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Movement from Secure Base to the Unknown World: A Study of Child Psychology in
Dev Kumari Thapa's Selected Stories

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Letter of Approval

On the recommendation of the supervisor Assistant Professor Mahesh Paudyal, this thesis “Movement from Secure Base to the Unknown World: A Study of Child Psychology in Dev Kumari Thapa’s Selected Stories” submitted by Uma Nepali is approved for the examination for the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in English.

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Abstract

This thesis explores how child psychology is portrayed in four selected stories by the renowned Nepali author Dev Kumari Thapa, taken from a collection initially published in 2019 AD. Anchored in Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, the study delves into the psychological growth of child characters and their emotional responses to societal challenges. The stories, including "Securing Future," "Puppy," "Ritthe's Question," and "Tears That Could Not Become Pearls" provide a nuanced examination of innocence, curiosity, and resilience amidst adversity. Each narrative aligns with key developmental stages: Naresh's imagination and questions about war reflect the preoperational stage; Madhukari's empathy for her puppy and defiance towards her father resonate with the transition to the formal operational stage; Ritthe's survival instincts highlight the concrete operational stage; and Bhunte's reflections on loss and suffering demonstrate the onset of abstract thinking in the formal operational stage. Thapa's works capture the essence of childhood in a socio-cultural context, emphasizing the interplay between external hardships and internal emotional growth. Through symbolic elements like pearls, tears, and war, the stories reveal how family, environment, and societal expectations influence cognitive development. Read with a critical lens from Piaget's developmental psychology, this thesis offers a critical lens to understand childhood psychology through literature, contributing to the discourse on emotional resilience, cognitive growth, and moral development.

Keywords: Child psychology, cognitive development, emotional growth, parental influence, innocence

This study is based on the exploration of children's psychology in Dev Kumari Thapa's stories "Securing Future", "Puppy", "Ritthe's Question" and "Tears that Could Not Become Pearls". The stories intersect with Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development. Thapa delves into themes of innocence, curiosity, and societal hardship, portraying how children like Naresh in "Securing Future", Madhukari in "Puppy", Ritthe in "Ritthe's Question", and Bhunte in "Tears That Could Not Become Pearls" navigate and interpret their challenging environments. Naresh's struggle with war and peace reflects his position in the preoperational stage, where symbolic play and imaginative reasoning are pivotal. Madhukari's affection towards her dog and hatred towards her father explains the dynamics of her psychological being. Ritthe's pragmatic approach to survival in poverty aligns with the concrete operational stage, showcasing his ability to process tangible realities. Bhunte's contemplations on the symbolism of pearls and his emotional reflections illustrate the formal operational stage where abstract and critical thinking come to the fore. Thapa's narratives thus not only capture the essence of children's psychological development but illuminate how their cognitive growth is intricately linked with their emotional responses to their sociocultural contexts. Her stories offer a nuanced portrayal of how innocence and curiosity interplay with the harsh realities of life, enriching our understanding of Piaget's theories in the context of literature.

These stories have been taken from *Selected Stories of Dev Kumari Thapa* (2019). Pratinidhi Kathaharu initially published the Nepali version of the book in 1994 and edited it by Narendra Chapagai. Mahesh Paudyal later translated it into English as *Selected Stories of Dev Kumari Thapa*. By getting the stories translated, the author apparently seeks a wider community of readers. Many academicians,

critics, and writers have attempted to conduct a descriptive and comparative study of these stories from different perspectives.

Kabiraj Neupane, in the blurb to *Selected Stories of Dev Kumari Thapa* makes a cursory estimation of the merits of her work:

Her works laden with the deep feelings stay in the readers' mind even long after they have been read. By dint of these qualities, she became a subject of deep faith for the senior generation of Nepali literature especially for their bright authorial future, and was an orchid of great inspiration for her juniors. Thapa's deeply felt pieces have a profound effect and motivation for upcoming authors and many more. (Blurb)

Neupane's estimation is more on the emotional universe of Thapa's characters. He also highlights the potential positive effects they can have on the readers. Another critic, Gayatri Shrestha, interprets "Ritthe's Question" as a story that depicts the image of poverty that aligns with the psychological well-being which has direct a bearing on the character's psychology to the extent that it provokes Ritthe to become a thief and lose the respect of his mother on the grounds of dignity issues. Finally, the mother realizes that poverty is eliminating Ritthe's dignity. Every child has the right to cherish dreams, but life is hard for those who live in slums. Such conditions of the lower class people limit them from access to higher purposes in life. Instead, they are inclined towards theft and robbery, which resembles the Ritthe's life.

According to Dipen Tamang, the book *Dev Kumari Thapako Kathama BalJeevan* unearths the simplicity of Nepali society and deals with child psychology that changes with time. Thapa adds that stories are mostly "concerned towards the children living in a society that is all covered with filth" (149). In her stories he further claims that Thapa, "depicts the wild image of society that is affecting every

person living in it, which is also affecting children directly or indirectly" (14). Thus, Tamang's observation identifies both psychological and social aspects of Thapa's stories.

Another critic, Dinesh Shrestha, concentrates on the aesthetic aspects of Thapa's stories. Thapa writes, "In her stories, embodies both inner and outer beauty with a poise and dignity" (blurb). Shrestha highlights the elegance of prose in this book by stating that she embodied inner and outer beauty, emphasizing the author's ability to convey complex emotions gracefully and subtly.

Likewise, Pramod Pradhan identifies both the thematic and linguistic merits of Thapa's stories: "Her stories present various vices and paradoxes of the Nepali society of her days in simple, lucid and moving language and style. She was adept in presenting the psychological trepidations, restlessness, and longings of the hearts of her characters through an in depth depiction of the psychology of children and women" (blurb). As critic Pradhan observes, Thapa's stories present "various vices and paradoxes of the Nepali society of her days in simple, lucid and moving language and style, skillfully portraying the psychological struggles, desires, and vulnerabilities of her characters, particularly through her profound exploration of the inner worlds of children and women" (blurb).

The critics mentioned above have mostly dealt with the artistic and aesthetic aspects of Thapa's stories. A few also highlight the psychological dimension, but it is not limited to children. Therefore, an exclusively psychological study of minor characters in Dev Kumari Thapa's stories has not been conducted yet. This thesis attempts to address this research gap.

The first story selected for this study is "Securing Future" which more or less operates in a single-family setting. The family members, parents, and a boy child,

Naresh, live in a small, charming house in Tungsung, Darjeeling. Parvati is depicted as a virtuous and graceful woman, and her husband, Krishna Bahadur, is a former World War II lieutenant who was promoted to the rank of captain. After the war, he started a small business. They have a five-year-old son named Naresh. Parvati is deeply concerned about the turbulent world, filled with wars and conflicts, and how it might affect her son's future. She dreams of making Naresh a champion of peace, not of war. However, Naresh is fascinated by war stories and dreams of becoming a soldier like his father. A significant moment occurs when Naresh notices bullet scars on his father's body, leading to a conversation about the war and killing enemies, which troubles Krishna Bahadur. Parvati tries to distract Naresh from these thoughts by pointing at a butterfly, symbolizing peace and beauty. Parvati harbors a dream of Naresh becoming a champion of peace, which she keeps private, reflecting her emotional nature and the weight of her aspirations for her son. However, the narrative exposes a stark contrast between Parvati's hopes and Naresh's fascination with war, influenced by his father's military past. Naresh's innocent yet troubling questions about the scars on his father's body and the realities of war reveal a child's struggle to understand the complexities of violence and heroism in psychological terms. Krishna Bahadur's discomfort and Parvati's attempt to divert Naresh's attention to a butterfly highlight the parents' shared concern for steering their son away from the glorification of war.

The second story shows that Madhukari names her new black spaniel pup 'Pluto', noting its fur glitters like the planet Pluto. Pluto quickly bonds with Madhukari, eagerly greeting her after school and enjoying rice dumplings from her plate. This routine deepens their connection. Three days after Pluto arrives, Madhukari's father, Ram, comes home drunk, which adds tension to the household.

