

Class Mobility, Identity, and Modernisation in Diksha Basu's The Windfall: A Socio-Cultural Analysis

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الحراك الطبقي, الهوية, التحديث في رواية (The Windfall) ل دكشا باسو: تحليل اجتماعي ثقافي

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#### Abstract

This paper examines how The Windfall (Diksha Basu, 2018) is the epitome of how the impact of a movement of classes, identity politics, and urban modernization in India intersects. In the novel, Basu critically unites the processes that are sometimes discussed separately in the sociological literature to discuss the desires and interests of the fast-growing middle classes. Thus, to bridge this gap, this paper takes a combined socio-cultural approach. It employs the theory of symbolic capital by Bourdieu, the theory of cultural identity by Hall, and the Modernisation Theory, the formulations of Castells and Inglehart. Moreover, the study is conducted on a qualitative and contextual level, showing how mundane practices, such as conspicuous consumption, community relations, and family interactions, offer a platform on which symbolic legitimacy can be dramatized in a way that financial capital is being transformed into it. Indeed, in the novel, the city in urban India is portrayed as a critical discussion of the image of class mobility, identity making, and the modernization process, which is the object of the study. Consequently, the importance of this study lies in its combination of literature and sociological insights, revealing the general pattern of status anxiety, symbolic performance, and social reinforcement struggles that are often overlooked in the context of an average family. These findings confirm that The Windfall is not just a mere social comedy but a critical treatise that illuminates the inconsistency that is prevalent in the middle classes of Indian society. It belongs to the new postcolonial urban literature studies because it throws light on the application of fiction in accumulating the two tints of belonging, identity, and status in the transitional societies.

Keywords: class mobility, symbolic capital; cultural identity; modernization; The Windfall

#### المستخلص

تتناول هذه الورقة البحثية رواية ) The Windfall ديمًا باسو، ٢٠١٨) بوصفها المثال الأبرز على كيفية تقاطع حركة الطبقات والسياسات الهوياتية والحداثة الحضرية في الهند. ففي الرواية، توجّد باسو بشكل نقدي العمليات التي غالبًا ما ثناقش بشكل منفصل في الأدبيات السوسيولوجية، وذلك من أجل تناول رغبات واهتمامات الطبقات الوسطى سريعة النمو .ومن ثم، ولردم هذه الفجوة، تعتمد هذه الدراسة مقاربة سوسيو—ثقافية مركبة. إذ تستند إلى نظرية رأس المال الرمزي عند بورديو، ونظرية الهوية الثقافية عند هول، ونظرية التحديث بصيغتي كاستيلز وإنغلهارت .وعلاوة على ذلك، تُجرى الدراسة على مستوى نوعي وسياقي، حيث تُظهر كيف أن الممارسات اليومية، مثل الاستهلاك التظاهري، والعلاقات المجتمعية، والتفاعلات العائلية، تتيح منصة تُعرض عليها الشرعية الرمزية بطريقة يُحوِّل فيها رأس المالي إليها .وفي الواقع، تُصوّر الرواية المدينة في الهند الحضرية بوصفها ساحة نقاش نقدي لصورة الحراك الطبقي وصناعة الهوية وعملية التحديث، وهو ما يُعد موضوع الدراسة .وبناءً عليه، تكمن أهمية هذه الدراسة في دمجها بين الأدب والرؤى السوسيولوجية، كاشفة النمط العام للقلق المرتبط بالمكانة، والأداء الرمزي، وصراعات التعزيز الاجتماعي التي غالبًا ما يُتغافل عنها في سياق الأسرة العادية. وتؤكد هذه النتائج أن The Windfall ليست مجرد كوميديا اجتماعية، بل هي أطروحة نقدية تكشف عن التناقض السائد في الطبقات الوسطى للمجتمع الهندي. كما أنها تنتمي إلى دراسات الأدب الحضري ما بعد الكولونيائي الجديد، لأنها تسلط الضوء على دور الأدب في الطبقات الوسطى للمجتمع الهندي. كما أنها تنتمي إلى دراسات الأدب الحضري ما بعد الكولونيائي الجديد، لأنها تسلط الضوء على دور الأدب في الطبقات الإنتائية أن

الكلمات المفتاحية :الحراك الطبقى؛ رأس المال الرمزي؛ الهوبة الثقافية؛ التحديث؛ The Windfall

#### 1. Introduction

The social structure of the country has changed tremendously after the liberalization of the Indian economy in the early 1990s, and an urban middle class has emerged, whose anxieties and visions are central to identity and modernity discourses (Fernandes, 2023; Srivastava, 2023). Furthermore, the new middle class that is constantly in the process of developing is engaged in negotiation in the case of India, as it is demonstrated by scholars like Srivastava (2021) and Mahato (2020); however, the new middle class also has to face social divisions, inherited in the past, urban consumer culture, and globalisation. It is in the weirdness of this transition that one can see the simultaneity of already established system of castes, family, neighbourhood politics, which still determine social change and solidarity in the conditions of contemporary prosperity (Jha, 2021; Sridharan, 2020).

