

# Constructing Love, Beauty, and Selfhood in Durjoy Datta's *Our Impossible Love*

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**Abstract-** Durjoy Datta's *Our Impossible Love* explores the emotional and psychological landscapes of contemporary Indian youth, focusing on love, beauty, identity, and societal pressures. This paper examines how the novel critiques socially constructed standards of beauty, highlights moral and emotional dilemmas, and emphasizes the transformative power of relationships. Drawing on literary theories—including poststructuralism, psychoanalysis, reader-response theory, and humanist perspectives—the study analyzes quotations from the novel to uncover the interplay between societal norms, individual desire, and moral aspiration. By integrating theorist quotations, the paper demonstrates how Datta's narrative reflects urban youth experiences while challenging dominant ideals of beauty, love, and selfhood.

**Index-Terms-** Beauty, Love Poststructuralism, Moral development, Indian Youth Literature

## I. INTRODUCTION

The representation of love, beauty, and selfhood in contemporary Indian fiction has evolved significantly over the past two decades. Authors like Durjoy Datta capture the nuanced experiences of urban youth, negotiating both traditional societal expectations and modern influences. In *Our Impossible Love*, Datta explores the intersections of desire, morality, and identity, portraying the challenges and aspirations of young adults. Literary theory provides a critical lens for interpretation. Michel Foucault asserts, "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault 93), highlighting how societal norms, including beauty, regulate thought and desire. Roland Barthes similarly notes that "myths are a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve except by destroying previous meanings" (Barthes 109), which emphasizes how cultural constructs like beauty are socially produced rather than natural. Psychoanalytic theory, particularly Lacan's notion of the gaze, underscores the formative

role of recognition in shaping desire and selfhood: “Man’s desire is the desire of the Other” (Lacan 87). These frameworks provide insight into Datta’s portrayal of youth navigating societal pressures, romantic relationships, and personal growth.

This paper examines four significant quotations from Datta’s novel, using theorist perspectives to analyze: the social construction of beauty, recognition and emotional depth in love, the dynamics of longing and absence, and the aspiration toward moral and emotional growth.

## II. BEAUTY AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

Datta critiques the socially imposed nature of beauty:

“Beauty was devised by someone very insecure to rob others of the happiness he or she couldn't feel. It was a dick move, to be honest” (Datta 56).

This observation aligns with poststructuralist theory, which emphasizes that concepts like beauty are culturally constructed and maintained through power relations. Foucault asserts, “Disciplines ‘train’ bodies, enforce norms, and produce what is considered normal and abnormal” (Foucault 138). In the context of Indian urban youth, beauty standards are internalized as part of social norms, impacting self-perception and emotional well-being. Barthes reinforces this perspective, noting that “myth transforms history into nature” (Barthes 130), illustrating how arbitrary social ideals are accepted as natural truths. Datta’s characterization demonstrates how youth experience pressure to conform to these ideals, negotiating insecurity, envy, and moral judgment. Psychoanalytic theory complements this view, suggesting that internalized norms can produce anxiety and feelings of inadequacy (Freud 112). Beauty, then, is not merely aesthetic—it functions as a psychological and social mechanism.

## III. LOVE AND RECOGNITION: SEEING BEYOND THE SURFACE

Datta foregrounds emotional authenticity in human connections:

“Yes, I love your eyes—they are black and deep and almond-shaped but I see the kindness in those eyes I have never seen before, ...” (Datta 72).

Lacan’s theory of the gaze illuminates this interaction: “Desire is always the desire of the Other” (Lacan 87). By recognizing kindness beyond superficial traits, the protagonist engages with desire ethically, seeking authentic emotional connection. Maslow’s humanist perspective complements this view: “Self-actualization is the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming” (Maslow 102). In this context, love becomes a medium for recognizing and fostering moral and emotional qualities rather than merely physical attributes. The novel’s emphasis on inner qualities challenges societal norms, demonstrating the tension between constructed ideals and authentic connection. Here, theorists reinforce the narrative’s ethical and psychological dimensions, showing that love is as much about moral recognition as it is about desire.

#### IV. LONGING AND THE DYNAMICS OF ABSENCE

Datta portrays the immediacy of attachment and the pain of separation:

“I drove back home. I missed her already” (Datta 168).

This statement resonates with reader-response theory. Wolfgang Iser argues that “the text establishes a structure which is actualized in the act of reading” (Iser 49), suggesting that readers project their own experiences of longing onto the narrative. Psychoanalytic theory also interprets this longing as a manifestation of the human desire for recognition and emotional fulfillment (Lacan 102). In urban youth contexts, separation from loved ones intensifies self-reflection and emotional awareness. Datta’s portrayal of absence serves not only as romantic narrative tension but also as a tool for exploring selfhood and ethical engagement. By integrating reader-response and psychoanalytic perspectives, the narrative engages readers in the emotional and moral growth of characters.

#### V. ASPIRATION AND MORAL GROWTH

Datta emphasizes the transformative potential of relationships:

“I want you to be more than what I was and will ever be” (Datta,110).

Maslow’s humanist theory supports this idea: “The story of human life is a story of growth, and the aim is to develop one’s capacities to their fullest” (Maslow 102). By presenting love as a catalyst for self-improvement, the narrative situates youth experiences within an ethical and developmental framework. Sartre adds an existentialist dimension: “Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself” (Sartre 56). Relationships, therefore, become sites for moral action, identity formation, and self-actualization. This quotation reflects the novel’s insistence that love is aspirational: it challenges individuals to transcend past limitations and embrace moral and emotional responsibility. Datta’s depiction underscores the interplay between ethical growth, desire, and relational engagement.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

*Our Impossible Love* presents a layered critique of societal norms while exploring emotional and moral dimensions of youth experiences. By integrating theorist quotations—from Foucault on power, Barthes on myth, Lacan on the gaze, Iser on reader response, Maslow on humanism, and Sartre on existentialism—the novel emerges as a text that interrogates beauty, love, and selfhood in contemporary urban India. Datta’s narrative challenges readers to reconsider dominant cultural ideals, demonstrating the transformative potential of authentic connection and ethical engagement.

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