks his own life to save Amrita.

Amrita, a lecturer with a doctorate in Kannada literature, lives alone with her two sons, Vijai and Vikas, in her home. She receives assistance from Somashekar in repairing her home, who ultimately saves her life. In a brief period, they develop a friendship that eventually blossoms into love. Even though she is profoundly in love, she experiences guilt as a married woman. Amrita is a strong, independent woman whose life has been filled with suffering. Her mental health and serenity are negatively affected by her aunt Jayalakshmi's embezzlement and her husband Ranganath's deceit. This past burden is the primary cause of her emotional suffering and depression. Suffering, anguish, depression, and hopelessness induce suicidal ideation in Amrita. Almost every night, Amrita writes or rewrites a suicide note and attempts to shoot herself with a revolver, but she pauses in the middle of the attempt when she remembers her children. Her sons are her only link to existence. As her relationship with Somashekar develops, they begin to meet frequently and have nightly telephone conversations. This precludes her from making a suicide attempt. Amrita and Somashekar's relationship deepen over time, raising complex and uncertain concerns about their future. The duo's inability to answer all these queries presents a challenge they strive to

surmount. They are determined to stop seeing each other and sever their ties, but they are unable to do so immediately. Due to their inability to handle the separation, they lost their careers. Both of them attempt to overcome their suffering on their own but are unsuccessful and contemplate suicide. Somashekar severs his ties with the outside world and starts to live in seclusion. Amrita struggles with her suicidality and finally decides to meet Somashekar. Together, they ultimately resolve to live with the children despite all obstacles.

Amrita and her existence are the focal points of the novel. It depicts how suffering, hopelessness, and emptiness pose a threat to her existence, which she is able to overcome with the help of Somashekar. In the novel, Amrita's image is skilfully constructed, and it will be evaluated in detail using Mieke Bal's 'construction of the image' concept. The study employs 'accumulation and repetition' to illustrate Amrita's hopelessness, which ultimately led to her suicidal behaviour, and 'relation to others and transformation' to explain how her relationship(connection) with Somashekar and her children gave her hope and rescued her from the brink of despair.

Accumulation: Progressive Revelation of a Person's Character

"One element interacts with another" (Harper, 2010: 89) says Graeme Harper about creative writing. The accumulation of these elements contributes to the creation of a character's image. The author does not list all of a character's characteristics on a single page. They write with care and disclose characteristics in stages so that the character's mystery is gradually revealed throughout the story. Mieke Bal writes on accumulation— "[t]he accumulation of characteristics causes odd facts to coalesce, complement each other, and then form a whole: the image of a character" (Bal, 1997: 125). The legendary Sherlock Holmes' adept observational, logical, deductive, and problem-solving skills, as well as his forensic expertise, are progressively acquired through the accumulation of character details. The accumulation technique is used to captivate

readers and maintain their interest in the characters.

Throughout the course of *Brink's* plot, Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa mentions numerous characteristics of Amrita. Together, these characteristics paint a complete picture of her. Jayalakshmi, Amrita's aunt, attends the interment of Amrita's mother at her home in Sakleshpur. At the age of six, her mother passed away. Jayalakshmi is the spouse of Amrita's paternal uncle, who is the sibling of her father. Jayalakshmi initially takes care of Amrita and later quickly becomes Amrita's house and coffee plantation's decision-maker. After a few years, Amrita's father passes away. Her aunt resolves to marry Amrita off to Ranganath, her brother. Amrita is determined to continue her education even though she is pregnant and enrolled in the Master of Arts program in Mysore. Shveta, a friend of Amrita whose father also owns a coffee estate, discloses that Jayalakshmi, while overseeing Amrita's home and coffee estates, misappropriated funds. She bought two coffee estates valued at twenty-six hundred thousand for her two sons, Jayarama and Krishnamurthy. Additionally, she almost acquired eighty kilograms of gold and covered the expenses for her brother Ranganath's engineering degree and accommodation in a hostel. Amrita is disheartened at knowing the truth. Even though she is aware of her aunt's deceit, she does not confront her; instead, she confides in her spouse, who rationalises his sister's behaviour. Amrita becomes repulsed by him. When she confronts her aunt, she sheds crocodile tears, vows that she is a loyal servant, and then, one week later, transfers all property and bank privileges into Amrita's name. She becomes pregnant again and describes it as "[a] malice that presently was caused by Ranganath and instigated by his sister" (Bhyrappa, 2020: 101) when she discovers that her husband altered the contraceptive device on the advice of his sister to save their marriage. In addition, she obtains a letter from the bank requesting repayment of the loan, which totals 19 hundred thousand. Amrita realises that her aunt's fraudulent behaviour did not end with purchasing two estates and gold, but also included obtaining a

