

SUPERVISOR'S REPORT

The supervisor should complete the report below and then give this cover, enclosing the final version of the extended essay, to the Diploma Programme coordinator. The supervisor must sign this report; otherwise the extended essay will not be assessed and may be returned to the school.

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters) _____

Comments

If appropriate, please comment on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion H. Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate.

took on a challenging literary topic and did a reasonable job, despite not having had much prior training in literary analysis.

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisor's signature: _____

Date: _____

ASSESSMENT FORM (for examiner use only)

Candidate session number									
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ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL

First examiner	maximum	Second examiner
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General assessment criteria

Refer to the general guidelines.

A Research question	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
B Approach	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
C Analysis/interpretation	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
D Argument/evaluation	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
E Conclusion	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
F Abstract	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
G Formal presentation	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
H Holistic judgement	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

Subject assessment criteria

Refer to the subject guidelines.

Not all of the following criteria will apply to all subjects; use only the criteria which apply to the subject of the extended essay.

J		<input type="checkbox"/>
K		<input type="checkbox"/>
L		<input type="checkbox"/>
M		<input type="checkbox"/>

TOTAL OUT OF 36

Name of first examiner (CAPITAL letters): _____ Examiner number:

Name of second examiner (CAPITAL letters): _____ Examiner number:

How are the journeys of self-discovery of the protagonists of “The Impressionist” and “The Mystic Masseur” similar?

Word Count

: 3550

Abstract

The Research Question

The protagonists of both novels, Ganesh and Pran Nath from “The Mystic Masseur” by V.S. Naipaul and “The Impressionist” by Hari Kunzru, are in search of their identity. Both protagonists take a journey through time and places, meet people and come across unexpected turns in their lives that moulds them into people they didn’t know even existed. Both books manage to capture a very realist picture of the emotions of a young man experiencing these physical, emotional and spiritual changes in his life with wit and humour. The research question this essay deals with is:

How are the journeys of self-discovery of the protagonists of “The Impressionist” and “The Mystic Masseur” similar?

The Scope of the Investigation

In order to examine this question, this essay will look at the major factors influencing the protagonists in their journey to become self-aware. The essay will firstly focus at the setting and time periods of the protagonists. Secondly, the essay will look at an assortment of adventures the protagonists experience and the different characters they come into contact with. This essay will highlight the conclusions the protagonists come to about their journey of self-discovery.

Conclusion

This essay deduces that the journey of self-discovery of the protagonists, Ganesh and Pran Nath of the “The Mystic Masseur” and “The Impressionists” is similar. The essay accepts the difference in the settings and situations of the protagonists yet it concludes that the outcome of the self-discovery in both protagonists is almost parallel. It also arises new questions on the limitation and generality of the journeys of self-discovery for young men.

Word Count: 270

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Introduction

The protagonists of both novels, “Ganesh” and “Pran Nath” of “The Mystic Masseur” and “The Impressionist” respectively, are two young persons in search of their own identity. Both experience a series of unexpected events that not only change their lives but also make them aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. Both characters are exposed to a world they didn’t know existed. The situations they go through, the other characters’ influence on them and their own helpless and moldable nature, changes them into people they didn’t know even existed.

Ganesh is the son of a local Trinidadian who gathers enough money to send Ganesh to ‘Queens Royal College’. After his father’s death, Ganesh, who was indifferent towards the outside world, suddenly had to face everyone and understand his community. He is burdened with responsibilities and is forced by the community to marry. These incidents lead Ganesh to change and adapt into the person he eventually becomes. Pran Nath is brought by his rich father in Agra. Pran Nath is spoilt, pampered and ill-mannered as a child as he grows up without his mother, who died as soon as he was born. Once when Pran Nath is fifteen years old, he tries to grab the maid’s daughter, but the maid catches him. She tells on Pran to his father, not only about his son’s ‘devil’s nature’, but also his true parentage. Pran Nath was the result of an incident that occurred between his mother and a British officer caught in a storm. Pran Nath’s father disowns his son after learning his soiled background and dies from a heart attack and thus Pran is thrown to the streets to search for his true identity.

