



Love in the Age of Apps: A Study of Digital Intimacy and Identity in Sudeep Nagarkar's *She Swiped Right into My Heart*

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Abstract

*This paper examines postmodern themes such as fragmented identity, digital intimacy, and the shifting nature of love as portrayed in Sudeep Nagarkar's *She Swiped Right into My Heart* (2016). The novel highlights the struggles of contemporary Indian youth as they navigate relationships influenced by social media and dating apps in today's digital world. Through the character of Geet, the paper analyzes how digital communication affects emotional attachment and self-perception, simultaneously promoting intimacy and insecurity. Using Jean Baudrillard's concept of hyper reality and Sherry Turkle's insights on mediated relationships, the study emphasizes the blurred lines between virtual and physical realities. It further explores Geet's experience of emotional dependency, depression, and her ultimate rediscovery of identity, highlighting the postmodern rejection of fixed truths and the notion of selfhood as a construct in the digital age. The novel's open-ended conclusion highlights the evolving and performative nature of love within postmodern discourse.*

Keywords: postmodernism, digital intimacy, social media and relationships, fragmented, identity, identity reclamation

Postmodernism is a philosophical and cultural movement that emerged in the mid-twentieth century as a reaction against the ideals of modernism. Modernism emphasized universal truths, objective knowledge, and progress through reason, whereas postmodernism challenges these ideas, suggesting that truth is subjective, fragmented, and shaped by culture and history. It questions the idea of a single fixed meaning and instead accepts multiple interpretations and perspectives.

Postmodern thought stresses that reality is constructed, showing how language, media, and social structures influence our understanding of the world. It frequently dissolves the lines between high and low

culture, fact and fiction, and reality and representation, employing techniques like irony, parody, and intertextuality in literature and media, postmodernism appears through nonlinear storytelling, metafiction, and the mixing of genres, mirroring the complexities and uncertainties of modern life. Sudeep Nagarkar's novels deal with postmodernism. His works frequently portray the fragmented realities of contemporary life, where love and identity are influenced by digital communication, social media culture, and the shifting boundaries between the virtual and the real.

Sudeep Nagarkar is a prominent contemporary Indian author known for his contributions to youth-



centric romantic fiction. He was born in Mumbai in 1988, Nagarkar holds a degree in engineering and a management diploma, but he transitioned into writing with his debut novel *Few Things Left Unsaid* (2011), which became an instant bestseller. Since then, he has authored over a dozen novels, many of which have consistently featured on national bestseller lists.

Nagarkar's writing is known for its relatable characters, simple narrative style, and exploration of contemporary issues affecting Indian youth, including friendship, love, heartbreak, peer pressure, and the influence of technology on relationships. His novels are often based on true events or inspired by real-life experiences, which enhances their emotional appeal among young readers. His notable works are *Few Things Left Unsaid*, *That's the Way We Met*, *It Started with a Friend Request*, *Sorry, You're Not My Type*, *You're the Password to My Life*, *You're Trending in My Dreams*, *She Swiped Right into My Heart*, *All Rights Reserved for You*, *Our Story Needs No Filter*, *She Friend-Zoned My Love* and *Stand by Me*.

Sudeep Nagarkar's popular novel *She Swiped Right into My Heart* (2016) portrays the growing influence of digital culture and the transformation of intimacy in the postmodern context, making it a valuable text for examining love and identity in the age of apps and social media. Through such works, Nagarkar articulates the struggles, desires, and digital realities of today's Indian youth, securing his place as a significant figure in contemporary popular fiction.

The novel *She Swiped Right into My Heart* is a modern love story set in the digital era, where social media, dating apps, and instant messaging influence the ways love and friendship develop. Geet, a bold yet socially marginalized college student, persuades her popular friend Rudra to pose as her boyfriend in order to boost her image, with most of their relationship unfolding in the online space. Over time, their relationship grows closer, but problems surface when Rudra starts having feelings for Geet's reserved best friend, Shibani, whose struggles add further emotional depth to the story. A parallel subplot focuses on Shibani's sister Tushita, whose accident brings Vivaan into their world, merging real-life trauma with continuous digital interaction. Misunderstandings

arising from texts and social media posts put a strain on the trio's bond, revealing the delicate nature of digital intimacy. The novel closes without a clear resolution, depicting love as shifting and evolving, in keeping with postmodernism's rejection of fixed truths.

In the postmodern era, the socio-cultural context shaping the lives of young people is markedly different from that of earlier generations. Today's youth are deeply immersed in a world dominated by media saturation, consumerism, cultural pluralism, and digital technology. These aspects affect not only their daily lives but also transform the way they perceive identity, relationships, and reality itself.

With digital screens like smartphones, social media, and online platforms being ever-present, most of their interactions with the world are mediated through technology. Reality is no longer encountered firsthand but is instead mediated through apps, algorithms, and carefully curated content. Jean Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality suggests that the line between real and simulated experiences becomes blurred, with young people often connecting more deeply to images and online performances than to direct, face-to-face interactions.