Despite window of upward mobility the modernisation and technological connectivity offered, they still enhanced status anxiety, obligating families to enact their model of an upwardly mobile lifestyle, including from-the-ground-up types of prescribed classes that are somewhat visible and contradictory (Mukherjee, 2021; Palat & Veron, 2018). It is under these conditions that an acclaimed novel set in India by Diksha Basu, *The Windfall* (2018), has become an incendiary piece of fiction that illustrates these tensions in a rich, albeit comic, image of the family of the Jhas, an average New Delhi family unoccupied with wealth turns into a flashy family living in an exclusive enclave of nouveau riches India (Capelos & Basu, 2022; Gupta, 2023). Through her witty and empathetic satire, Basu explains how the symbols of class, such as extravagant furniture and neighbourhood gossip, and the offer of a social

club, are transformed into territories where new identities are shaped and sought after in pursuit of social recognition (Mahato 2020; Srivastava 2021).

The central theme of this research is the interrelated terms of class mobility, identity, and modernisation, which imply a particular yet closely related reasoning about the interpretation of Basu's work. In many cases, the mobility of classes in India is not only linear but also wholly economic; it necessitates the conversion of material capital into symbolic capital that depends on neighbourhood reputation, family honour, and fine codes of taste (Bourdieu, 1989). The following example is Basu Jhas, who can afford fancy furniture. It yet has to work to deserve the contempt and bitterness of his new neighbours, which testifies to the fact that the relocation is not only about economic success but also about cultural adjustment (Baviskar and Ray, 2020; Srivastava, 2021). The second topic, the identity one, is manifested as unstable and fluid, a precarious construction that needs to adapt to new social categories, modified friendship relationships, and new relations with parents, which also depend on wealth (Bhandari, 2020, p; Borgohain and Ammari, 2022). The daily decisions that the Jhas have to make in their daily lives are converted into an analogy of actions redefining them; organising parties as much as dwarfing the westernised way of mannerisms of their son.

The greater picture brought about by modernisation is the urban centres of India, especially Delhi, and it represents the paradox of shining emergent infrastructure alongside the antique social stratifications (Castells, 1997; Levy, 2020). Their experience is a witness to the amplification and escalation of social insecurities by technology and consumerism, as families are eager to keep up with their wealthiest counterparts through

migration to urban areas due to the aspiration (Narayan and Srinivasan, 2023). Even though such themes have been explored in previous literature, such as the cultural politics of urban spaces, gendered aspects of new middle-class life (Lentz, 2020), or postcolonial urban subjectivities (Gururani and Kennedy, 2021), these themes are so intertwined that there is a conspicuous absence of analysis between them. Indeed, there is very little literature that provides a close study of the interaction between sudden upward mobility, identity negotiation, and modernisation in popular fiction, such as *The Windfall*. However, the difference between fiction and non-fiction is considerable in the sense that it is easier to investigate fiction to reveal much of the psychological contradictions and micro-interactions that macrosociological research fails to capture (Borgohain & Ammari, 2022; Mahato, 2020).

Thus, this paper will be a critical discourse on the topic of class mobility, identity formation, and modernisation of the city in urban India as presented in the novel, which is associated with Basu. The importance of the study lies in its intersection of literary and sociological approaches, which reveals how the struggle of an average family to be heard can expose broader tendencies of status anxiety, symbolic performance, and social reinvention. Based on this, the guiding question in this research will be: How does The Windfall by Diksha Basu represent the socio-psychological bargains of unexpected class mobility and modernisation in the formation of the individual and family identity? In an attempt to put this analysis into perspective, the research will rely on a holistic theoretical framework, which integrates the work of Bourdieu (1989, p. 24) notion of symbolic capital, the cultural identity theory (1980) by Hall, as well as the concept of Modernisation theory as expressed by Castells (1997)

that offers prism to the discussion of how the characters in Basu negotiate the alternate terrain of class, selfhood and city aspiration. To establish the underpinnings of this analysis, the next chapter will introduce the key theoretical framework, which will detail how class mobility, identity, and modernisation are going to be treated to position The Windfall in the broader context of socio-cultural discussions.