Ram kicks Pluto in anger, causing the pup to scream in pain. Madhukari comforts Pluto, calling him my child and Ram demands that she get rid of the dog by the next day. In his anger, Ram slaps Madhukari hard on the cheek. Madhukari, shocked and hurt, sits in silence while Pluto licks her cheeks and hair, showing their deep emotional connection. Madhukari continues to care for Pluto, often dreaming about him. After school, she routinely releases Pluto from his chain, and they share snacks together. Occasionally, Pluto wanders off, and Madhukari searches the neighborhood for him. Pluto joyfully returns to her, and she fondly pets him. One day, Pluto doesn't greet her as usual and refuses to eat, only sniffing the food. Distressed, Madhukari decide to stay hungry as well. The next day, Pluto is found dead, where he had been chained. Mamta, Madhukari's mother, didn't notice any signs of Pluto's impending death. When Madhukari cannot find Pluto, she goes to the kitchen, and Mamta is caught in a difficult situation, knowing how upset Madhukari would be. After eating, Mamta tells Madhukari that Pluto's miseries have ended, indicating that Pluto has died. Madhukari continues eating without reacting, which shocks Mamta. Mamta repeats that death has relieved Pluto from misery, but Madhukari remains silent and even giggles, prompting Mamta to call her heartless. Madhukari then collapses to the ground, lamenting and rolling over in grief. Mamta tries to console her by saying Pluto is sick and is now at peace, but Madhukari doesn't listen and cries even more.

Similarly, the third story chosen for this study is "Ritthe's Question". It paints a vivid picture of a nameless street where homeless people reside. Despite a formal address or name, the street becomes a hub for those without homes. These individuals lead simple lives, untouched by the complexities and advancements of modernity. They live in a cave-like residence beneath a railway station, which they keep clean and decorate with flowers, contrasting their dire living conditions. The community

sustains itself through begging, and occasionally, they are treated to good food and clothes during the death rituals of wealthy people, moments that bring them temporary joy.

The narrative highlights communal life in this slum, including moments of conflict and harmony. The residents, including women and children, sometimes fight and scream, but they also share moments of joy by singing songs. The story particularly focuses on Rithe, a twelve-year-old boy with peculiar eyes that resemble soap nuts. Despite his young age, he appears much older and has become adept at begging, often securing the most resources through his efforts.

Likewise, Thapa's other prominent story is "Tears that could not Become Pearls". The story revolves around Bhunte, a young boy who recently moved from his village to the town. He is curious about the origins of the pearls in his mother's necklace, and she explains that pearls are formed inside shellfish when sand irritates them, causing them to secrete a substance that eventually turns into pearls. Bhunte is disturbed by the idea of pearls being the graveyard of leeches or the tears of fish. His mother reflects on her life, realizing that her pearl necklace symbolizes her unfulfilled dreams and hardships. She recalls a shopkeeper who once told her that pearls represent tears, a statement she had dismissed but now finds true. Bhunte, struggling with life in the town, reveals that his family lost their land to creditors after his father's death, leaving them without money for essentials. As the seasons change, Bhunte returns to his village, carrying basic supplies. Before leaving, his mother blesses him and asks him to visit her if he returns. Both are aware that their struggles may never lead to progress, and the story ends with the mother praying to become a shell in her next life to transform her tears into pearls, symbolizing a desire for transformation and meaning in their suffering. Many psychological factors can be

seen in every child in the stories, and they have a specific value and impacts if connected with one another. The children are all in the same phases of growing up by being curious, playful, living in crisis. Though every child is learning something new that changes their perception towards the ever-changing society, they are surviving the obstacles that can be seen in our society in the form of law and ethics as her book indicates the challenges between men, women and children in contemporary society where all the factors point to the new revolutionary practices.

All four stories chosen for this study are related to child psychology and the children's cognitive behavioral patterns. I could connect myself with the children in the stories I picked for my thesis work which shows the same kind of psychology I had in my childhood. I was a lot more curious about everything that felt new to me. This paper is dedicated to emotional growth, particularly the undressing ending of conflict, suffering, and aspirations practiced by their parents' experiences and their interpretations of societal hardships. Furthermore, Thapa's use of symbolic elements like pearls and tears highlights the complex interplay between emotional labor, material conditions, and psychological resilience in children's formative years that is becoming a triggering point to cognitive behavior as suggested by Jean Piaget in his theory of cognitive development.

Before discussing Jean Piaget's postulations of developmental psychology, a brief discussion of the secure base concept is needed. Based on theoretical assumptions developed by psychologist John Bowl, his successors Mary Ainsworth and others developed the idea of a secure base as a person or object to which the infant remains attached, not only for satisfying its physical needs but also for its security and safety. Ainsworth et al. define a secure base in the following terms:

...actively monitor their caregivers' location and availability while exploring. That is, exploration was pivoting around or referenced to a secure base figure about whom information and expectations were continuously updated by an attachment control system. Indeed, if there were no exploration there would be no need for proximity seeking. The infant could, as in many species, simply stay on or within reach of its mother. (xvii)

Piaget's concept moves beyond the child's attachment to a secure base and radiates out to the outer world, to which infants are introduced with the increase in age. Piaget mentions the importance of the environment and the process of adaptation. His investigation vastly exceeds any previous inquiries into children's thinking, including those of Bowlby and Ainsworth. Through observations and experiments with his three children, he followed the cognitive development of infants; two books cover these investigations. A further book describes the origins of play and imitation in children as symbolic ways of representing the world are learned.

Rabthah Abd. Rahim, and Syar Meeze Mohd Rashid comment:

Piaget proposed four stages of cognitive development for children:

sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational.

While Piaget's theory has significantly impacted developmental psychology, it has also faced criticism. One major criticism is that Piaget overestimated adolescent abilities and underestimated infant capabilities.

Additionally, he overlooked cultural and social interactions in cognitive development and children's thinking abilities. Cognitive development occurs at various stages during childhood. Consequently, studying cognitive development involves examining how children gain conscious control over their intellect and behavior. (3)

With children of school age, sometimes with the aid of collaborators, Piaget studied the development of language and thought in children, their judgments and reasoning, their understanding of physical causality, and the origins of phenomena in the world. The last four books, with a fifth concerning the development of moral concepts. He is also known as the father of child psychology. The key terms included by Jean Piaget would be the combination that can be seen in the stories I have picked. According to him there are five major stages where children's behavior is transformed through time: schema, assimilation, accommodation, equilibration, and adaptation. These stages are discussed briefly below.

Schema: According to Piaget, schema is the basic building block of intelligent behavior. For example, if a child sees a cat for the first time, he creates his own schema of what a cat is. The same idea of a child's interest is shown in reacting to every emotion that goes inside their mind and transforms their way of thinking or perception.

Assimilation refers to fitting a new experience into an existing or previously created schema. For example, if a child sees another cat, this time a small cat, maybe a kitten, he would add this new information into his schema of cats that are different from one another.

Accommodation: In this stage, the child creates a new schema, another animal with four legs. This time, the child finds the differences and acts accordingly, where the thought process develops.

Equilibration: Equilibration helps explain how children can move from one stage of thought into the next: assimilation and accommodation are the two sides of adaptation where children finally adapt to the things and environment around them.

Adaptation: this refers to the process of fitting a new experience into an existing or previously created schema, for example, if a child sees another cat, this time a cat is small, maybe a kitten, he would add this new information into his schema of cat; this refers to the process of creating a new schema for example, if the same child sees another animal that looks a little bit like a cat but somehow different, he might try to fit it into his schema of cat. With the parents' help, identifying objects and achieving a proper balance between assimilation and accommodation become the factors for their upbringing.

In the case of Piaget's son, Laurent, the tendency to grasp developed very early into a habit of clasping and unclasping his hands. Piaget terms such well-defined sequences of actions schemas or schemata. Their chief characteristic, regardless of their nature or complexity, is that they are organized wholes that are frequently repeated and can be recognized easily among other diverse and varying behaviors.