The writer of “The Mystic Masseur”, V. S. Naipaul and the writer of “the Impressionist”, Hari Kunzru are well-known contemporary British writers. Even though both are of Indian ethnicity, V. S. Naipaul grew up in Trinidad while Kunzru was brought up in England. “The Mystic Masseur” was Naipaul’s first novel in 1957 and it gained great popularity all over the world. The queen of England knighted V.S. Naipaul in 1989 on top of the various other awards he achieved during his long career as a writer including the Nobel prize for literature.¹ “The Impressionist” was Kunzru’s first novel as well, and the book qualified Kunzru for the finals for the “Best of young British Novelist”² He is a well-known freelance journalist and an editor.³

Both novels portray the lives of two young men who grow up, change and adapt to fit in and be respected by the people around them. Both books manage to capture a very realist picture of the emotions of a young man experiencing these physical, emotional and spiritual changes that I can relate to personally. This aspect of the books convinced me to further research and understand the journeys of discovery of young men like myself and thus I wanted to research, **How are the journeys of self-discovery of the protagonists of “The Impressionist” and “The Mystic Masseur” similar?**

¹ Nasta, Sushila. "V.S. Naipaul." *Contemporary Writers* (2002)
<<http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth78#top>>.

² Pruno, Luca. "Hari Kunzru." *Contemporary Writers* (2006)
<http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth03B5O073112634971>

³ "Conversations - Hari Kunzru." *Book Club* (2001) <<http://www.book-club.co.nz/features/harikunzru.htm>>.

Approach to the research question

This essay's prime focus is on the physical and emotional journeys experienced by the protagonist of the two novels, "The Mystic Masseur" and "The Impressionist". This essay, in order to answer this question, will first explore and deduce the changes that are evident in the personalities of the protagonists affected by their respective settings. The two stories take place in different locations and time periods.

"The Mystic Masseur" is situated in Trinidad, an island in the Caribbean, a British Colony. The British around mid nineteenth century brought a lot of immigrant indentured labour groups from India and other Asian countries to Trinida. This story takes place in the mid twentieth century, mainly among the Indian immigrants of Trinidad.

"The Impressionist", on the other hand, is set in the early twentieth century in India. The protagonist is born in Agra, however, through a series of mishaps and adventures, he is often transported, usually against his will, to different parts of India and later to England and Africa. India is still under the British Empire, and a conflict between the Indians, the British and the "Blackie-White" is portrayed in different parts of India, in the novel.

In addition, the essay will also look at the protagonists' self-discovery of their respective identity. Ganesh realizes that he does not control his life, and that everything that happens, happens for a reason. He believes in fate and therefore leaves all his decisions to God. Pran Nath, in contrast, realizes that all the unfortunate (and some fortunate) events he encounters are because of co-incidence. Yet, he strongly believes that these incidents were necessary to occur for him to become what he does in the conclusion of the novel. The essay will next look at the other minor characters of the book that are either related, friends with or enemies of the protagonist. Some of these character either directly influence or their actions influence the protagonists. The essay will focus on how these characters either pressure or persuade the protagonists and mould them into people they prefer the protagonists to be.

In conclusion the changed identities of the protagonists and the main reasons for it to occur will be highlighted. The differences in setting, time period and situations between the two novels will be mentioned, hand in hand with the similarities between the outcomes and conclusions the two protagonists achieve.

Setting

“The Mystic Masseur” is set in the southern most and biggest island of Trinidad and Tobago, situated in the Caribbean. Ganesh lives in Fuente Grove, a small town a few hours away from the capital of Trinidad, Port of Spain. Fuente Grove is densely populated by Trindadians of Indian ethnicity. This story takes place around the 1940s, when Trinidad was still under the British Empire. Ganesh, the protagonist of the novel, is immensely affected by the place and the time period in the story. He doesn’t join the army to help the British in the World War II because he understands that on his return he will not get decent jobs because there will be a sudden rise in the number of potential employees all over the country. He also speculates that when the war is over, American soldiers, on their way back home, might stop over at Trinidad. He feel he should be prepare to handle the demands of these foreigners and thus decides he wouldn’t become a taxi driver like most Trindadians around him. Ganesh later becomes the Member of Legislative Council (M.L.C) followed by a Member of British Empire (M.B.E) and is therefore shifted to a bigger house in the Port of Spain. All this, the glorious outcome of Ganesh’s life, according to Ganesh is because of series of intentional and unintentional decisions made by him at the right time; and therefore the relevance of time is so important in this novel.