bank loan without her permission. Amrita ceases all communication with her spouse and returns to Mysore. Amrita's spouse, who works in a different city, neither reaches out to her nor apologises for his errors. She takes care of herself throughout her prenatal and postpartum phases. She negotiates a plan with the bank and coffee estate association to repay the loan monthly and manages her estate. To care for her family, she became a college lecturer after receiving her PhD. The reader's comprehension of Amrita's dismal situation is heightened by the revelation of her tragic past and the accumulation of these elements.

Similar to Amrita, the protagonist, Sumi, in Sashi Deshpande's *A Matter of Time* (1996) is left in a hopeless predicament when her husband, Gopal abandons her and their three children. Sumi handles the circumstance with aplomb. Despite having every right to do so, she did not cry or argue with her spouse. Amrita is viewed as an independent, career-driven woman, whereas Sumi is a stay-at-home mother of three adolescent daughters. In contrast to Amrita, she does not contemplate suicide, and her determination not to give in to her sorrow drives her to be independent. She learns to drive and begins to construct hope independently, whereas Amrita needs Somashekar's help to feel hopeful. Sumi behaves differently than Amrita, and the novel by Sashi Deshpande presents an alternative response to despondency through Sumi.

On reviewing the accumulated data, it can be seen that Amrita trusts and respects her aunt without question until her friend Shveta reveals the truth. She never imagined that her aunt would become a villain. The person she admired and treated as her mother ruined her existence. This vile deed shattered Amrita, but she never pursued legal action for many years against her perpetrator. Amrita is informed that Krishnamurthy, the younger son of her aunt, is her biological brother because he was born to her father. "She was disgusted at her father, rather disdainful, that he had handed over the reins to this aunt not just for the mundane reason of man's lack of enterprise in household

matters, but for obnoxious reasons" (Bhyrappa, 2020:413). Amrita realises that her aunt's deceit is never-ending, and she finally overcomes her past trauma by transferring one-third of her estate to Jayaram and Krishnamurthy. Along with Amrita, readers realise why her father delegates all of his responsibilities to Jayalakshmi, which leads to hopelessness in Amrita's life. Amrita's relationship with her aunt teaches her that one cannot unconditionally trust anyone, even family members.

Currie asserts that narrative allows for the progressive revelation of a person's character (Currie, 2009), and the accumulation of data is one of the most effective narrative techniques compatible with it. Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa employs the same technique to progressively reveal the depth of each character and maintain suspense throughout the book. Numerous pieces of information are intentionally withheld and only revealed at a suitable moment. The aggregation of these particulars is employed to elucidate the source of Amrita's hopelessness and emptiness.

Repetition: Emphasis on Character Development

In order to draw the reader's attention to an important word or phrase in the text, logical emphasis must be shown using repetition (Kemertelidze and Manjavidze, 2013). Repetition is a literary device used to emphasise character development or a plot point. According to Bal (1997), we contemplate something only after our attention has been focused on it several times. *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) by one of the most prominent authors, Virginia Woolf, employs repetition to reiterate Clarrisa's identity crisis as Mrs. Dalloway. In *Brink*, Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa applies this technique proficiently. Amrita's past and her husband's and aunt's betrayal caused melancholy, mood swings, and suicidal tendencies, which are discussed repeatedly in various scenarios to establish her character.

From the outset of the novel, her suicidal thoughts are established, "Death brings about cessation to distress. Not just a thought, a deluge of feelings" (Bhyrappa, 2020: 28). Somashekar is

aware of her suicidal impulses, which she never conceals. Amrita insists that death is not a problematic proposition for her and that she will pass through the vent (Bhyrappa, 2020). She has no fear of death and, in fact, eagerly anticipates it. Her suicidal tendencies intensify at night after her sons have fallen asleep. She experiences emptiness in her life and doubts her own existence. Suicide is a consideration for her as a result of her feelings of isolation and the absence of a loved one who understands her suffering. Despite the criminalisation of suicide under Indian law, Amrita persists in her attempt at self-harm. Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code states, “whoever attempts to commit suicide and does any act towards the commission of such offence, shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year (or with fine or with both)” (Commission, 1888:72). Prominent individuals, including the Iron Lady, Irom Chanu Sharmila of Manipur, were frequently detained on charges of “attempt suicide” during her sixteen-year hunger strike (Imphal, 2015). The law does not deter Irom and numerous women, including Amrita.