#### 1.1 Theoretical Framework

This part provides a summary of the primary theoretical settings in the socio-cultural analysis of *The Windfall* by Diksha Basu. In this work, an interdisciplinary approach is used to place the novel in the framework of a larger discussion about the issues of class, identity, and urban change in contemporary India. It is based on the theorisation of symbolic capital as put forward by Pierre Bourdieu (1989), the cultural identity as put forward by Stuart Hall (1980), and the theory of Modernisation as put forward by Castells (1997).

#### 1.1.1. Symbolic Capital and Social Mobility

The concept of symbolic capital by Bourdieu (1989, 2020) assumes that economic means should be transformed into cultural acknowledgment and respectable status by means of the collective social codes and practices. According to Bourdieu, economic mobility depends on the expression of taste, the style of life, and belonging to recognizable social groups that are viewed as legitimate at least through the eyes of the people involved. The authors confirm that this tendency is also reproduced in the Indian middle-income households in the emerging category, whose unit households make use of consumption and image in the community to secure their social status (Baviskar and Ray, 2020; Srivastava, 2021). *The Windfall* also demonstrates that Symbolic Capital is not something that can

be bought but gained through the situation when the Jha family had to change their place of residence, purchase many luxurious objects, and act in a way that would make them look like they belong.

#### 1.1.2. Cultural Identity Formation

In his theory, Stuart Hall (1980, 2018) emphasizes the aspects of what goes into creating identity as something that is never developed outside of social and historical circumstances. Identity, according to him, is dynamic and connectional, which is produced in terms of relations with other people, as well as the hegemonies of cultural discourses. Borgohain and Ammari (2022) and Narayan and Veron (2018) state that in the development of new identities within the urban middle classes in India, the traditional and the new tend to trade off against each other. Part and parcel of this performance of status in *The Windfall* is the wavering, self-conscious concept of self as visualised and wanted by the Jhas, the subjective formation of identity that is vulnerable to forces of both the newfound prosperity and modernisation.

## 1.1.3. Modernisation Theory

Modernisation theorists like Castells (1997, 2017) and Levy (2020) think that such a process of high economic growth, technological advancement, and urban mobility alters the form of social organization and creates new forms of subjectivity. This impression is crucial to the learning that the Indian cities are not only opportunities, but also war and contradiction, as the old divisions of classes are still present in the new consumer neighborhoods. Sarkar and Bhattacharya (2024) illustrate how these conflicts are revealed in the quotidian life of the family. The sudden mobility of the Jhas is quite evident in the story by Basu,

where the city of Delhi, with its urban networks, future markets, and competitive powers of the neighbourhood, makes it possible.

## 1.1.4. Synthesis and Application

The combination of all these theories contributes to the explanation of *The Windfall* as not only a social comedy. Indeed, the social structure indicates that the mobility process requires symbolic bargaining and identity construction in a dynamic social environment, and the modernisation process has given all these a new meaning. Moreover, the paper will employ these perspectives to investigate how the characters in the novel perform class by engaging in the most mundane activities, such as furnishing their new home, interacting with their neighbors, and negotiating rumors. Therefore, in the process, performing these activities demonstrates the thin border between desire and vulnerability in modern urban India. Ultimately, with this operationalisation of the unified framework, we have examined the role that literature can undertake in bringing out the lived contrasts that may exist in the reinvention of classes, identity anxiety, and the dynamics of modernisation in the ever-changing society.

#### 2. Literature Review

The rapid urban economic liberalisation of India has provoked an intense academic debate over the past several decades regarding the existence of middle classes in urban India, and the aspirations and status anxiety that they introduce with them (Fernandes, 2023; Srivastava, 2021). Moreover, this discussion has even moved out of the economic context into matters of identity, culture, and modernisation. In contrast, despite numerous studies on macro-level social and economic transformations, literary analysis is beginning to reveal the nature of fiction in representing the everyday bargain of class, identity, and

modernity as constituting this new urban subjectivity. Nevertheless, interdisciplinary overlap is not thoroughly explored, and fiction can be utilized to bridge the gap between theory and experience. Indeed, this brief overview of the three fields of study, like sociological research on the mobility of classes, literature that is critical of classes and identity, and literature on modernisation and urban space, therefore indicates the need to be more integrative. Additionally, this convergence is important, as it places the literary text not as an implication, but as an active part of forming urban consciousness. Thus, *The Windfall* by Diksha Basu presents an important location upon which the mediation of structural changes and lived experiences can be observed through fiction.

# 2.1. Past Research in the Middle Class and Class Mobility of India.

There is abundant research literature relating to the shifting relations of classes in India and the cultural politics of new middle classes. Making it clear that the middle population in India is not just an economic capital group but also a cultural construction as well as a construction of the state, gender politics, and social anxieties, Fernandes (2023) puts this cultural construction on the border between the state, the market, and the individual. To enact the class identity, Baviskar and Ray (2020) also make it clear that the everyday belongings, such as neighbourhood processes, social clubs, and conspicuous consumption, remain the primary parts thereof.