The narrative of Parvati, Krishna Bahadur, and Naresh serves as a poignant case study for exploring key aspects of child psychology, particularly in relation to the impact of parental war experiences, the development of a child's understanding of violence and peace, and the broader familial dynamics that influence a child's psychological growth. As Parvati was trying to make her son sleep after kitchen chores, Naresh engulfed his mother's face with his tender palms, and said in a pampered voice, "Mummy, I have thrown away my gun from today, When I grow up, I will go to Germany and make the Germans my friends, and like them, make medicine to treat the sick ones" (19). Such a child's mindset is derived from the environment he lives in, which accordingly affects the upbringing of children.

Piaget's theories of the development of children's thinking and to give a representative sample of his many observations and experiments with children.

Inevitably, there are omissions; for example, there is no attempt to outline Piaget's discussions of his own theories in relation to those of other psychology schools.

Piaget writes that each individual adapts to his environment by developing sufficient research, which shows that children often internalize their parents' beliefs and experiences. Naresh's desire to emulate his father's wartime heroics suggests that he is processing the narratives and values imparted to him, highlighting the role of parental influence in shaping a child's aspirations and moral framework. The psychological concept of intergenerational trauma indicates that children of trauma survivors can develop symptoms of secondary traumatization. While Naresh may not directly experience the traumas of war, his exposure to Krishna Bahadur's scars and stories could evoke a psychological burden, complicating his emotional development. This shows that what children adapt is influenced by their environment as a repertoire of schemas to deal with the common round of events, but it is a temporary adaptation only which is modified environment alters or as the individual extends his range of action" (*An Outline of Piaget's Developmental Psychology for Students and Teachers* 5).

Naresh's questions about war indicate his emerging cognitive abilities and curiosity about the world around him. This cognitive development is accompanied by emotional responses that reflect the duality of innocence and exposure to harsh realities. His fascination with war and his innocent questions about his father's scars reflect a child's natural curiosity but also a deeper psychological process influenced by parental experiences. As a World War II veteran, Krishna Bahadur embodies trauma and heroism, leading Naresh to grapple with complex themes of violence and morality at an impressionable age.

Naresh's innocent perception of war contrasts sharply with the violent truths revealed by his father. This dissonance can lead to confusion, as he attempts to reconcile his fascination with heroism against the backdrop of violence, creating potential emotional distress. Parvati's attempts to redirect Naresh's focus to a butterfly symbolize her efforts to cultivate emotional regulation and a peaceful mindset in her son. This reflects an understanding of the importance of fostering resilience and promoting positive emotional experiences as a buffer against the negative impacts of his father's past. The family dynamic between Parvati, Krishna Bahadur, and Naresh highlights attachment theory principles, which emphasize the importance of secure bonds for healthy emotional and psychological development.

Parvati's nurturing approach aims to foster a secure attachment with Naresh, providing him with a safe emotional base from which to explore the world. Her protective instincts against the glorification of war suggest a strong maternal drive to nurture peace and emotional stability. Conversely, Krishna Bahadur's internal struggles may affect his availability as an emotionally present parent. His discomfort in discussing war with Naresh indicates potential barriers to forming a secure attachment, as unresolved trauma can lead to emotional withdrawal or authoritarian parenting styles.

Naresh's interactions with his parents reflect the principles of social learning theory, wherein children learn behaviors and attitudes by observing their parents. Naresh's admiration for his father's military past underscores how children may emulate their parents' experiences. The glorification of war in Naresh's mind directly results from his observations and interactions with Krishna Bahadur, reinforcing the need for parental modeling of peace-oriented values. Naresh's innocent yet troubling desire to shoot Germans as he grows up exemplifies how their parents' narratives can

skew children's perceptions of conflict. This highlights the crucial role of parental guidance in shaping attitudes towards violence and heroism, demonstrating the responsibility of parents in cultivating a child's moral compass.

Piaget continues in explanation:

All that the child assumes is that...in lowering his hand he will again find the tactile impression experienced shortly before...but this return to the initial position is still determined by the activity itself, the advantage of this position rising merely from the fact that it characterized the beginning of the action in progress. Proof of this interpretation...is that the child makes no attempt to search for the object when it is neither within an extension of the gesture made, nor in its initial position. (*An Outline of Piaget's Developmental Psychology for Students and Teachers 6*)

So, children of trauma survivors may exhibit signs of anxiety, depression, and behavioral issues, as they absorb their parents' unresolved emotional conflicts.

Naresh's innocent curiosity about his father's scars may symbolize a burgeoning awareness of these complexities, provoking questions that challenge his understanding of heroism and violence.

Parvati's nurturing approach suggests a potential for fostering a secure attachment in Naresh, crucial for his emotional development. However, Krishna Bahadur's internal struggles may complicate their familial dynamics; possibly leading to an insecure attachment if he withdraws emotionally or reacts with authoritarianism. Secure attachment fosters resilience and effective emotional regulation, allowing Naresh to navigate his feelings about conflict and peace. In contrast, insecure attachment could lead to difficulties in emotional expression and social interactions, reinforcing maladaptive responses to stress. Social learning theory posits that children learn

behaviors and attitudes by observing their parents. This theory is crucial in understanding Naresh's fascination with war and heroism.

Krishna Bahadur's war stories and physical scars may inadvertently glamorize violence for Naresh, shaping his aspirations. Children may replicate aggressive behaviors they observe, potentially leading to the normalization of violence if it is not countered with messages of peace and compassion. Parvati's attempts to redirect Naresh's attention to symbols of peace, like the butterfly, illustrate an active effort to provide alternative behavior models. This highlights the importance of parental guidance in shaping a child's values, particularly in exposure to potentially harmful narratives. The family's efforts to navigate their experiences in a post-war context reveal the potential for building resilience in Naresh.

This research indicates that fostering open communication, emotional support, and encouraging healthy coping mechanisms can mitigate the impacts of trauma. Parvati's emphasis on beauty and peace through nature can be a protective factor, helping Naresh develop resilience against the negative influences of his father's past. By promoting a perspective that values peace and understanding over violence, Parvati can help Naresh develop a growth mindset, enabling him to adapt and thrive in a complex world marked by conflict.

The story of Parvati, Krishna Bahadur, and Naresh serves as a microcosm for understanding the intricate dynamics of child psychology in the context of familial trauma and societal conflict. By applying frameworks such as trauma theory, attachment theory, cognitive development, and social learning theory, we gain insight into the profound effects of parental experiences on a child's emotional and psychological growth. Naresh's journey underscores the necessity of nurturing secure attachments, fostering resilience, and modeling positive behaviors as essential

components in guiding children through the challenges posed by their parent's legacies. This nuanced understanding highlights parent's critical role in shaping their children's perceptions of conflict and peace and their emotional and social well-being in an often tumultuous world. The narrative of Parvati, Krishna Bahadur, and their son Naresh explores key concepts in child psychology, particularly how parental trauma and societal influences shape a child's development.

Krishna Bahadur's experiences in World War II create intergenerational trauma, impacting Naresh's emotional and psychological well-being. Naresh's curiosity about his father's scars indicates an awareness of the complexities of violence and heroism, which can lead to anxiety and confusion. Naresh's fascination with war reflects his cognitive development stage, where he begins forming moral frameworks. His internal conflict between his father's valor and his mother's aspirations for peace can lead to cognitive dissonance, complicating his moral reasoning. The attachment dynamics within the family are crucial. Parvati's nurturing approach suggests a potential for secure attachment, essential for Naresh's emotional resilience. Conversely, Krishna Bahadur's internal struggles could lead to insecure attachment, impacting Naresh's emotional regulation.

According to social learning theory, Naresh learns behaviors from his parents. Krishna Bahadur's war stories may glamorize violence, while Parvati's efforts to redirect Naresh towards symbols of peace (like the butterfly) highlight the importance of parental guidance in shaping values. The family's ability to navigate their post-war experiences reveals opportunities for building resilience in Naresh. Open communication and promoting healthy coping strategies can mitigate the negative impacts of trauma, fostering a growth mindset focused on peace and understanding.