Amrita always rides up the Chammundi hills in her car whenever she is feeling depressed. She begins to reminisce about her past and ponder her future as she stands on the edge of the hill. Due to the guards, she fails to leap from the dam into the canal on two subsequent attempts. Amrita’s numerous suicide attempts demonstrate her hopelessness. Employment did not mitigate her susceptibility to suicide attempts. Similarly, many accomplished women have tragically taken their own lives for a variety of motives (Shidhaye, 2023). Varsha Bhosle, a journalist and the daughter of Asha Bhosle, committed suicide by shooting herself following a previous unsuccessful suicide attempt. Varsha succumbed to depression, resulting in her demise (“Why did Asha Bhosle’s daughter Varsha commit suicide? Police clueless,” 2012).

Returning to *Brink* (2020), Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa repeatedly mentions Amrita’s suicidal thoughts and tries to emphasise and elucidate in detail the mother’s

depression and despair. Her persona is reminiscent of Sylvia Plath, a famous poet who took her own life for similar reasons. She was a successful author and mother with a failed marriage who had always yearned for her own demise. After several unsuccessful attempts to end her life, she succeeded (Fraga, 2023). Amrita has a failed marriage and a sad personal existence, despite her professional success. Amrita attempts to compose a new suicide note with frustration. “How many times to write so in the suicide note? Aren’t there umpteen notes enough?” (Bhyrappa, 2020: 62). She is well aware that a sense of desolation and melancholy is the source of her mental anguish and emptiness, which robs her of sleep and makes her restless. Sometimes, she attempts to change her mind and peruse books, but holding a revolver is the only thing that helps. When her sons resemble their father, she becomes despondent because it reminds her of his betrayal. When her children inquire about their father and grandmother, she is disheartened because she believes they are ungrateful despite her best efforts to make them joyful. Somashekar comprehends her despondency, but he is unable to assist her. “Many a day, her mood would go melancholic. For no reason whatsoever, she would flare up in anger” (Bhyrappa, 2020: 43). Every time he attempts, she repels him. Her extreme mood swings are indicative of her melancholy and desolation. Amrita’s extreme duality causes her actions to bewilder and irritate readers until they discover her history. Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa repeatedly depicts her varied actions to illustrate the plight of a depressed woman and elicit sympathy and empathy from the reader. Every audience, particularly women, can relate to Amrita and relate to her emotional turmoil. When Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa presented his book, *Brink*, to psychiatrists, they stated that it resembled a case study. In his interview, Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa states that after reading the book, doctors and psychiatrists praised it as an excellent case study (Agrawal, 2020). In the novel, Amrita and her emotions are portrayed with such originality.

In his article titled *Ariadne's Thread: Repetition and the Narrative Line*, Miller (1976) argues that "repetition is what disturbs, suspends, or destroys the linearity of the line, like a soft wintry aurora playing behind its straightforward logic" (Miller, 1976: 70). He claims that repetition hinders the effectiveness of a story's logic. In contrast, Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa uses repetition to create a powerful and logical storyline that repeatedly mentions Amrita's suicidal nature, extreme mood swings, void, melancholy, and pain in numerous incidents to establish her hopelessness throughout the novel.

Relation to Others: Connection to Existence

The work of literature is not just a source of enjoyment but also an endless supply of human truths and possibilities because of the complexity of human relations, their impact, and their repercussions (Varotsi, 2019). Relationships between characters are crucial to the plot development. In similar context, Bal (1997) asserts that "relations with others also help to build the image of a character. The character's relation to itself in an earlier phase also belongs to this category" (125). The reader's opinion of the character varies depending on their relationship with another character. *The God of Small Things* (1997) by Arundhati Roy is a popular novel about a complicated family coping with various issues. Baby Kochamma, one of the characters, is disliked by the majority of readers as she ill-treats Rahel and Esathappen. Even though she has a tragic past and a lonely existence, she rarely evokes readers' sympathy. This demonstrates the significance of a character's interpersonal relationships.

