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Juxtaposing Morality and Genealogical Senselessness in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Mr̥chakaṭikā*: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

This paper explores how morality and genealogical *senselessness* are configured in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by One Hundred Years of Solitude and the ancient Sanskrit drama *Mr̥chakaṭikā* (“The Little Clay Cart”). Through comparative analysis grounded in postcolonial literary theory and classical Indic dramaturgy, the study argues that both texts articulate moral imperatives through non-linear family histories and destabilized genealogies, challenging conventional narratives of ethical formation and social order. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, cyclical family repetition blurs individual moral agency, while in *Mr̥chakaṭikā*, social structures and relational networks defy normative lineage hierarchies. Despite cultural and historical distance, both works destabilize genealogical logic to expose social inequity, communal responsibility, and complexity of moral identity. By foregrounding disorderly lineages and ethical ambiguity, the texts invite readers to rethink morality not as hereditary destiny but as negotiated, contingent, and communal.

Keywords: Morality, genealogy, lineage, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *Mr̥chakaṭikā*, comparative literature, postcolonial theory, classical Indian drama.

Introduction

Literature often anchors moral inquiry in family history and genealogical coherence. Yet some of the most powerful texts in world literature challenge this assumption by portraying genealogical *senselessness*—family lines that loop, repeat, and disintegrate—which in turn destabilizes conventional moral formation. Two strikingly different but thematically resonant texts that engage this disruption are *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez and *Mr̥chakaṭikā* (The Little Clay Cart), an ancient Sanskrit play attributed to Śūdraka.

One Hundred Years of Solitude portrays the Buendía family across generations in the fictional town of Macondo, where time collapses and genealogical repetitions undermine individual identity and moral agency (Márquez 45). In contrast, *Mr̥chakaṭikā* foregrounds social networks and ethical action outside of hereditary privilege, destabilizing caste and lineage hierarchies through its focus on civic morality and relational commitments (Sharma 27). This paper explores how both works configure morality through genealogical disruption and communal interdependence, drawing on postcolonial literary theory and classical Indian dramaturgical principles.

Understanding genealogical senselessness and moral configuration requires theoretical grounding. Postcolonial theorists like Homi K. Bhabha argue that narratives often disrupt linear histories to resist hegemonic identity formation

(Bhabha 2). In classical Sanskrit dramaturgy, the Nāṭiyaśāstra conceptualizes relational networks and social dynamics as integral to ethical action, often privileging *rasa* (aesthetic experience) over genealogical determinism (Datta 56). Combining these frameworks allows us to read both texts not as genealogies of once-fixed moral identities, but as configurations of relational ethics shaped through cultural disjunctions and social interaction.

The Buendía lineage in Márquez’s novel is famously cyclical, with names—José Arcadio and Aureliano—repeating across generations. This repetition is more than a stylistic choice; it erodes distinct individuality and destabilizes moral agency. As the senior Úrsula reflects, “It was as if the family were tied to the wheels of an unseen mechanism that kept turning and turning” (Márquez 68). The Buendías’ genealogical loops manifest moral ambiguity: repeated failures, incestuous intimations, and overlooked ethical responsibility for communal decay. The novel’s relentless recurrence suggests not linear progress but repeated ethical breakdown, where lessons fail to transfer across generations: “He realized that if the new child looked like a pig it was because the family’s legacy of solitude had trapped them in an endless loop” (Márquez 127). This motif aligns with Bhabha’s concept of history as “unhomely,” where repetition disrupts identity formation (Bhabha 3). By the end of the novel, the last Buendía deciphers ancient prophecies only to discover they predicted the family’s own extinction. Genealogical memory

collapses into senselessness, revealing moral order as matched to social unpredictability rather than lineage determination (Márquez 301). The narrative thus subverts traditional moral narratives grounded in ancestry and progress.

In contrast to the epic or Paurāṇic dramas that centralize lineages and dynastic legitimacy, *Mṛcchakaṭikā* foregrounds civic morality and ethical agency outside hereditary entitlement. Its protagonist, Cārudatta, a man of modest means, acts morally not by birthright but through generosity and social obligation (Sharma 39). The play's plot centers on Cārudatta's kindness to Vasantasenā, a courtesan, and Rakṣasena, a wrongfully accused noble—neither lineage producing a privileging moral status. Instead, moral worth stems from *dharma* enacted through choice: “Cārudatta's charity contradicts normative expectations that only the high-born act benevolently” (Sharma 41). This social redistribution of moral agency challenges lineage-based ethics, aligning with Nāṭyaśāstra's emphasis on relational dynamics rather than genealogical determinism (Datta 59).

Rather than familial bonds, *Mṛcchakaṭikā* privileges communal ties. The collective support for the wrongly accused and the public assembly's judgment underscore communal moral agency over individual heredity. According to Kulkarni, “The play negotiates civic ethics through social negotiation rather than bloodline inheritance” (Kulkarni 92). Despite cultural and historical distance, both texts *deconstruct genealogical logic in service of moral exploration*.

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, lineage becomes repetitive and meaningless, reflecting moral disintegration. In *Mṛcchakaṭikā*, lineage does not determine moral worth; socio-ethical relations do. Both destabilize hereditary morality but through different mechanisms: one through cyclical collapse, the other through social redistribution. In both cases, moral configuration emerges through relational networks rather than genealogical continuity.