“The Impressionist” is set in the early twentieth century when India was still a British colony. Pran Nath is born in a rich merchant’s family, living in Agra. His mother died while giving birth to Pran Nath and thus his father brought him up on his own. When his family disowns Pran Nath after finding out that he is an illegitimate son of his mother and an unknown British officer, he explores the streets of Agra in search for food. “Ejected from his childhood home and traipses through the following locales: a brothel, where he is force to dress as a girl; the court of a minor princeling, where he is ordered to lure a pederastic British major into a compromising situation; a Presbyterian mission in Bombay where he's fought over by the starchy minister and his estranged Indophile wife; a British boarding school where he steps in to impersonate a young Englishman who dies in an Indian alleyway; Oxford, where he strives to remain completely unexceptional; and, finally, the furthest reaches of Africa, where he ventures into the bush as part of an ethnographic expedition.”⁴

⁴ Miller, Laura. ""The Impressionist" by Hari Kunzru." 26/may/2002
<<http://archive.salon.com/books/review/2002/04/26/kunzru/index.html>>.

The Mystic Masseur

The Mystic Masseur is a “slyly funny and lavishly inventive novel”⁵ that explores the life of Ganesh Ramsumair, “a failed school teacher and impecunious village masseur who in time becomes a revered mystic, a thriving entrepreneur, and the most beloved politician in Trinidad.”⁵ Ganesh is schooled in Trinidad at the “Queen’s Royal College”, in the Port of Spain. He is laughed and ridiculed by his English acquaintances to such an extent that he even pretends to be “Gareth” and not “Ganesh”. He does not fit in with anyone in his four years of schooling, which is followed by his vain attempt to become a teacher in a nearby school in the Port of Spain. With the news of the death of his father, Ganesh returns to Fuente Groove, to cremate his father’s corpse and finds this opportunity to end his term as a schoolteacher and thus settle back in his father’s old house in Fuente Groove.

Ramlogan, Ganesh’s father’s friend, takes Ganesh in and gives him food and company everyday. Ramlogan is very impressed by Ganesh’s college education, “I like hearing educated people giving off ideas”⁶ and wants Ganesh to marry his sixteen year old daughter, Leela. Leela is a skeptical girl, can read and write a little, and is unusually fond of punctuation marks. Ganesh agrees to marry Leela but when he finds out that Ramlogan, deceivingly, is paying for the wedding with Ganesh’s money he decides to teach Ramlogan a lesson. On the wedding night, in the ceremony of dowry, Ganesh robs Ramlogan off his money and since then they vex against each other.

After marrying Leela, Ganesh remains idle and unemployed for several months. “He doing a lot of thinking, that boy Ganesh”⁷ people would say. Ganesh, against the will of his well-wisher, Beharry and Leela, tries to become a masseur like his father but inevitably fails. “Facts is facts, Leela. I ain’t have a hand for massage.”⁸ He would offend and drive away his customers telling them that there was nothing wrong with them and that God had wished for the mishaps to happen.

Ganesh then diverts his attention to writing books after his incident with Mr. Stewart who mentions to Ganesh that he should be writing instead of sitting idle, as he is one of the few educated ones in Trinidad. Ganesh is also helped by his friend and mentor Beharry, who helps him buy a lot of books for research and also makes him a timetable according to which Ganesh could finish his book fast. Ganesh writes his first book called, “101 Questions and Answers on the Hindu religion” which he dedicated to Beharry. The book was a fail, even after hiring Bissoon, the best seller in Trinidad, to sell his books.

Later Ganesh’s aunt ‘Great Belcher’ visits him and claims that she has a feeling that Ganesh has the powers to heal people and their souls and thus should become a ‘pundit’.

⁵ Naipaul, V.S.. The Mystic Masseur. New York: Vintage Books , 1959.

⁶ Naipaul, V.S.. The Mystic Masseur. New York: Vintage Books , 1959 (p23)

⁷ Naipaul, V.S.. The Mystic Masseur. New York: Vintage Books , 1959 (p22)

⁸ Naipaul, V.S.. The Mystic Masseur. New York: Vintage Books , 1959 (p63)

Co-incidentally a mother with her sick son, who is traumatized by a malign cloud, seeks Ganesh for help as a pundit. This incident changes Ganesh's life as he cures the boy of his delusions by pretending to be Mystic. After this incident Ganesh becomes famous in Trinidad for being the best "Mystic Masseur" as he cures his patients by his acquired skills in dealing with spirits and fallacies.

"Ganesh found himself now a philosopher and arbiter."⁹ The key words of this quote are "found" and "now". Throughout the book, the protagonist **finds** himself in situation where he discovers something new about himself and the people around him. At this point of the book, Ganesh's negotiating skills, his philosophical nature and his ability as an editor of a press company is revealed. Without any experience whatsoever of being an editor of a newspaper, Ganesh with his two friends, Partap and Swami and with the help of Swami's nephew, design and publish a four-page newspaper called "The Dharma". The main purpose of this newspaper is to fight back against Ganesh's new enemy, C.S. Narayan, the editor of "The Hindu", who wrote ill things about Ganesh's profession.