The beginning of Amrita and Somashekar's relationship occurs when Somashekar arrives at her home to repair the leaking roof. It develops into an admirable friendship that swiftly evolves into affection. The first time Somashekar and Amrita met, Somashekar remarked, "So we share a specific wavelength" (Bhyrappa, 2020: 17). Amrita discloses to Somashekar that her co-worker Jalaja told her about a past incident involving Somashekar; this is the initial reason why she begins to trust him. Jalaja's father was

Somashekar's professor, and Somashekar often stayed at Jalaja's house to complete school-related tasks. He promptly notifies Jalaja's mother when he discovers a gold chain in a book from their home library. Jalaja's mother speaks favourably of Somashekar because he did not steal the chain despite having the opportunity. Amrita perceives that Somashekar is not motivated by money and will never deceive like her aunt and spouse. This once-friendship-turned-love has many stipulations. It is difficult for a mother of two children to abandon everything for love, and this angers her. Sometimes, Amrita yearns to be with Somashekar and other times; she berates herself for having lost her chastity. Guilt is a potent emotion capable of endangering a person's existence. The emotions of regret and remorse are two of the many factors that contribute to our humanity. Amrita's remorse disrupts her relationship with Somashekar. Two factors contribute to Amrita's sense of remorse: one, engaging in a romantic relationship with Somashekar and losing her chastity. Two, the termination of her and Somashekar's pregnancy. Amrita is aware that she and Somashekar share an intense affection. She is determined to advance the relationship by becoming intimate with him. After their physical union, she begins to accuse Somashekar of exploiting a vulnerable married woman.

While you messed with me, shouldn't you have given but a fleeting thought to discriminate between the aptness or otherwise of causing ethical damage to a woman, rendering her sacrilegious towards her husband, of damaging her authority over her children? (Bhyrappa, 2020: 56).

Amrita questions and sends Somashekar out of her house. When she fails in her attempt to end her life, she laments that after losing her chastity, she has lost the courage and composure to confront death. She avoided Somashekar and has not contacted him for twenty-three days. She then reconciles with him after meeting him. However, their relationship continues. As their relationship violates cultural

and societal conventions, Amrita often experiences feelings of guilt. She feels terrible because she believes the relationship will continue to be immoral.

Amrita holds Somashekar accountable for her pregnancy. When she loses her temper, she dumps hot curry and food on his head. She punishes herself later with the iron chains for harming him. Somashekar is frequently assaulted by her, but he maintains his composure in most situations.

Then she slapped him on the right cheek with the same soiled palm. He remained still. Her anger swelled. Raising her hand, she slapped his left cheek, right cheek, this again, that next, back and forth again, delivering seven to eight blows on each. He did not budge. He did not react (Bhyrappa, 2020: 54).

When she realises her errors, she asks him to strike her back as a punishment, which he refuses. Instead of appreciating his serenity, Amrita accuses him of 'butchering' her emotions. The torment that Amrita inflicts on Somashekar frequently irritates readers and makes them feel sorry for him. In her article, Aarushi Agrawal remarks:

As a reader, one often wants to tell Amrita not to take that thing he said so personally and that no, as a reader I've been in his mind, trust me, he didn't mean it like that. And tell Somashekhar not to keep huffing and running away from his own feelings, but try to understand why she may have behaved that way, since as a reader I've been in her mind, and her cruelty is not a true reflection of how she feels about you (Agrawal, 2020).

Amrita is perceived as a selfish and impulsive person who acts in the heat of the moment and subsequently apologises for it, whereas her relationship with Somashekar reates a favourable impression. His forbearance, serenity, and unconditional love for Amrita inspire admiration from the audience. Somashekar resembles Big Hoom's character

from Jerry Pinto's *Em and The Big Hoom* (2012). Twenty years without resentment, Augustine, the Big Hoom, takes care of his schizophrenic wife. He prevents her from committing suicide, takes turns caring for her, never complains, and keeps the family together. Somashekar is also selfless, dedicating his life to saving Amrita from depression. Depression, a serious mental illness, is frequently overlooked and untreated in a significant number of individuals. In her interview with Vogue India, Shaheen Bhatt (2018) discloses that she received a diagnosis of depression at the age of 12 and has made multiple suicide attempts. Shaheen's timely recognition of her illness and prompt medical intervention not only saved her life but also empowered her to regain control over her despair. In Amrita's situation, her connection with her children kept her from trying to take her own life.