The same point is backed up by Srivastava (2023), who, when referring to gated communities and other cities, states that people experience more status anxiety and the distinction between classes is more evident in these urban, gated spaces. As Sarkar and Bhattacharya (2024) illustrate, sudden upward

mobility is based on common trends of generating new insecurities that families have to overcome repeatedly through the demonstration of their authenticity by employing symbolic capital. Furthermore, Sridharan (2020) and Narayan and Veron (2018) also prove that there is never a simple scenario in the case of vertical mobility, and families are forced to juggle their lineage ties, caste membership, and modern societal demands at the same time. Even though these studies in sociology give a fair picture of the relationship of classes in India, there is a tendency to ignore the literature that offers a clear picture of the psychological and symbolic tensions that underlie everyday lives.

## 2.2. Class and Identity Studies of Literature.

In seeking an answer to this question, several critics have explored the manner in which modern Indian fiction deals with the issues of class, identity, and urban modernity. Lentz (2020) presents some of the earliest accounts of the reflection of contradictions of post-liberalisation novels in the middle-class domesticity. Others written more recently, including Capelos and Basu (2022), consider The Windfall by Basu as a social satire. Nevertheless, they focus more on its comical aspects and do not elaborate on its understanding of symbolic capital and modernisation. Thomas and Jaleel (2025) compare the story of Basu to that of The White Tiger by Adiga, revealing that both authors demonstrate status anxiety through their narrative techniques.

The mobility of identity in Indian fiction, as highlighted by Borgohain and Ammari (2022) and Mahato (2020), is not always paired with the daily negotiations of family identity under the condition of unexpected wealth. Hawley (2022) associates postcolonial urbanism with the transformation of subjectivities, but does not present a continued close reading of The Windfall

as an example of reinventing the classes. Overall, despite these articles confirming the importance of fiction in reflecting the tensions of the classes, they do not explain how Basu has dramatised the intersection of the classes' mobility, identity, and modernisation into an easily consumable complexity.

# 2.3 Modernisation and Urban Space as a Research in Literature.

The third theme examines how recent subjectivities have been constructed in Indian cities through modernisation and other forms of urbanisation. Castells (1997) assumes a network society and illustrates how technological and economic revolutions rupture the traditional fabric of society and create new and pulled symbolic lines. As per such an argument, culture change has an economic growth connection, as Levy (2020) suggests, and new struggles between the traditional and aspirational arise in the course of modernisation. The gated communities and exclusive neighbourhoods, as Srivastava (2023) demonstrates, are also the causes of these contradictions and strengthen them in and around Delhi. Sarkar and Bhattacharya (2024) argue that the city is not a simple physical location, but an atmosphere of negotiating the classes and belonging by conducting daily shows. According to Narayan and Veron (2018) and Mahato (2020), these insecurities may prove to be an overwhelming issue when new rules of the society conflict with the old kinship relations in case of unexpected wealth. However, these contributions remain infrequent and do not constitute a comprehensive study of how literature creates such ties and relationships, nor how these relations can be enabled by combining the processes of class movement, identity anxiety, and modernisation into a single narrative, as seen in The Windfall.

### 2.4. The Research Gap

Taken together, these three threads of analysis provide reasonable grounds of a gap: that though sociological and literary commentary on the condition of the middle-class in India, of the urban context and Identity Politics has been made, no one work has synthesized these approaches into a coherent, unified description of the psychological and ideological embodiment of sudden and upward mobility as embodied in the fiction of the present day. To be more exact, *The Windfall* is being studied as a golden example to dramatise how an average family manages to find its way in the world of aspirations, status anxiety, and the problems of modern urban life. However, the existing research bridges this gap and hence offers an interdisciplinary explanation between class mobility, identity formation, and modernisation, forming a concrete basis in the background of the chapters of the theoretical framework and analysis presented earlier.

#### 3. Methodology

This section outlines the methodological approach adopted to examine how Diksha Basu's *The Windfall* portrays the complex interplay between class mobility, identity formation, and modernisation in contemporary urban India. Indeed, considering that the study involves socio-cultural bargaining as a component of a literature that is part of a narrative itself, a qualitative research design can be viewed as the most appropriate one. According to Creswell (2013) and Clarke and Braun (2014), qualitative studies are particularly well-suited for examining texts related to meanings, context, and symbolism, and thus, this suggests that qualitative studies can be appropriate for conducting rigorous literary analysis.