Overall, the story illustrates the intricate dynamics of child psychology, emphasizing the roles of trauma, attachment, and parental modeling in shaping a child's understanding of conflict and peace. It underscores the importance of nurturing secure attachments and resilience in guiding children through complex emotional landscapes.

Parvati's concern deepens as she reads about the ongoing conflict in Korea, highlighting her fears for her son Naresh's future. Inside their cozy home, Krishna Bahadur is resting while Naresh plays nearby. The moment becomes pivotal when Naresh, noticing the scars on his father's shoulders, innocently asks, "Daddy, what's this, here?" (6) Krishna Bahadur's response, "That is a bullet mark. I was shot in the war," (6) introduces a stark contrast between a child's innocence and the harsh realities of war. This exchange not only exposes Naresh to the brutal truths of his father's past but also evokes Krishna Bahadur's internal struggle with the memories and scars he bears.

Aware of the implications of such conversations, Parvati feels the weight of her aspirations for Naresh to champion peace amidst the violence that still looms large in their lives. This moment captures the tension between the innocence of childhood and the burdens of adult experiences, setting the stage for the family's ongoing struggle to navigate their conflicting realities.

Naresh's questions reflect his natural curiosity and cognitive development. At five years old, children begin to explore the world around them, seeking to understand their environment. His inquiries about his father's scars and experiences show a desire to make sense of the adult world, particularly the idea of war and its consequences. Naresh's questions about whether his father killed others signify his budding moral reasoning. He grapples with the dichotomy of war as a heroic endeavor versus the

ethical implications of taking a life. This moment illustrates the complexity of moral understanding in children, where innocence collides with the harsh realities of adult experiences. Krishna Bahadur's grave response indicates his struggle with the emotional weight of his past. This can impact on Naresh as he processes the gravity of his father's experiences. Children often mirror their parent's emotional states; thus, Naresh may feel confusion or distress as he tries to reconcile his father's heroism with the violence associated with it.

The conversation exposes Naresh to the realities of war and violence at a young age, which can shape his perceptions and beliefs. This early exposure could lead to internal conflicts as he navigates between the values of peace his mother advocates and the glorified notion of war presented through his father's experiences. How Krishna Bahadur responds to these questions is crucial for Naresh's emotional security. If Krishna engages openly and sensitively, it can foster a secure attachment. Conversely, if he withdraws or reacts negatively, it may lead to insecurity or fear in Naresh regarding the topics of war and conflict.

The conversation may also introduce feelings of fear or anxiety about the world, particularly if Naresh begins to associate his father's scars and experiences with danger. Children often internalize such discussions, leading to potential anxieties about safety, violence, and the future. This scene serves as a microcosm of the broader themes of childhood innocence, moral development, and the psychological impact of parental trauma. It illustrates how children absorb and interpret their parent's experiences, shaping their understanding of complex issues like war and peace. The dialogue highlights children's challenges in processing adult realities and underscores parent's critical role in guiding their children through these formative experiences.

Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development provides insight into how children understand and interact with the world through stages that reflect growing mental complexity. In this story, "Puppy," we can analyze Madhukari's behavior and emotional responses in the context of Piaget's stages of cognitive development. Madhukari, likely an early adolescent or preteen, is around the Concrete Operational Stage (7-11 years) and possibly transitioning into the Formal Operational Stage (12 years and up). This phase is marked by an ability to think logically about concrete events, but abstract reasoning is just beginning to develop.

Madhukari's bond with her puppy Pluto exemplifies how children in the concrete operational stage form strong emotional attachments based on their immediate environment and personal experiences. Madhukari is emotionally attached to Pluto through routines (like sharing food and playing). This routine helps her establish a stable relationship, which is crucial at this stage, as she understands Pluto's presence as something permanent and emotionally significant. Madhukari's response to Pluto being kicked by her father and how she comforts the pup by calling him "my child" shows her ability to empathize with the suffering of another being. This demonstrates her development of emotional intelligence and understanding of the emotions of others. Jasmia, and Syaodihe comment:

The formal operational stage is in the age range of 11 years. This phase is also known as adolescence. Adolescents think in a more abstract, logical, and more idealistic way. The formal operational stage, ages eleven to fifteen. At this stage individuals have begun to think about concrete experiences, and think about them in a more abstract, idealistic and logical way (421).

When Pluto dies, Madhukari's response reflects her difficulty in fully grasping the abstract concept of death. Although she is told that Pluto's miseries have ended, she initially continues with her usual behavior of calling him and bringing bread, indicating that she struggles to internalize the finality of death. Piaget suggests that in earlier stages, children show egocentrism, believing their perspective is the only one that exists. While Madhukari is likely outgrowing this, her delayed reaction to Pluto's death suggests a lingering attachment to her personal experience and expectations, struggling to comprehend the abstract reality that Pluto is truly gone. Her behavior, such as continuing to eat after being told that Pluto had died, can be seen as a defense mechanism where she's unable to immediately accept the harsh reality of loss. It is only after going outside and not finding Pluto that her cognitive understanding catches up with her emotional experience, leading to her collapse in grief. This suggests that while Madhukari is transitioning into the formal operational stage, her emotional understanding of complex concepts like death lags behind her logical capabilities.

Madhukari's collapse after realizing Pluto is gone shows her grappling with complex emotions. In Piaget's formal operational stage, children begin to think about hypothetical situations and abstract ideas, such as the permanence of death, morality, and fairness. Madhukari's giggling when her mother says Pluto has died could be seen as her subconscious grappling with the dissonance between the finality of death and her ongoing attachment to Pluto. Madhukari's reaction to Pluto's death highlights the development of abstract thinking, as she processes life, death, and loss concepts. Her initial denial and subsequent grief are part of this process, where her emotional regulation hasn't fully caught up with her cognitive development.

Madhukari's relationship with her father, Ram, and his abusive behavior also play a role in her emotional and cognitive development. Piaget's theory suggests that

children at this stage become more independent and develop their sense of morality, justice, and fairness. Madhukari's reaction to her father kicking Pluto and demanding that the dog be removed shows her developing moral reasoning. She understands that her father's actions are unfair and cruel, which contributes to her emotional response. Piaget suggests that during the transition to formal operational thinking, children begin to challenge authority and understand that rules are not absolute but can be questioned based on fairness.

Using Piaget's cognitive development theory, Madhukari's puppy reflects a young mind in transition. Her strong attachment to Pluto and her delayed emotional reaction to his death highlight her development from concrete to formal operational thinking. She is learning to navigate abstract concepts like death and emotional loss while also developing her sense of morality and justice, especially in the face of her father's abusive behavior. This story encapsulates the tension between Madhukari's emerging ability to think abstractly and her emotional struggle to cope with complex realities.

Analyzing the story of Madhukari and her pup Pluto through Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory, we can focus on how Madhukari's behavior reflects the cognitive stages Piaget identified. Piaget's theory describes how children move through four stages of development, each characterized by different abilities and ways of thinking: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational. Madhukari strongly attaches to Pluto and sees the world mostly through her experiences and emotions. For instance, when Pluto dies, Madhukari continues her normal routine by calling Pluto, offering him bread, and refusing to accept that he is gone. Her inability to grasp the finality of death and the intense emotional bond she has with Pluto reflects the egocentric nature of her thinking at this stage, where she

may believe that her own perspective is the only one that exists. Animism is when children often believe that inanimate objects or animals have human thoughts or emotions. Madhukari may project her own feelings onto Pluto, seeing him not just as a pet but almost as an extension of herself. When she calls Pluto "my child" and later doesn't understand why Pluto is no longer with her, it could be an example of animism where she attributes human-like qualities and relationships to Pluto.