Amrita's only link to her existence before meeting Somashekar is the love and affection she has for her children. Whenever she attempts to shoot herself at night, the image of her sons sobbing and the thought of them experiencing trauma after seeing her corpse prevent her from taking the next step. Amrita, prior to shooting herself, considers: "[h]earing the sound, the children would wake up and, seeing their mother, would collapse unconscious and be subjected to mental shock all their lives" (Bhyrappa, 2020: 205). Her concern for her children's welfare compels her to return to them even when she visits the hilltop at midnight. She fears that thieves may break into the home if they observe her departing at midnight. Due to the same reasons, she owns two canines. Amrita is extremely protective of her children. She makes a point of spending time with her sons even when she is emotionally exhausted. She engages them in play and bedtime stories before putting them to slumber. She conceals all of her problems from her children. She introduces them to Somashekar because he is significant and she wants them to know him and accept him in the future. She strives for their approval, exerts effort and sincerely desires for them to like Somashekar. She was even willing to abandon Somashekar for them. She aborts her

child out of concern for her son's reaction. The future of her sons is one of her primary motivations for fighting for the estate. She desires stability for their future. Amrita's connection to her sons inspires her to continue living although she despises her existence. She decided to start a new life with Somashekar because she knew he would adore and care for them as if they were his own children. Amrita makes all of her life decisions with her children and their future in mind.

Amrita is concerned that her sons might not accept the baby and treat it differently. She silences Somashekar and takes him to Bangalore for an abortion. After the abortion, she could not get over the guilt of killing a foetus and began to throw a tantrum at Somashekar. She begins fighting with him without provocation. She believes she has forfeited her right to be a mother. The guilt induces depression and heightens her desire to end her life. She believes that the foetus was preventing her from committing suicide and that nothing can prevent her from taking her own life. The intervention of Somashekar saves her life. Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa illustrates the influence that remorse has on a person's life through Amrita's story, remorse can make or break a person, and Amrita and Somashekar's future is threatened by their accumulated remorse. Amrita's relationship with Somashekar is one of the primary reasons for her ability to surmount suicidal ideas and behaviour. When Somashekar discovers that Amrita is depressed, he does not flee from her.

Amrita, whom he loved, who, a little before, had with the gentle tenderness of royal jasmine, teemed sap de vitae into his body, mind, and soul, was eager to end her life by outing a bullet in her body, he came to know how much he loved her (Bhyrappa, 2020: 58).

Somashekar fears for Amrita's life when she attempts suicide. He fears losing her and genuinely cares about her well-being. His qualities of unconditional love, unwavering support, candour about her past, and recognition of her struggles instil optimism in

Amrita. This 'hope' motivates Amrita to take charge of her life and stand up for her rights. She divorces Ranganath and resolves the property dispute with her aunt's family. Amrita intends to progress forward and settle down in her life with the help of Somashekar. Amrita is able to start a new existence due to Somashekar's unwavering and unrelenting belief in their relationship.

Her relationship with Somashekar and her sons provides her with a reason to live, and she begins to transform as a result. Scholars argue that connectivity's main function is to shield individuals who are highly vulnerable to suicidal thoughts because of their suffering and hopelessness (Klonsky and May, 2015). Amrita's relationship with Somashekar is identified as a significant connection in her existence. With the newfound hope provided by the connection, Amrita begins to mend her shattered existence. Her transformation from a mother without hope to a mother with a strong will is meticulously crafted by Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa.

Transformation: Regaining Existence

Transformation of character happens gradually through deeds, reactions, and assessments; by the time the story is over, the character may have new or different perspectives (Varotsi, 2019). In a story, a character, particularly the protagonist, undergoes a transformation. "The changes or transformations which a character undergoes sometimes alter the entire configuration of character as it looked during the analysis of mutual relations" (Bal, 1997:125). Characters learn from their mistakes in the past, correct them in the present, and evolve into stronger people for the future. This observation resonates the infamous Snape from J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. After Lily's death, Snape resolves to become the person Lily always wanted him to be. He functions as a double agent, deceives Voldemort, and sacrifices himself to save the school.