Moreover, the research design of the present study is qualitative and interpretive, as it enables a nuanced

understanding of the treatment of symbolic capital, identity, and modernisation through daily life interactions and narrative structure. In contrast to quantitative approaches, which focus on interacting with quantifiable variables, a qualitative design provides a contextual and multilayered account of the social realities and cultural codes within which fiction is produced (Denzin, 2018). In this sense, generalisability is not the most critical thing, but rather the contribution to understanding how a single text, such as *The Windfall*, can be used as a microcosm of the vast socio-cultural action.

#### 3.1. Data Collection

The purposeful sampling is used in the paper to determine *The* Windfall (2017) as the unit of analysis. This choice can be justified by the fact that the novel is centered around the rapid upward mobility of urban middle classes in India, a topic of interest to sociologists such as Fernandes (2023), Baviskar and Ray (2020), and Srivastava (2023), but seldom discussed in the literature. The analysis will concentrate on the text, specifically examining critical narrative moments, character dialogues, descriptions, and transitional points, where themes of class performance, identity anxieties, and contradictions modernization can be delineated. The supposition of the same approach is congruent with the view of Tisdell and Stuckey-Peyrot (2025), who believe that purposeful sampling, as applied in the textual analysis, focuses on meaning and relevance rather than statistics.

## 3.2. Data Analysis

Analysis of the chosen data will be conducted using thematic textual analysis, a method whose adaptable structure was first outlined by Clarke and Braun (2014). This technique involves coding the text about repetitive messages, patterns, and symbols

that are preferably associated with the research question and theoretical framework. These themes are divided into three ideas.

- 1. **Symbolic capital**: how the Jha's achieve status through consumption, neighbourhood reputation, and social rituals (Bourdieu, 1989; 2020);
- 2. Cultural identity: how characters negotiate shifting senses of self amid new social contexts and pressures (Hall, 2011; Borgohain and Ammari, 2022);
- 3. **Modernisation**: how urbanisation and technological change shape the family's mobility and anxieties (Castells, 1997; Levy, 2020).

  Close reading is based on direct textual evidence and interpretive commentary, whereby the analysis is based on the narrative but with a connection to the larger sociocultural theories presented in Chapter 2.

## 3.3. Trustworthiness and Researcher Reflexivity

Credibility in qualitative literature studies necessitates that it is founded on transparency and sufficient evidentiary support to ensure the reliability of interpretation. The direct quotes from the novel support thematic arguments and are compared with existing literature through cross-references. It aligns with the requirements for credibility and confirmability in qualitative research, as provided by Sarif and Ismaila (2020). Moreover, the reflexivity of researchers is maintained through constant doubt in the interpretive biases and by preserving the background of the readings on a textual and theoretical level.

#### 3.4. Ethical Considerations

There are no human participants, surveys, or interviews in this study, which reduces the ethical risk. All sources are referenced

in APA (7th edition) format, and due credit is given to the original authors and their intellectual property. Its analysis is done with due respect to the integrity of the text by Basu, and quotations will be used responsibly to make interpretive arguments.

## 3.5. Limitations of the Methodology

This study is both restricted and qualitative as it is grounded in a singular text, and it does not purport to represent the definitive narratives of the middle class in India. The depth rather than breadth brought about by the focus on The Windfall suggests that the findings can provide important information on the effect of sudden wealth and modernisation on identities and subsequent social mobility. Still, it cannot be extended to other similar fictitious situations. Cao (2013) assumes that case study research is capable of generating transferable knowledge when supplemented with a relevant theory and parallel literature.

Finally, the paper is based on qualitative, thematic textual analysis of *The Windfall* to demonstrate how modernisation, identity, and mobility in classes overlap in the lives of characters in their everyday life. The research aims to provide a cogent and theoretically motivated interpretation, which will be developed in the subsequent analysis chapter. This chapter will decisively impart the analysis within a specific methodological framework, explicitly relating it to symbolic capital, identity theory, and modernisation perspectives.

## 4. Analysis

This part entails a textual critique of the novel *The Windfall* by Diksha Basu, with the application of the theoretical constructs presented in Chapter 2 to understand how this novel presents the subtleties of the relationships between classes, identity development, and modernisation in the urban middle class of

India. In this part, the theories of the concept of symbolic capital raised by Bourdieu, the concept of cultural identity as the process designed by Hall as a dynamic and relational process, and the theory of modernisation and urban space offered by Castells are harmonized to explain how the narrative presented by Basu illustrates anxieties and contradictions striving in the midst of a sudden outbreak of affluence. This discussion is divided into three sections, evaluating each of the three primary themes of the study through close reading and textual analysis.