The newspaper accomplishes its purpose, however, Ganesh's friends and relatives ask him how to finish this matter for once and for all with a final blow to Narayan. Ganesh, to this, says "I thinking about it all the time"¹⁰ to which Beharry and the readers recognize the old pre-mystic Ganesh. This quote is a parallel to quotes by Ganesh previously in the book when Ganesh was idle and unemployed and was yet to become the mystic. This shows that even with the great change in situations and Ganesh's status and position there is still a bit of "old" Ganesh left who has no idea or any will to challenge his circumstances.

Ganesh becomes rich and famous in Fuente Groove; and with the success of the newspaper, "The Dharma", he reaches out to the people from all over Trinidad. With his growing popularity and status he is invited to become the member of the Legislative counsel. He was a reckless politician and was the first man to walk out on a session as a method of protest. However, he becomes the favourite politician of Trinidad along with one of the best writers of Trinidad with a number of his published books. This eventually leads him into becoming a "M.B.E.". "He (Ganesh) had no idea he was on the road to the M.B.E."¹¹ Ganesh, therefore, becomes one of the most powerful men in Trinidad and he attributes his success to God in one of his books, "The Years of Guilt" that also includes that he strongly believes in predestination.

⁹ Naipaul, V.S.. The Mystic Masseur. New York: Vintage Books , 1959 (p149),

¹⁰ Naipaul, V.S.. The Mystic Masseur. New York: Vintage Books , 1959 (p173)

¹¹ Naipaul, V.S.. The Mystic Masseur. New York: Vintage Books , 1959 (p202)

The Impressionist

“The Impressionist”, an audaciously funny novel, revolves around the story of Pran Nath Razdan, born in a wealthy Kashmiri pundit family in Agra. He is a beautiful boy of fifteen and is the heir to his father’s money and thus is loved by everyone. His life is turned upside down when he makes the mistake of grabbing and pulling the maid’s daughter, Gita to his holster. The maid, Anjali, jabs Pran, with a monkey stick, several times on his body before she takes him to his father, Amar Nath Razdan. She “paints a lurid picture of Pran’s faults, drawing the incontrovertible conclusion that the boy exhibits all the signs of tainted blood.”¹² With that she reveals Pran’s true parentage, showing Amar Nath a picture of an English officer dressed in Khaki who resembled his son Pran. Amar Nath passes away in disappointment and Pran is thrown out of the house in the streets, confused and crushed.

Pran Nath is mocked and ridiculed by the beggars on the street and is misled by one of them to go ask for help from the others like him, “Blackie-Whites”. He is badly beaten up by Harry, who is frustrated with his half Indian heritage, which is reminded to him by looking at Pran. Pran, desperately in search of food and shelter, is taken in a brothel where Pran is constantly drugged by “maa-ji’s special lassi” and dressed like a girl. Pran is then sold off to the “Hijras” of Fatehpur, in the court of a minor kingdom, and is given the name, “Rukhsana”. As Rukhsana, Pran is brought in front of the Nawab’s younger brother, Firoz, who uses him as a tool to get a high ranking English officer, Major Privett-Clampe, who is the decider of the successor of this kingdom, in a compromising situation and change his decision and make Firoz the Nawab instead. Major Privett-Clampe held a fetish for young boys, and thus the Firoz offers Rukhsana to the Major. The Major, who later feels guilty and teaches Rukhsana some English, sexually exploits Rukhsana/Pran. Firoz’s plan to overtake his brother’s empire fails when his brother gets the queen pregnant and a new heir to the kingdom is born. During a hunting party, when things fall out of place and the tigers escape, Pran finds himself an opportunity to escape.

Pran, in Bombay, is known by different names by different people. Reverend Macfarlane, a rigid, orthodox Christian, and his indophile wife, Ambaji, take Pran in and name him Robert and Chandra respectively. He helps Ambaji around the house while the Reverend teaches him English, language and manners. When Pran is not with them, he snoops around the city in search of small street-jobs, and the people in the street know him as “Pretty Bobby”. “No one can find anything about Bobby’s background” With his good looks and adaptable nature, Bobby learns to do the appropriate things in front of different people. He often acts like a middleman, a chores-boy and sometimes a spy to earn money. Once Bobby dresses up as an English man and happens to fool one to think he is one. This incident encourages Bobby to dress up as English more often and go to the ship docks to practice his English. Bobby changes his name and engages into conversations with English people just arriving back to India to learn more about the “English culture”. This habit of Bobby also gets him into troubles sometimes when he is not able to keep his stories consistent. One day Bobby comes into contact with a man called Jonathan

¹² Kunzru, Hari, *The Impressionist*, New York: Penguin Putnam Inc. 2003 (p39)

Bridgeman, a young English man who had come to Bombay to catch a ship to England to live with his uncle and inherit his father's fortune. Bobby shows Jonathan around, when suddenly some muggers who stop their way and kill Jonathan. Since no one knew what Jonathan looked like, Bobby seized this opportunity and went to England as Jonathan himself.