Somashekar's unconditional affection inspires Amrita to overcome her past demons. Ranganath visits Amrita and engages in casual conversation with her. She confronts him and decides to dissolve their marriage. "I will sign all necessary documents. No need to contribute a

single pai towards the children” (Bhyrappa, 2020: 395). She only overcomes her remorse after filing for divorce from her husband, Ranganath. Even though she knew that her aunt cheated on her, she gives her siblings, her aunt’s son, a portion of her land. It is indicative of Amrita’s righteousness.

Amrita’s incessant efforts to win over her children stem from her insecurity. Her insecurity is heightened by her sons’ desire to meet their father and grandmother. They served as her reason for living. She consistently makes the effort to spend time with them and care for them so that they may comprehend her affection for them. It breaks her heart when her eldest child accuses her of prioritising her career over him. She constantly worries that she may lose her sons to her aunt or spouse. At some point, her exhaustion results from this continuous effort. Amrita persuades herself that even after her demise, either their father or grandmother will care for the children, leaving her with no reason to continue living. With the passage of time and Somashekar’s encouragement, she sues her aunt to recover her money and secure the future of her sons. Amrita, backed by Mangamma, the domestic worker, exposed Jayalakshmi’s wrongdoings to her children. She discloses all relevant case information and ensures it remains up to date. The children’s gradual recognition of their grandmother Jayalakshmi’s real qualities inspires hope in Amrita.

Amrita’s career is negatively impacted by the fact that she devotes no time to professional development. She ultimately quits her employment due to taking too many leaves. To mitigate the financial loss, she sells her jewellery. When Amrita effectively begins to rebuild her life, she decides to enrol in an interior design course and work with Somashekar to start their new firm. After overcoming her past, Amrita reconciles with Somashekar and intends to reside with him and their children.

The transformation of Amrita parallels that of Ankita in Preeti Shenoy’s novel *Life is What You Make It* (2011). When Ankita is diagnosed with bipolar disorder, her existence completely transforms from that of a top MBA student. She

breaks down believing her life is over, but with the aid of her doctor and her commitment to work, she regains control of her disorder. She earns six more degrees and marries a kind man as she advances in her career. Ankita resembles Amrita as she clings to her life connection in the hope of regaining her life.

As the plot develops, Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa orchestrates Amrita’s transformation. Amrita reaches the lowest point of her existence and loses all motivation to continue living or working as the narrative progresses. Then, he demonstrates how Amrita overcomes all of life’s adversities with the help and affection of Somashekar and her children by fighting back against all of the adversities she faces. After reading *Brink*, Aarushi identifies that Somashekar is a “compassionate individual with clarity, he provides her with support and perspective as she climbs out of her own depression” (Agrawal, 2020).

Construction of Image: A Strong-willed and Determined Woman

In *The Bright Chimaera: Character as a Literary Term*, Rawdon Wilson emphasises the significance of character as a literary term and adds, “Character is a construct and like all artefacts open to analytic inquiry” (Wilson, 1979: 733). The construction of a character by a reader is dynamic, but the presentation of a character in a text has a substantial impact on the relationship between the character and the reader (Jannidis, 2013). The depiction of a character influences the reader’s perception of the character. As discussed above, we reiterate that this study has scrutinised Amrita’s depiction in Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa’s *Brink* (2020). Construction of Amrita’s image in relation to Meike Bal’s concept of ‘image construction’ was elaborated based on repetition, accumulation, relation to others and transformation. It also discussed the function of connection and hope, which contributed to Amrita’s development.

We argue that the celebrated author, Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa creates a captivating image of Amrita in *Brink* (2020). He claims that he employs stream of consciousness

to write the story and that the character is derived from the narrative. Stream of consciousness is a narrative technique that endeavours to depict a character's thought process in a realistic manner. It imitates our brain's non-linear thought process. Jannidis states:

[t]he story world is constructed during the process of narrative communication, and characters thus form a part of the signifying structures which motivate and determine the narrative communication (Jannidis, 2013).

Jannidis' philosophy is consistent with Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa's method of creating a plot and characters. For readers, the characters are one of the most important aspects of a story. Characters will be robust and long-lived in compelling storylines. The tale of Amrita exemplifies it. Somashekar's first mental image of Amrita is of her as a beautiful woman.

A mother of two sons, a seven-year-old and a four-year-old, a well-educated woman, astute of intellect, of tall build with attractive facial features, among them keen eyes, and a university lecturer holding a doctoral degree in Kannada literature. She handles everything herself; her husband not around (Bhyrappa, 2020: 12).