## 4.1. Class Mobility and Symbolic Capital

The initial theme, encompassing both the plot and tone of the novel, revolves around the concept of class mobility and the acquisition of symbolic capital. Bourdieu (1989) adheres to the idea that upward mobility should be attained not only by material advantages but also by cultural capability of converting them into social validity. This is the dilemma that Basu mocks in the fumbling activities of the Jhas to execute status. The decision by the family to leave its humble neighbourhood in East Delhi for an upmarket enclave in South Delhi is the best illustration of this tension. Basu writes, "Their old neighbours saw them as traitors who had sold their souls for a South Delhi address." (Basu, 2017). This statement fundamentally underscores the ethical considerations and relational transformations instigated by class mobility: it transcends mere physical movement, redefining the of belonging exclusion. parameters and This delicate realignment is strikingly exemplified by Mr. Jha's preoccupation with ostentatious displays of refinement, notably the notorious chandelier: "The chandelier was so big it needed its own structural support like their new status, it seemed too heavy to hold." (Basu, 2017, p. 45). The metaphor describes what happens to newfound wealth, where no symbolic capital preexists, and it becomes a burden. Sarkar and Bhattacharya (2024) and Baviskar and Ray (2020) confirm this information by stating that in the Indian urban enclaves, such performances are highly judged. Any new wealth is mocked, and every new wealthy family is presumed to be suspect.

The local country club becomes another stage for status anxiety. Mr. Jha believes that membership will solidify his position in the elite. Yet, Basu's narration exposes his vulnerability: "He felt like an intruder at a party where he was both invited and uninvited." (Basu, 2017, p. 110). This perfectly embodies Bourdieu's (2020) idea that social fields have unwritten rules that newcomers struggle to master. Rupak, the Jhas' son, underscores this point when he remarks, "We're still outsiders here. We just bought a ticket to watch the show." (Basu, 2017, p. 13). In this context, social mobility is depicted as a transactional process. Yet, ultimately insufficient: financial resources alone fail to dismantle the unseen barriers that distinguish established elites from the emergent affluent class. The result, according to Basu, is a precarious, performative existence in which status must be renegotiated repeatedly, a pattern that also reflects Srivastava's (2021) investigation into status anxiety in India.

## 4.2. Identity Negotiation and Anxiety

The second theme is the identity negotiation that contrasts with the theme of class mobility, disclosing that the sense of self is violated among the Jhas when their status rises unexpectedly. According to Hall (1980; 2018), the essentialisation of identity is alleged to be a relational pattern of dynamic character, driven by social interaction and cultural discourse. In The Windfall, it is possible to observe such a conflict in the character of Mrs. Jha, as she yearns for the comfort of her old place of residence, where she used to live, while also desiring to be loved by her new

neighbours. This conflict is explained by Basu when she comments: "She felt she was wearing her old East Delhi self over her new South Delhi dress." (Basu, 2017, p. 63). This stratified metaphor can be considered a summary of Hall's understanding, who does not think that identity is a single, but a multiple and even contradictory aspect.

The urge to reinvent identity is most obvious in everyday interactions. At a high-society party, Mrs. Jha constantly adjusts her sari, worried about whether it is "too plain, too old-fashioned, or too new-money". This worry reflects the precariousness of the boundary between the aspiration and authenticity of the middle-income earners in India (Borgohain and Ammari 2022). In the meantime, Rupak also has his plot, and it introduces the element of generational conflict because Rupak cannot balance the demands of his family with the demands of the Westernised life. Basu writes, "Rupak's mind was a place he didn't know how to explain to his parents." (Basu, 2017, p. 97). The conflict emphasized in this line is the intergenerational conflict Bhandari (2020) describes, wherein the interactions between the younger members of the family can be viewed as conflicting in identity.

Mr. Jha is not exempt from identity crises either. Though self-confident on the outside, he has instances of self-doubt. Indeed, he recalls that after hearing the joke about wealth, which a neighbour had told him, it quickly turned him into a little man. Thus, this silent scene shows that instant fortune does not give identity any more stability; on the contrary, it puts it under new types of questioning. Narayan and Srinivasan (2023) note that this is a trend in the general structure of the urban classes in India: the status acquisitions are constantly put under threat of social disownment. The story by Basu presents these microdramas,

illustrating that identity is not a conclusive event, but a continuous negotiation that is uncomfortable and unstable.

#### 4.3. Modernisation and Urban Contradictions

The last theme puts the Jhas experience in the larger context of forces of modernisation that characterize the Indian urban environment. According to Castells (1997) and Levy (2020), modernisation produces contradictory spaces: new infrastructures and technologies are expected to promise movement, but they keep up with the social boundaries of the past. This is precisely the space that Basu calls Delhi. Gated neighborhoods, exclusive clubs, and shopping centers become venues where the Jhas must present their new social standing under the scrutiny of everyone.