In the novel *She Swiped Right into My Heart*, the characters' romantic and personal journeys take place in a world shaped by the digital age, where social media, texting, and online presence play a central role in self-representation. In *She Swiped Right into My Heart*, Geet's love for Rudra blossoms gradually through their social media interactions rather than conventional face-to-face meetings. Their connection starts with casual chats and exchanged humor on Facebook and WhatsApp. Rudra's witty messages, supportive tone, and constant online presence create a sense of comfort and familiarity for Geet. She becomes emotionally invested as his messages become part of her daily routine. Each like on her posts, each emoji he sends, and each late-night conversation deepens her sense of closeness. Over time, this online companionship evolves into emotional attachment — a defining feature of digital intimacy, in which affection is nurtured through



carefully crafted messages, profile pictures, and immediate responses.

Geet's perception of Rudra is built almost entirely from his online persona: his carefully chosen profile picture, thoughtful captions, and responsiveness to her messages. These virtual fragments form a mosaic of the "ideal" partner in her mind, allowing her to fall in love with the version of Rudra she experiences in the digital sphere rather than in physical reality. Her constant dependence on online communication makes her emotionally fragile, as delayed replies or minor changes in Rudra's online behavior provoke excessive anxiety and self-doubt. This reflects Sherry Turkle's argument in *Alone Together* that digital intimacy often gives the illusion of closeness while simultaneously breeding deep insecurity.

Most of the relationship develops through texts, emojis, and social media, which often creates a risk of misunderstanding tone, intent, or feelings. A late reply or an unclear status update can easily be misread, leading to conflict. Because digital platforms are always accessible, the line between Geet's private life and her romance becomes blurred, making constant connection feel necessary and disconnection hard. She starts to judge her self-worth based on Rudra's online validation, where likes, comments, and messages turn into measures of her emotions.

When Geet receives a message from Rudra, she experiences a combination of joy, surprise, and reassurance. Until then, she struggled with loneliness and self-doubt, but his words offer her comfort and a sense of connection. The message makes her feel seen and appreciated, and she slowly begins to trust him as someone who looks beyond superficial judgments. It sparks a new hope within her, lifting her spirits and boosting her confidence, while also opening her heart to the possibility of companionship during a vulnerable phase of her life.

The digital world that once gave her joy becomes the very space where she encounters rejection and absence. Geet's emotional distress after seeing her photo shared on social media and being rejected by Rudra can be better understood using psychological ideas about social influence, self-esteem, and relationships. When her photo was shared without her

permission, it felt like an invasion of her personal privacy, which is essential for emotional safety. This kind of violation, especially on social media, often leads to feelings of embarrassment and powerlessness, especially if the photo was taken during a private or vulnerable moment. Studies show that when someone's image is shared without consent, it can severely impact their self-image, especially when they have no control over it. For Geet, coming across the photo online might stir feelings of embarrassment and insecurity, leaving her anxious about how others perceive her. Her desire for others' acceptance becomes a defining element of her emotional state.

Rudra's rejection intensifies her pain, particularly since Geet had deeply invested her emotions in their relationship. Being rejected by someone close can lead to intense feelings of loss and betrayal. Attachment theory suggests that individuals rely on emotional bonds with others for a sense of security and validation. Rudra's rejection could have shaken Geet's emotional stability, making her feel overlooked or unloved and leading her to think she does not deserve love or acceptance.

The rejection from Rudra, combined with the public exposure of her photo, could create cognitive dissonance—a mental conflict where Geet's private self-image clashes with the public image she is forced to confront on social media. This inner conflict may lead her to withdraw emotionally in an attempt to avoid further judgment or rejection. Consequently, she might start to feel isolated and develop signs of depression, such as sadness, hopelessness, and constant over thinking. These feelings may be worsened by negative self-talk, where she might ask herself questions like, "Why did this happen to me?" or "What did I do wrong?" (SSRH-73). These thoughts can spiral, making her feel more helpless and powerless.

At this difficult moment, when Geet's private photo on social media brought her humiliation and rejection, Rudra stood by her side. He did not let her drown in guilt or shame. Instead, he understood her pain and reminded her that her life and identity were much bigger than the scandal caused by a single photo. Rudra's constant support gave her strength and



created a safe space where she could begin to heal. He kept reminding her of her qualities—her strength, intelligence, and dignity—which helped her fight against the stigma and ignore the voices that tried to bring her down. His loyalty and acceptance gave her back trust, both in friendship and in herself. Through his words and actions, Rudra showed her that true value comes from character, not from society's harsh judgments. With his steady encouragement, Geet slowly regained her confidence and rebuilt her identity, proving that she was not just a victim of a scandal but a strong person able to shape her own life.

Thus, the novel *She Swiped Right into my Heart* illustrates how digital platforms not only create spaces

for intimacy but also expose individuals to vulnerability. Love in the digital age, as Nagarkar portrays, is deeply entangled with technology, identity, and performance

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