The novel's description of Amrita summarises her personal and professional existence. The relationship between Amrita and Somashekar influences her character graph. At the beginning of their friendship, she is pleased to have a friend who understands her like no other. She even expresses her desire for death to end her existence. She has suicidal impulses nearly every night. Although she adores Somashekar, she does not immediately abandon her desire to end her life. The remorse of being in love despite being married and a mother exacerbates her suicidal tendencies. Occasionally, she becomes furious and even reprimands him, claiming that waiting for his call saps her will to live. In some instances, Somashekar's appeal prevents her from pulling the trigger on her pistol. Every time she attempts to sever ties with Somashekar, she

fails. Somashekar gradually gains an understanding of Amrita and adapts to her mood fluctuations. He attempts to establish stability in their life and relationship. Amrita's desolation, depression, and yearning for death are substantially ameliorated by the transformation of their relationship from friendship to love. With Somashekar's persistent efforts, Amrita begins to revive with the acquired hope. This observation is similar to the claims of the acid assault survivor Reshma Qureshi, who said in an interview that her family's unwavering love and support enabled her to overcome her suicidality (Ashraf & Gauba, 2018).

As evidenced by the analysis, Amrita's persona is crafted to foster reader connection and compassion. Amrita's feelings of emptiness and isolation lead to suicidal ideation. Somashekar remains faithful to Amrita even though they are not married. He recognises that she needs his assistance and provides it, despite the fact that the process wears him out and causes him discomfort. Amrita believes she must live for Somashekar as a result of their strong relationship. They encountered numerous obstacles, disagreements, misunderstandings, and breakups, but they never gave up on their love. Amrita's bleak existence is illuminated by this connection. The courage to battle for her rights is given to her by Somashekar's instilled optimism. Amrita is the one who tackles her battles, despite the fact that Somashekar offers her encouragement and strength. She effectively confronts and overcomes her past demons. Amrita's transformation from a woman encumbered by the repercussions of her previous circumstances to one embarking on a fresh existence in her homeland alongside her spouse and children, functions as an exemplar for others undergoing similar life transitions.

Conclusion

Meike Bal's construction of 'image' demonstrates the role of connection and hope in Amrita's existence. Depression, desolation, and suicidal ideation characterise Amrita's hopelessness. Amrita's hopeless existence is redeemed by her unbreakable connection with Somashekar and their children. Connection and

hope are fundamental human requirements, and Amrita's transformation demonstrates their significance. In numerous ways, connection and hope are intertwined. For example, we feel optimistic about the future when we have the support of our family and colleagues. On the other hand, when we are alone and unsupported, we feel defenceless. Overall, connection and hope are essential for our mental and emotional health. Developing strong relationships with others fosters a sense of optimism for the future, resulting in a happy, fulfilled existence with the fortitude to overcome all obstacles. Amrita's character has the potential to influence readers that life can transform at any moment and it largely depends on self-will.

Fiction is not only read as entertainment by the readers, they utilise it to extend their knowledge of the human mind and behaviour. In this context, Varotsi argues that, though indeterminate, there is a degree to which fiction can be correlated with reality (Varotsi, 2019). Mostly, authors create fiction and fictional characters with inspiration from real life. Amrita is one such character creation of Santeshivara Lingannaiah Bhyrappa inspired by a woman he met. Often people with mental illnesses such as depression are portrayed in negative or stereotypical ways by books and media. Conversely, *Brink* (2020) presents Amrita as an individual replete with susceptibilities. Her past, relationships, futility, and transformation were prioritised over her depression.

Amrita, a financially stable professor, formerly faced a significant risk of suicide until she discovered a meaningful connection to life. Women lacking connection, regardless of their profession, are susceptible to suicide. However, the media and research predominantly concentrate on suicides among housewives. This research uncovers the challenges faced by employed women and their unspoken conflicts with societal and cultural biases. Furthermore, it emphasises the significance of literature in addressing sensitive subjects such as suicide. The text concludes with unresolved inquiries: why is there a scarcity of Indian literature that explores

the theme of suicide, and do readers possess reservations about engaging with such a delicate and sensitive topic?

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Author Contribution Statement

Deepika T has conceptualised, collected resources, analysed and wrote the original draft.

Dr Bhuvaneswari R. has edited, reviewed and developed the final draft.

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