¹³“By the time Pran gets to England to take the place of the doomed Jonathan Bridgeman, the proceedings become less fantastical and more pointed. The impostor diligently takes down notes to perfect his ruse: "Englishness is sameness," he writes. The weather in London leads him to understand "for the first time the English word 'cozy', the need their climate instills in them to pad their blue-veined bodies with layers of horsehair and mahogany, aspidistras and antimacassars, history, tradition and share certificates. Being British, he decides, is primarily a matter of insulation.” Jonathan falls in love with Astarte Chapel, a young English woman full of ambition and life. Jonathan to impress Astarte, attends her father's lectures in school and soon becomes really close to both of them. He is then offered by Mr. Chapel to assist on one of his trips to Africa with him, which he instantly accepts, “for Astarte Chapel”¹⁴. Jonathan on the way to Africa, meets Astarte in Paris, where he finds out that Astarte is engaged with Sweetie, a black musician.

Jonathan, heart broken and confused, reaches Africa with Professor Chapel and his team. They roam around the forests and villages of the natives and collect information about their living conditions. Jonathan finds out about the plan of the British government of industrializing and urbanizing these villages but doesn't do anything about it even though he feels that the natives ought to be left alone. When the war between the locals and the British breaks out, Jonathan is the only British survivor who is taken in by the locals. Jonathan, the impressionist, feels “For now, the journey is everything”¹⁵ and carries on his journey through Africa all by himself, waiting for an opportunity to start a new life yet again.

¹³ Miller, Laura. ""The Impressionist" by Hari Kunzru." 26/may/2002
<<http://archive.salon.com/books/review/2002/04/26/kunzru/index.html>>.

¹⁴ Kunzru, Hari, *The Impressionist*, New York: Penguin Putnam Inc. 2003 (p388)

¹⁵ Kunzru, Hari, *The Impressionist*, New York: Penguin Putnam Inc. 2003 (p465)

Conclusion

Ganesh in his autobiography, *Years Of Guilt*, illustrates his reason for success as predestination and that “circumstances which conspired to elevate him seem indeed to be providential.”¹⁶ The timing of his birth, his father’s death, his refusal to become a taxi driver, his failed first book and so on where few of the things that lead to what Ganesh eventually becomes in the novel.

“He is always somebody that when an opportunity presents itself, he just takes it.”¹⁷ Hari Kunzru talks about his character, Pran in an interview. Pran Nath, after being rejected by Astarte Chapel for Sweets, he wonder, “Is Sweet’s blackness another kind of skin he could put on and inhabit?”¹⁸ This shows that Pran realizes that he no longer has an identity of his own and that he can re-mould himself yet again to be accepted.

Both, Ganesh and Pran are opportunists and their journey of self-discovery is very similar. Both take the journey through time, place and circumstances in order to become self-aware with their burgeoning identity. Even though the setting, time periods and circumstances of both the protagonists differ, their adaptable nature is revealed to themselves in their respective journeys. Ganesh and Pran realize the relevance of their respective time and setting that affected them directly in their journey of self-discovery. Characters like, Beharry and Leela for Ganesh while Astarte Chapel for Pran (Jonathan) also help the protagonists in their process of becoming self-aware.

In order to investigate and conclude to the research question, “**How are the journeys of self-discovery of the protagonists of “The Impressionist” and “The Mystic Masseur” similar?**” one can also hypothesize the generality of the journey of self-discovery. Is the journey of self-discovery simply a process of becoming self-aware in order to confirm and experiment with the burgeoning identity of young men?

¹⁶ Naipaul, V.S.. *The Mystic Masseur*. New York: Vintage Books , 1959 (p193)

¹⁷ "Coversations - Hari Kunzru." *Book Club* (2001) <<http://www.book-club.co.nz/features/harikunzru.htm>>

¹⁸ Kunzru, Hari, *The Impressionist*, New York: Penguin Putnam Inc. 2003 (p404)

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