Difficulty in Grasping Abstract Concepts defines the concept of death as abstract and difficult for young children to comprehend fully. Madhukari's initial reaction to Pluto's death is her continuity in eating, and acting as if nothing had happened. This suggests that she hasn't fully grasped the abstract idea of death as final. Only when she collapses and laments Pluto's absence does her understanding of loss emerge from her personal, emotional perspective. The symbolic play of the story shows that Madhukari's deep attachment to Pluto and her emotional expression after his death may reflect symbolic play in Piaget's theory. In this case, the dog represents more than just a pet; it is a companion, perhaps filling a gap left by her unstable relationship with her father. The pup symbolizes safety and love, making his death emotionally overwhelming for Madhukari.

In conclusion, through Piaget's lens, Madhukari's reactions and behaviors reflect characteristics of the preoperational stage. She has a strong emotional connection to Pluto, difficulty processing abstract concepts like death, and an egocentric world view, where her emotions dictate her perception of events. Madhukari's behavior in the story "Puppy" exemplifies key features of Piaget's stages of cognitive development, particularly as she transitions from the Concrete Operational Stage to the Formal Operational Stage. Her emotional attachment to her dog Pluto and her difficulty processing the abstract concept of death demonstrates the

challenges children face in balancing logical thought and emotional understanding during this critical period of cognitive and emotional growth.

Madhukari's bond with Pluto reflects her reliance on concrete experiences. Children in the concrete operational stage form deep emotional bonds based on direct interaction with their environment. Madhukari's emotional attachment to Pluto and her daily routines of sharing food and playing, demonstrates her understanding of relationships as stable and permanent, a key feature of this stage. Madhukari's empathy and care show the ability to comfort Pluto after her father kicks him revealing her emerging empathy. Piaget's theory emphasizes that children in this stage begin to understand the feelings of others. However, their perspective is still rooted in concrete experiences, such as her physical presence with the dog.

When Pluto dies, Madhukari's continued efforts to feed and call him reflect her struggle to grasp death as an abstract and final concept. Children transitioning to the formal operational stage begin to understand abstract ideas, but Madhukari's initial denial of Pluto's death shows she is still tied to the concrete reality of her bond with the dog. Although Piaget suggests that egocentrism diminishes in the concrete operational stage, Madhukari's attachment to her routine and delayed response to Pluto's death suggests she struggles to see beyond her own experience. This lingering egocentrism causes her to resist accepting Pluto's death because it contradicts her expectations. After being told Pluto has died, Madhukari's behavior, including continuing to eat and call Pluto, suggests a cognitive dissonance between her emotional and logical understanding. Piaget's formal operational stage marks the ability to think about abstract ideas like death, yet Madhukari's emotional attachment to Pluto delays her logical acceptance of this finality. Madhukari's eventual collapse after realizing Pluto is truly gone signifies her emotional response catching up to her

cognitive processing. Her ability to process death, loss, and permanence indicates a developing but still incomplete capacity for formal operational thought.

Madhukari's negative reaction to her father's cruelty towards Pluto shows her developing sense of morality and justice, a key feature of Piaget's later stages. As she begins to questioning authority and understanding fairness, her emotional response to her father's actions and Pluto's death signals her growing independence in forming moral judgments. Her cognitive and emotional development as portrayed in the story reflects Piaget's stages of development, illustrating the tension between concrete thinking, emotional attachment, and the emerging ability to process abstract concepts like death. Her bond with Pluto and her eventual acceptance of his death highlights the complexities of transitioning from the concrete operational stage to the formal operational stage, where emotional understanding still lags behind cognitive development.

The story of "Ritthe's Question" provides a window into the emotional and psychological development of a child, Ritthe, who grows up in a disadvantaged environment. Several key themes and implications can be examined from a child psychology perspective. Ritthe, being just thirteen years old, is growing up in an environment filled with hardship and uncertainty. According to child psychology, the environment significantly shapes a child's cognitive and emotional development. In this case, Ritthe's environment is one of survival, where begging and living in a cave beneath a railway station is the norm.

Ritthe, at thirteen, is at the stage of "Industry vs. Inferiority" in Erikson's model, where children develop a sense of pride in their abilities through social interactions and accomplishments. However, Ritthe's harsh living conditions and forced early maturation might impact his ability to develop a sense of competence. His success in

begging may give him a skewed sense of achievement, emphasizing survival rather than intellectual or social accomplishments typical for children his age.

Ritthe's appearance, described as looking older than his age, and his skill at begging reflect the premature maturation forced upon children in such harsh environments. Children in survival-focused settings often skip stages of typical childhood development, such as playing and forming educational goals. Instead, they are thrust into roles of responsibility far too early. His early exposure to the struggles of life has likely accelerated his psychological development. Instead of the curiosity and playfulness typical of children his age, he has become a more serious and pragmatic figure. The narrative suggests that his environment demands that he develop practical skills such as begging to secure resources, which can rob him of a traditional childhood experience.

According to child psychology, peers are critical in shaping a child's self-concept and social behavior. The story's communal life provides Ritthe with positive and negative social experiences. On one hand, the conflicts and fights reflect the strain of the harsh environment, potentially leading to aggressive behaviors. On the other hand, moments of singing and shared joy demonstrate the community's role in providing emotional support and solidarity. Ritthe lives in a communal setting with other homeless individuals, including women and children. The presence of conflict and moments of joy, like singing songs together, reflects the complex social dynamics within the group. His ability to secure the most resources through begging suggests high resilience and adaptability. In child psychology, resilience refers to the ability of a child to cope with adversity and maintain psychological well-being despite difficult circumstances.

Ritthe's resilience can be seen in his ability to navigate the challenges of his environment. His skill in begging suggests that he has learned to adapt and survive. This resilience is an essential protective factor, allowing him to face the instability and dangers of his life with some degree of competence. Living in such difficult conditions can harm Ritthe's emotional well-being. Children who grow up in poverty or in unstable living conditions are more prone to experiencing stress, anxiety, and depression.

Although the story does not delve deeply into Ritthe's internal emotional state, it can be inferred that living in constant deprivation and the absence of a stable, nurturing environment may lead to chronic stress or emotional trauma. While Ritthe has adapted to his environment, the psychological toll of living without consistent security, education, or parental support can affect his long-term mental health. At thirteen, Ritthe is at a developmental stage where children typically begin to think about their future, form aspirations, and develop a sense of identity. However, Ritthe's future might seem limited or uncertain in his situation.

From a child psychology perspective, "Ritthe's Question" paints a naïve picture of how extreme poverty and difficult living conditions can shape a child's development. Ritthe's premature maturity, resilience, and the complexities of his social interactions highlight the adaptive and maladaptive aspects of growing up in such an environment. While Ritthe exhibits a remarkable ability to survive, his psychological development is likely compromised by the hardships he faces, posing risks to his emotional well-being and future growth. Children like Ritthe may have difficulty envisioning long-term goals or aspirations beyond their immediate needs in an environment marked by survival. This can hinder the development of a healthy self-concept and reduce motivation to pursue educational or vocational paths that

could improve their lives. Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development outlines four stages through which children move as they grow, each characterized by different ways of thinking and understanding the world. Analyzing "Ritthe's Question" through the lens of Piaget's theory can help us understand how Ritthe's successful cognitive development is shaped by his unique environment.

According to Piaget, Ritthe is transitioning from the Concrete Operational Stage to the Formal Operational Stage. The Concrete Operational Stage (7-12 years) is when children start to think logically about concrete events but struggle with abstract or hypothetical concepts. They can perform operations (like math and reasoning) on objects and think about how things interact in the real world, but their thinking is still grounded in the tangible. The ability to recognize that numbers or objects can be changed and returned to their original state. In the story's context, Ritthe might see resources (like food or money) as interchangeable or reversible, understanding that begging today can bring temporary satisfaction but doesn't permanently change his dire situation. However, Ritthe's cognitive development may be limited by the challenging circumstances of his life. While children in this stage typically start solving problems using logic, their environment might force them to focus on survival rather than typical developmental tasks like exploring academic or abstract thinking. Ritthe's life, shaped by survival and the practical needs of his environment, likely reinforces this focus on concrete, immediate concerns. In this stage, the understanding of objects remains the same, even if their form changes. For instance, Ritthe understands the value of resources like food and clothes even when acquired from different means, such as begging or during the rituals of the wealthy. The ability to consider multiple aspects of a situation. For example, Ritthe can likely understand the importance of keeping the cave clean and decorated with flowers, even

though it's a slum. He can think about survival and the need to maintain some sense of dignity or beauty in his surroundings.