Márquez's novel situates Macondo's eventual downfall in the collective failure to act ethically amid repeating cycles. Similarly, *Mṛcchakaṭikā* frames moral triumph not through family heroic deeds but through collective justice and shared responsibility. As Jameson states, postcolonial narratives often “reconfigure moral authority away from lineage to communal narrative visibility” (Jameson 118). Both texts reflect this shift—one through narrative destabilization and the other through social affirmation. The comparative study reveals how literature can challenge genealogical determinism: In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, genealogy becomes a *fantastic device* to critique inherited moral assumptions. In *Mṛcchakaṭikā*, morality is enacted through *social relations*, not hereditary ascendance. Together, these texts suggest that moral identity is not inscribed by blood but configured through *historical contingency, cultural negotiation, and social engagement*.

The comparative exploration of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Mṛcchakaṭikā* reveals that despite their vast differences in geography, genre, temporality, and aesthetic tradition, both texts converge in their radical interrogation of genealogy as a foundation for morality. Each work dismantles the assumption that ethical order flows naturally from lineage, inheritance, or social hierarchy. Instead, they reposition morality within structures of contingency, relationality, and communal negotiation. Through cyclical time and repetitive naming, Gabriel García Márquez destabilizes the genealogical logic of the Buendía family, exposing the fragility of inherited moral memory. Conversely, *Mṛcchakaṭikā* redistributes ethical authority away from dynastic privilege toward civic

action and interpersonal responsibility. In both cases, genealogical senselessness does not signify nihilism; rather, it becomes a narrative strategy for reconfiguring moral imagination.

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the Buendía lineage functions as a metaphor for historical repetition and ethical stagnation. The recurrence of names—José Arcadio and Aureliano—blurs distinctions between generations, eroding the individuality necessary for sustained moral growth. The cyclical structure suggests that moral lessons are neither cumulative nor transmissible through bloodlines. Instead, they dissipate amid solitude, obsession, and forgetfulness. The final revelation that the family's destiny was inscribed in Melquíades' parchments underscores the futility of genealogical determinism: the Buendías are trapped not by fate alone but by their inability to translate inherited experience into ethical transformation. Genealogy, in this context, becomes self-consuming—a closed system that collapses under the weight of its own repetition. Yet Márquez's vision is not merely tragic; it is diagnostic. By portraying the extinction of the Buendías, he critiques historical amnesia and inherited arrogance, urging recognition that morality requires active, communal engagement rather than passive inheritance.

By contrast, *Mṛcchakaṭikā* offers a dramaturgical alternative in which moral identity is configured through social networks rather than ancestral prestige. Cārudatta's ethical stature does not derive from noble lineage but from compassionate action. The play foregrounds civic space—the marketplace, the courtroom, the public assembly—as the arena where morality is enacted and affirmed. Genealogy in this drama is displaced by relational ethics; characters achieve moral significance through generosity, loyalty, and collective solidarity. In destabilizing rigid caste hierarchies and elevating marginalized figures such as Vasantasenā, the play contests the notion that moral authority resides in inherited status. Instead, it affirms a dynamic social order where virtue is performed and recognized within communal frameworks. The dramaturgical emphasis on *dharma* as lived responsibility rather than genealogical entitlement anticipates modern conceptions of ethical citizenship.

Taken together, these works illuminate two complementary trajectories of moral reconfiguration. Márquez exposes the dangers of genealogical insularity—how obsession with lineage fosters repetition, isolation, and ultimately annihilation. Sūdraka's drama, by contrast, models a porous moral structure in which ethical legitimacy circulates beyond bloodlines. Both narratives reject simplistic equations between ancestry and virtue, suggesting instead that morality must be continually negotiated within historical and social contexts. Their differing narrative strategies—magical realism's cyclical temporality and classical Sanskrit drama's civic resolution—underscore a shared insight: ethical meaning emerges not from genealogical continuity but from relational engagement and collective memory.

Furthermore, this comparative analysis demonstrates the value of cross-cultural literary study. By placing a twentieth-century Latin American novel alongside an ancient Indian play, the discussion reveals how disparate traditions grapple with analogous concerns: the instability of identity, the fragility of moral inheritance, and the tension between individual agency and communal responsibility. The juxtaposition challenges linear literary histories and underscores the universality of certain ethical questions. Both texts reflect societies in transition—Macondo amid colonial

and postcolonial upheaval, Ujjayinī within shifting social hierarchies—where inherited structures prove insufficient for sustaining moral coherence. In doing so, they invite readers to reconceptualize morality as historically contingent yet socially grounded.

Ultimately, the concept of “genealogical senselessness” emerges not as narrative chaos but as a deliberate aesthetic intervention. By unraveling the authority of lineage, both *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Mṛcchakaṭikā* foreground the necessity of ethical consciousness beyond blood and birth. Morality, in these works, is neither predestined nor hereditary; it is enacted, contested, and remembered within communal spaces. Their enduring relevance lies in this insistence that ethical identity must be forged anew in each generation, not merely inherited from the past.

Thus, the comparative study affirms that literature possesses the power to interrogate foundational cultural assumptions about lineage and virtue. Whether through the haunting solitude of the Buendías or the redemptive civic ethos of Cārudatta’s world, these texts converge in a profound reimagining of moral order. They remind us that genealogy may structure narrative time, but it cannot guarantee ethical meaning. That responsibility rests, instead, with the living community and the choices it continually makes.

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