This is clear when Mr. Jha contemplates his new gated neighbourhood: "He wondered if the gates kept them in or kept others out and if he was the intruder or the resident." (Basu, 2017, p. 78). The physical barrier is also a metaphorical one, which is similar to what Kathuria and Natarajan (2022) said about how cities in India, after liberalisation, create both safety and exclusion. Similarly, the scene in the mall illustrates how consumerism can be both beneficial and detrimental to society. At home, Mrs. Jha keeps empty luxury bags out in the open to show her status: "The bags were trophies she didn't know how to spend." (p. 84). In keeping with Banerjee's (2022) observation that contemporary consumer culture frequently exacerbates rather than lessens status anxiety, this remark demonstrates how modernization extends the performance of class into household areas. At the same time, Although social relations have evolved in modern times, they have mostly remained constant. Indeed, despite their contemporary address, the Jhas remain the target of veiled criticism, rumors, and gossip. Similarly, Sarkar and

Bhattacharya (2024) and Srivastava (2023) claim that modern enclaves imitate historical hierarchies in the name of progress. The story Basu tells is that modernisation is not a process of elimination of old anxieties but of rearticulation of the same in new symbolic expressions, leaving families such as the Jhas in between aspiration and anxiety.

In conclusion, the short story of The Windfall demonstrates that the narrative authored by Diksha Basu is not a joke about social issues; rather, it is an elaborate examination of the hypocrisy of social progress, the instability of identity, and the irony of the modernisation process in India. Coupled with the day-to-day existence of the Jhas, the book reveals that wealth and modernity cannot be automatic belongingness; rather, they are the source of new grounds of tension and stress, and even symbolic rebellion. The discussion chapter that follows is based on these findings, which will be located in a larger argument about the larger questions in postcolonial urban studies and the modern Indian cultural discourse.

#### 5. Discussion

This segment describes the main conclusions made after reading The Windfall by Diksha Basu concerning literature. It establishes these findings in the literature of the urban middle class, mobility of classes, and identity negotiation of modernization in India. Lastly, it emphasizes how this research fills a significant void and adds new knowledge to postcolonial urban and cultural studies.

## 5.1. Comparison with Existing Studies

The results of the present study support some of the patterns outlined by scholars, such as Fernandes (2023, p.286) and Srivastava (2023), who draw attention to the fact that a need for continuous legitimacy performance characterises the emergent middle classes in India. Consistent with the analysis of Baviskar

and Ray (2020), the efforts of the Jhas to convert their economic capital into symbolic capital demonstrate how the processes and activities of everyday consumption and neighbourhood relationships remain one of the most critical areas for negotiating class. Yet, as much as such sociological studies are dependent on a macro-level description of survey and social observation, instead, this research demonstrates, via close reading, that these processes become dramatised in moments of intimacy within family members, on subtle nothings during conversations, and in inert symbolism like the chandelier and the gated enclave.

In contrast to scholars such as Capelos and Basu (2022) and Thomas and Jaleel (2025, p. 207), who perceived The Windfall mainly as a comedic satire to be read literally without unpacking its more profound theoretical implications, this study demonstrates that Basu's narrative is a nuanced exploration of Bourdieu's (1989) ideas on symbolic capital. This study, therefore, extends literary analysis by moving beyond surface irony to reveal the hidden work of class performance and the burden of symbolic recognition, showing how status must be continually legitimised through taste and reputation.

Furthermore, while Borgohain and Ammari (2022) and Mahato (2020) note the fragile and relational nature of identity in urban Indian fiction, they do not deeply examine how sudden wealth specifically disrupts and fragments family identity within a single narrative. This paper provides new explanations of the way the characters of Basu (especially Mrs. Jha and Rupak) maneuver through complex identities when exploring the path of conventional neighbourhood connections and new elitism. Attentively reading through these micro-dramas, the study situates the concept of identity, as presented by Hall

(2018), firmly within an Indian urban middle-class scenario, which is underrepresented in textual studies.

In the same way, despite the emphasis that Castells (1997), Levy (2020), and Srivastava (2023) put on the paradoxical modernisation process in the Indian urban space, the novel shows how the contradictions are symbolically condensed into the image of the everyday scene gates that secure and imprison, malls that open the door to all and further cormpress security forces, and neighborhoods that reproduce, but do not eliminate social division hierarchies. In contrast to Fernandes (2023) and Qureshi (2023), who discuss the problem of urban contradictions in the scope of ethnography or urban sociology, the given paper shows the specific power of fiction in illustrating the cost of modernisation on the human psyche in terms of irony and dialogue, as well as social interaction in everyday life.