According to Piaget, a child's cognitive development is influenced by their environment, especially through assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation is when a child incorporates new information into existing frameworks. Rithe likely assimilates the routines of begging and survival into his understanding of how the world works. He might see begging as a normal way to obtain resources because that's what he has known since childhood. Accommodation occurs when the child must adjust their frameworks to incorporate new information. Rithe's environment forces him to accommodate new and challenging realities. For instance, he might need to learn new strategies for survival as situations in the community change, such as when resources become scarce or when new people enter the slum. While children typically explore academic, social, and hypothetical thinking as they grow, Rithe's development is likely constrained by the daily struggles of his environment, which keeps his focus grounded in the concrete and immediate. In the Concrete Operational Stage, children start to move away from egocentrism which leads to the inability to see things from another person's perspective, which is typical in earlier stages (like the Preoperational Stage). By this stage, Rithe is likely able to understand the perspectives of others in his community, realizing that they are also struggling to survive and have their own challenges. However, his success at the beginning suggests that Rithe may have developed an edge over others in terms of survival. This could reflect an early form of social cognition, where Rithe understands social dynamics well enough to navigate them successfully. He may recognize how to present himself in a way that garners sympathy from others, understanding the perspectives of those from whom he begs.

Ahmad Radenan Mohd Shukri, and Hasnah Toran mention: "Learning through experience, cognitive adaptation and learning through interaction" can help learners who have special needs (1). While Piaget's theory primarily focuses on cognitive development, he also touches on moral reasoning, especially in the later stages. As children progress through the Concrete and Formal Operational Stages, they understand social rules and morality more sophisticatedly. In earlier stages, children view rules as fixed and unchangeable. This might be reflected in how Ritthe understands the harsh rules of his environment that make him beg, fight for resources, and survive. These are the "rules" (23) of his world. As children develop, they see rules as flexible and based on mutual agreements. In Ritthe's slum community, we see moments of conflict and harmony, where residents fight but cooperate and share joy through activities like singing. This suggests that Ritthe may be beginning to understand the complexity of social rules, which can change depending on circumstances and relationships.

Jean Piaget stated, "Knowing reality means constructing systems of transformations that correspond, more or less adequately, to reality" (5). Piaget emphasized the importance of a stimulating environment for children's cognitive development. Ritthe's environment, however, lacks educational opportunities, stable family support, and exposure to abstract concepts, all of which are crucial for a full progression through the stages of cognitive development. Ritthe's slum life revolves around basic survival rather than academic or intellectual challenges. This lack of educational stimulation may hinder his transition to more advanced cognitive thinking, keeping him focused on the concrete, rather than developing abstract reasoning skills.

Analyzing "Ritthe's Question" through Piaget's theory of cognitive development reveals how Ritthe's harsh living environment impacts his cognitive growth. While he is likely moving into the formal operational stage, his development remains heavily influenced by the immediate, concrete demands of his life. His focus on survival may be constrained by his ability to think abstractly, form hypotheses, and develop future-oriented thinking. At the same time his environment encourages practical skills like begging and social navigation for immediate needs. Piaget proposed that children actively construct their understanding of the world through interaction with their environment. He identified four universal stages of cognitive development: the sensorimotor stage, the preoperational stage, the concrete operational stage, and the formal operational stage (Yıldız 414).

"Ritthe's Question" offers a profound examination of life on the margins of society, focusing on a young boy, Ritthe, who navigates the complexities of homelessness and survival. This analysis will explore the narrative through various lenses, including socio-economic dynamics, psychological development, and thematic depth, providing insight into how the story reflects broader issues of poverty, childhood development, and communal living. Using Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory as a foundation, we will also examine the psychological implications of Ritthe's environment on his development, while addressing broader sociological themes such as social stratification, identity, and resilience.

The story is set in a nameless street, a symbolic representation of the marginalization faced by the homeless, and a cave beneath a railway station where the residents live. Though makeshift and located in a liminal space between society and exclusion, the cave is described as clean and decorated with flowers. This contrast between the grim reality of homelessness and the residents' efforts to create beauty

and order within their environment highlights the human desire for dignity, even in the harshest circumstances. The cave serves as a literal shelter and a psychological symbol of the residents' resilience. The cleanliness and decoration represent attempts to impose order and identity on their lives, resisting the complete dehumanization that often accompanies extreme poverty. This speaks to survival instincts not only on a physical level but also emotionally and psychologically.

Ritthe, a thirteen-year-old boy with striking eyes resembling soap nuts, is the story's focal point. Despite his young age, Ritthe appears older and more experienced in survival than most other residents. His skill at begging, which secures him more resources than others, positions him as a central figure in this microcosmic society. At twelve, Ritthe is transitioning from Piaget's Concrete Operational Stage to the Formal Operational Stage, where abstract thinking and problem-solving emerge. However, his focus on immediate survival through begging indicates that his cognitive development may be skewed toward practical, concrete concerns rather than abstract or future-oriented thinking. In this environment, Ritthe's cognitive development is driven by his need to understand the social dynamics of begging, resource acquisition, and survival rather than exploring intellectual or moral reasoning typical of children in less dire circumstances.

Ritthe's psychological development mirrors the socio-economic pressures of his environment. While he shows early signs of resilience and social navigation skills, his cognitive growth is stunted by the lack of intellectual stimulation, focusing instead on survival tactics. The contrast between Ritthe's cognitive potential and the limitations imposed by his environment forms a key element in understanding the effects of poverty on childhood development. A recurring element in the story is the brief moments of joy experienced by the homeless residents during the death rituals of

wealthy people. These moments, where the residents receive food and clothing, symbolize the occasional, temporary relief from their constant deprivation. The narrative suggests a stark irony: the homeless find joy and sustenance not in life, but in the ceremonies of death. This element underscores the deep stratification between the rich and the poor.

The wealthy, through their death rituals, provide the only opportunities for the homeless to experience moments of abundance. The interaction between these two disparate social classes is fleeting and transactional, yet it highlights the dependency of the marginalized on the excesses of the privileged. The fleeting joy found during the death rituals of the wealthy speaks to the systemic nature of inequality. The residents' ability to momentarily partake in the wealth of others highlights their exclusion from societal wealth and resources. Thematically, this suggests that the homeless are only remembered or acknowledged at the margins of society during times of excess. The story presents a nuanced portrayal of life within the homeless community, where conflict and harmony coexist. Residents fight, scream, and sometimes engage in discord, but they also share moments of joy, such as singing songs together. This duality reflects the tension between the harshness of their lives and the human need for social connection. In Erikson's terms, the community is a space where children like Ritthe may struggle with the industry versus inferiority developmental crisis. In a traditional setting, Ritthe would learn social skills, build competence, and achieve goals. Instead, his "competence" is measured in his ability to beg effectively and secure resources, reflecting his limited but crucial social role in this environment.

Piaget's observations suggest that the capacity to use representational schemas in delayed imitation, or in playing a role, is fairly independent of the development of

language, for deaf-mutes too may learn this. Instead, it depends on a general capacity to represent one thing by another and derives from the sensory-motor schemas. For example, in the case of Lucienne, "make-belief" or "symbolic play" made its appearance arising from a schema of action (7).