The research is also able to fill the gap identified in the literature review. The previous scholars were inclined to consider the issues of class mobility, identity, and modernisation as different spheres of investigation. The given paper discusses The Windfall in the framework of a combined approach based on symbolic capital with the identity theory created by Hall (1980) Modernisation Theory that and reveals the intricate interconnections between the two levels that can be identified in the context of everyday family life. This paper will not take into consideration some of the already published works on the same topic, which have focused on general social observation or general social commentary; rather, it will present some textual fragments of evidence on which it draws insights into how the performance of new-class status contributes or detracts from identity in the specific field of urban modernity in India.

The research is distinct in its approach because it provides insight into how popular fiction, such as Basu's novel, can serve as a valuable resource for understanding the psychological nuances of India's new urban middle class. Moreover, it supports the points of the earlier study but contributes to the discussion, showing the emotional frailty and symbolic literature in the postsudden-wealth period. In this sense, the provided endeavor broadens the scope of postcolonial urbanism and empowers the modern South Asian literary criticism. At the same time, it also means that subsequent research should be more eager to take into consideration the way fiction reveals an ordinary experience, which more general research can fail to notice. To sum up, this part has not only strengthened but also baffled the already existing discourses of class, identity, and modernisation in the fast-changing, globally integrated Indian city. Ultimately, by placing the novel within an interdisciplinary framework, the paper not only bridges a significant gap in the literature but also explains why popular fiction is a crucial site for understanding the consequences of everyday life's silent conflicts contemporary middle-class subjectivities.

#### 6. Conclusion

This study aims to examine how Diksha Basu's *The Windfall* represents the complex dynamics of sudden class mobility, identity negotiation, and modernisation within the urban Indian middle class. Specifically, through a close textual analysis grounded in Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital, Hall's (1980) theory of cultural identity, and Modernisation Theory as developed by Castells (1997), the study reveals how the novel is used to dramatise the provisional, ongoing labour of exchanging monetary capital for social credibility.

Importantly, it has been argued that the move of the Jhas out of East Delhi to a luxurious South Delhi neighbourhood is more than a physical one; rather, it is more a symbolic break that transforms the social affiliations, creating new status concerns and ethical conflicts. Moreover, the context in which the story has been narrated richly depicts how some of the familiar places (objects/spaces) like chandeliers, gated communities, and social clubs are places where scholars execute class and where identity is negotiated. Moreover, the study noted that the novel's characters reflect Hall's understanding that identity is a relational and fluid concept: the characters must reconcile their selfperceptions with new judgments of themselves made by others. Finally, the reading showed that modernisation, although it seemed to be mobile, worsens but does not eliminate traditional insecurities by fossilising them into new contradictions of the city.

## 6.1. Contribution to Knowledge

This piece adds a number of valuable contributions to the literature on the subject of urban middle classes in India and the study of postcolonial culture. In fact, first of all, it addresses the gap in the existing literature, where the issue of class mobility, identity, and modernisation was often addressed in isolation or at least in a macro-sociological level. In addition, with the incorporation of all these strands into one piece of textual analysis, the study provides novel information on the role of everyday family life in providing a space of accomplishing and negotiating class status, which macro-level analyses tend to ignore.

Second, the paper also widens the literary criticism of The Windfall to embrace the social comedy element in it. Notably, it shows that the narrative of Basu interpreted in an

interdisciplinary vein has been wrestling with the theoretical writings of Daniels concerning the topic of symbolic capital and the tenuous boundaries of belonging. In this regard, the study contributes to South Asian literary studies by showing that modern popular fiction could be used to portray a subtle outline of the aspiration, anxiety, and conflict of modernity.

## **6.2.** Novelty and Implications

The novelty of this paper lies in its close textual focus on one novel, crucially demonstrating how sudden wealth leads to not only material changes but also ongoing emotional and symbolic conflicts. Moreover, the study places significance on fiction by using cultural sociology and literary analysis to understand how aspirational classes in India tend to negotiate their daily lives. Importantly, this angle has been overlooked in the broader economic and policy-based studies.

Consequently, Future research is also open to investigation through the findings. Scholars can, for instance, use this work to compare *The Windfall* with other Indian English novels where the middle classes move into and out of their locations, or alternatively to make comparative research with other urban narratives of other postcolonial settings. Interestingly, in a practical sense, the study implies that policymakers and urban sociologists need to be more concerned with exploring the psychological aspects of mobility and belonging, which can only be highlighted by fiction. Finally, in a nutshell, this research has not only addressed a significant gap but also indicated the possibility of literary studies to bring to light the invisible, or rather the subtextual negotiations, that inform contemporary urban living.

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#### A Socio-Cultural Analysis

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