The tension between conflict and cooperation within the community reflects the complexities of marginalized group identity. Despite the chaos and hardship, the homeless community is bound by shared experiences and survival. Ritthe's role in this community is both a product of his individual abilities (as the best beggar) and his membership in a collective of individuals who face similar challenges. The story thus explores the delicate balance between individual agency and communal belonging in the context of extreme poverty. Ritthe's appearance is a significant motif in the story, with his eyes described as looking older than his age. This description is a metaphor for the gap between Ritthe's physical appearance and psychological state. Despite being a child, Ritthe has been forced to adopt an adult-like demeanor and survival skills due to the harshness of his environment. Ritthe's "soapnut" eyes symbolize his innocence, now hardened by the circumstances of his life. His eyes, which once might have reflected a child's curiosity and playfulness, now convey the wisdom and pragmatism of someone who has grown up too fast. Ruth M. Beard's study shows a close relationship between words and actions in the context of children:

Piaget's study of Children's development in the use in which the conversations of twenty children between four and seven were recorded, shows that monologue plays an important role in early thinking. A close link was found between words and actions. Children uttered words to initiate actions and frequently soliloquized as they worked, apparently with no further aim than to accompany actions as they took place. In a second kind of soliloquy, speech

served less to accompany or to accelerate action as to replace it by illusory achievement; the child would forget his actions and do nothing but talk, commanding animate and inanimate things. Among the two six-year-olds this happened more frequently in the one who Piaget termed this 'egocentric' speech. (10)

In Piaget's study on children's development, he observed that monologue plays a significant role in early thinking. Children aged four to seven often used words to initiate actions and engaged in soliloquies while, they worked, simply accompanying their actions with speech. There was also a second type of soliloquy where speech replaced action, with the child talking instead of performing actions, sometimes giving commands to objects or imaginary characters. This behavior, termed 'egocentric speech,' was more common among the two six-year-olds observed, with one child exhibiting it more frequently.

"Ritthe's Question" offers a layered and complex portrayal of life on the fringes of society, focusing on how poverty, homelessness, and marginalization affect both communal living and individual psychological development. Through Ritthe's character, the story explores the intersection of survival, identity, and cognitive growth, highlighting the ways in which socioeconomic deprivation shapes human potential. Using Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development as a framework, it becomes clear that Ritthe's psychological growth is constrained by his environment, with his cognitive abilities directed toward survival rather than intellectual or moral development. The story also addresses broader themes of social inequality, resilience, and the tension between individual and communal identities. In doing so, it serves as a powerful critique of how marginalized individuals navigate the complexities of life in

a world that often forgets them. Harris, N., and Md Misdar outline the developmental milestones of children's cognitive progress:

Their minds turn out to be more coherent and coordinated, yet at the same time concrete. Also, the children start utilizing inductive rationale, or thinking from explicit data to an overall rule. The last stage of cognitive development is the formal operational stage that only specific for the children from 12 years old and above. During this stage, the teenage grown-up starts to contemplate speculative issues and their theoretical idea arises. The children start to ponder good, philosophical, moral, social, and policy driven issues that require hypothetical and theoretical thinking. In addition, they tend to utilize deductive rationale, or thinking from an overall standard to explicit data. (112)

In "Tears That could not Become Pearls" by Dev Kumari Thapa, the character Bhunte reflects many aspects of child psychology, especially regarding how children perceive and process difficult realities like hardship, loss, and emotional pain. Children are naturally curious about the world around them, constantly seeking explanations for the things they don't understand. Bhunte's question about the origin of the pearls on his mother's necklace represents this typical childlike curiosity. He is intrigued by the unfamiliar, and his mother's explanation of how pearls are formed leads him to explore deeper ideas about pain, loss, and value. This illustrates how children's minds are always searching for meaning, especially in unfamiliar or abstract contexts.

Bhunte's fascination with the formation of pearls and his reaction to the fact that they are created through the suffering of the shellfish reflects a child's ability to take new information and apply it to broader, more philosophical questions. His comparison of pearls to "the graveyard of leeches or the tears of fish" (24) shows his capacity to think metaphorically, even if it is not fully refined or adult-like. Children

are often more sensitive to emotional undercurrents in their environment than adults may realize. Bhunte's reaction to the pearls and seeing them as symbols of pain hints at his growing awareness of the struggles around him. While he may not fully understand his family's financial situation or his mother's emotional state, he senses that there is a deeper sadness beneath the surface.

Bhunte's comments about the pearls being tears or graves suggest that he intuitively grasps the link between suffering and beauty or value, even though his understanding is not fully developed. This shows how children can often pick up on emotional cues or symbolism in ways that surprise adults. As Bhunte learns about the formation of pearls and reflects on his own life, he realizes that life is filled with suffering, much like how sand irritates the shellfish to form pearls. Children in difficult circumstances often struggle with reconciling their innocent worldview with the harshness of reality. Bhunte, having recently moved to the town, is still adjusting to the fact that his family has lost everything and that life in the town is much harsher than he imagined.

Bhunte's decision to return to his village after realizing that his family has no money for basic necessities reflects a child's need to retreat or return to a place of safety and comfort when faced with overwhelming situations. This psychological coping mechanism shows that when confronted with stress, children often seek familiarity or return to places they associate with safety. Children often internalize their family's struggles, even when they may not fully comprehend their reasons behind them. Bhunte's awareness of his family's financial troubles weighs heavily on him. He understands that his family has lost their land, and this loss is linked to his father's death. The emotional burden of being part of a family in a financial crisis,

combined with the loss of a parent, affects Bhunte deeply. His silent, tearful departure at the end of the story highlights the emotional toll these struggles take on him.

Bhunte's inability to speak when saying goodbye to his mother suggests a deep emotional conflict within him. This is characteristic of children who experience significant life changes, such as financial instability or parental loss. They may not have the words to express their emotions fully, but they feel them intensely. Bhunte's perspective on the pearls and his reaction to his family's situation reflects the tension between his childlike innocence and the harsh realities he is beginning to face. As he learns more about the world, his innocence is slowly replaced by a more complex understanding of suffering and hardship. This process is a natural part of growing up but is accelerated by the difficult circumstances in which Bhunte finds himself.

Bhunte's observation that pearls are like "the graveyard of leeches" demonstrates his innocent yet profound attempt to make sense of the world's complexities. While still childlike, his thinking reveals a growing awareness that life is not as simple as it once seemed. Despite growing awareness of life's difficulties, Bhunte still relies on his mother for emotional support. His silent nod when his mother blesses him before he leaves for the village shows that, like many children, he seeks reassurance and comfort from his parent. His attachment to his mother and his emotional struggle at the moment of departure reflects a child's need for connection, especially during times of uncertainty. Bhunte's relationship with his mother, who blesses him and asks him to return if he ever returns to the town, shows that even as he begins to understand life's difficulties, he still looks to his mother for comfort and guidance. This dynamic reflects a child's reliance on parental figures for emotional stability.

Bhunte's curiosity, sensitivity, and emotional responses highlight the ways in which children process difficult realities and the impact of family struggles on their psychological development. Bhunte's journey of emotional growth and the delicate balance between his innocence and newfound awareness mirrors the universal experience of children as they grapple with the challenges of growing up in a difficult world. As a thesis analysis of Dev Kumari Thapa's story "Tears that could not Become Pearls", we can focus on several critical themes, character dynamics, and symbolic elements that reflect broader social, psychological, and emotional issues.

The story's central theme revolves around the pervasive suffering experienced by the characters, both on a personal and societal level. Bhunte's family has lost their land, financial stability, and a father figure, leaving them in constant struggle. As a central symbol, the pearls represent both the beauty that can come from suffering and the harsh reality that some suffering leads to no tangible gain. The mother's reflection on her own hardships and the metaphor of the pearls reveal how material objects can mask deeper emotional wounds. The story presents suffering as a personal experience and a cyclical, inherited condition that defines the characters' lives, especially Bhunte's, highlighting how economic and social hardships shape individual identity and family dynamics.

The metaphor of the pearl plays a significant role in the story, symbolizing how something valuable can be born out of suffering and irritation. The process by which pearls are created through the pain of a shellfish mirrors the emotional and physical struggles that Bhunte and his mother endure. The pearls also represent unfulfilled dreams and the idea that not all suffering leads to transformation or progress, as seen in the mother's realization that her own tears, unlike the pearls, cannot be transformed into something valuable. The pearls in "Tears That Could Not

"Become Pearls" serve as a multifaceted symbol of human suffering, transformation, and the dichotomy between material wealth and emotional fulfillment. The story critiques the societal notion that material success or emotional resolution can always justify or compensate for suffering.

Bhunte's family's poverty is a key driver of the narrative, reflecting larger societal issues related to landlessness, debt, and economic disparity. The loss of their land to creditors represents a financial blow and a deeper loss of identity and stability. Bhunte's struggle to adapt to life in the town and his decision to return to the village reflect the internal conflict faced by individuals caught between rural and urban realities, poverty, and the desire for progress.

The economic struggles of Bhunte's family are emblematic of the broader societal inequities faced by marginalized groups, particularly those in rural areas. The story highlights how systemic issues like land loss and debt perpetuate cycles of poverty and limit opportunities for social mobility, particularly for children like Bhunte. Bhunte's journey in the story highlights the psychological impact of family hardship on children. Children are naturally curious about the world around them, constantly seeking explanations for the things they don't understand. Bhunte's question about the origin of the pearls on his mother's necklace represents this typical childlike curiosity. He is intrigued by the unfamiliar, and his mother's explanation of how pearls are formed leads him to explore deeper ideas about pain, loss, and value. This illustrates how children's minds are always searching for meaning, especially in unfamiliar or abstract context.

Bhunte's fascination with the formation of pearls and his reaction to the fact that they are created through the suffering of the shellfish reflects a child's ability to take new information and apply it to broader, more philosophical questions. His

comparison of pearls to "the graveyard of leeches or the tears of fish" shows his capacity to think metaphorically, even if it is not fully refined or adult-like. Bhunte's comments about the pearls being tears or graves suggest that he intuitively grasps the link between suffering and beauty or value, even though his understanding is not fully developed. This shows how children can often pick up on emotional cues or symbolism in ways that surprise adults. As Bhunte learns about the formation of pearls and reflects on his own life, he realizes that life is filled with suffering, much like how sand irritates the shellfish to form pearls.

Children in difficult circumstances often struggle with reconciling their innocent worldview with the harshness of reality. Bhunte, having recently moved to the town, is still adjusting to the fact that his family has lost everything and that life in the town is much harsher than he imagined. Bhunte's inability to speak when saying goodbye to his mother suggests a deep emotional conflict within him. This is characteristic of children who experience significant life changes, such as financial instability or parental loss. They may not have the words to express their emotions fully, but they feel them intensely. His perspective on the pearls and his reaction to his family's situation reflects the tension between his childlike innocence and the harsh realities he is beginning to face. As he learns more about the world, his innocence is slowly replaced by a more complex understanding of suffering and hardship. This process is a natural part of growing up but is accelerated by the difficult circumstances in which Bhunte finds himself.

Pearls are a luxury item, but Thapa uses them to represent the pain and struggles endured by the characters. The pearls on Bhunte's mother's necklace are formed through the irritation of sand within shellfish, symbolizing how suffering (both physical and emotional) can create something valuable. However, in Bhunte's

case, and for many others in the story, this suffering does not result in material or emotional gain. The metaphor of tears turning into pearls emphasizes that not all suffering leads to beauty or value; some suffering, like the characters' hardships, remains without reward.

The mother's silent wish to be reborn as a shell so she can turn her tears into pearls speaks to the longing for transformation, for which she yearns for her suffering to have value, but in this life, her tears remain fruitless. This reflects a broader societal critique of how marginalized people's emotional and physical labor often goes unrecognized and unrewarded. Thapa uses the struggles of Bhunte's family to depict how social and economic hardships perpetuate cycles of suffering. Bhunte's family lost their land due to debts, a common experience for many rural families forced to leave their homes and move to towns for better opportunities. Despite their efforts, they remain trapped in poverty. The pearl necklace, which initially appears to be a sign of wealth or success, instead becomes a symbol of the mother's unfulfilled dreams. It serves as a reminder that her life remains full of sorrow and unmet aspirations despite her sacrifices and hardship. As a symbol of lost dreams, the necklace reflects the broader economic struggles faced by families like Bhunte's, where the illusion of progress (the pearls) hides the reality of ongoing suffering and unfulfilled potential.

This critique extends beyond the personal, commenting on the failures of a society that allows people to endure such hardships without hope of redemption or success. The story's key theme is that not all suffering leads to meaningful transformation. Unlike the shellfish that can transform their irritation into pearls, Bhunte's and his mother's suffering does not lead to any improvement in their lives. Bhunte's desire to return to his village reflects a kind of defeat when he realizes that

life in the town has not brought the better opportunities he hoped for, and his family's financial struggles continue to dictate their lives. This cyclical nature of suffering is reinforced by the mother's prayer, which underscores the idea that, in this life, their struggles will never lead to progress or transformation.

The story's ending, where the mother prays to be reborn as a shell in her next life, emphasizes the hopelessness of her situation. Her wish to transform her tears into pearls in the next life suggests that she sees no possibility of change in this one. This points to a larger commentary on how systemic poverty and emotional suffering are intertwined, leaving little room for upward mobility or personal fulfillment in societies where individuals like Bhunte and his mother are marginalized. Through Bhunte's family, Thapa highlights the social and economic realities of rural and urban life in Nepal. The family's move from the hills to the plains, and their subsequent financial struggles, reflect the challenges many rural families face, who lose their land and are forced to seek better opportunities in towns.

Thus, the story critiques the economic system perpetuating poverty, leaving families trapped in a cycle of debt and loss. Bhunte's family is emblematic of those who migrate to urban areas with hopes for a better future but find themselves facing the same, or worse, struggles as before. Bhunte's reflection that his family cannot afford salt highlights the severity of their economic deprivation. At the same time his mother's pearl necklace symbolizes wealth that is out of sync with their reality, underscoring the disparity between appearance and actual economic conditions. This economic struggle is central to the story's critique of broader social inequalities. The psychological toll of suffering is evident in both Bhunte and his mother. Bhunte's innocence is slowly eroded as he confronts the harsh realities of life in the plains, while his mother reflects on her life with a growing sense of hopelessness. The story

portrays how economic struggles and emotional pain intertwine, shaping the inner lives of individuals who feel powerless to change their circumstances. The emotional weight of Bhunte's tears as he says goodbye to his mother symbolizes the emotional burden children carry when confronted with adult struggles. His mother's blessing, and her request for him to return if he comes back to the plains is a poignant reminder of the emotional ties that bind families, even in times of intense hardship.

In "Tears That Could Not Become Pearls," Dev Kumari Thapa uses the metaphor of pearls to explore the relationship between suffering and value, challenging the idea that all hardship leads to growth or beauty. Through the story of Bhunte and his mother, Thapa critiques the societal and economic structures that trap individuals in cycles of poverty, while reflecting on the personal and psychological impacts of unfulfilled dreams. The story's melancholic tone and emphasis on the lack of transformation offer a powerful commentary on the nature of suffering, both personal and collective, in a world where tears, unlike pearls, hold no material value. Bhunte is intrigued by the unfamiliar, and his mother's explanation of how pearls are formed leads him to explore deeper ideas about pain, loss, and value. This illustrates how children's minds are always searching for meaning, especially in unfamiliar or abstract contexts. His fascination with the formation of pearls and his reaction to the fact that they are created through the suffering of the shellfish reflects a child's ability to take new information and apply it to broader, more philosophical questions. His comparison of pearls to "the graveyard of leeches or the tears of fish" shows his capacity to think metaphorically, even if it is not fully refined or adult-like.

Children are often more sensitive to emotional undercurrents in their environment than adults may realize. Bhunte's comments about the pearls being tears or graves suggest that he intuitively grasps the link between suffering and beauty or

value, even though his understanding is not fully developed. This shows how children can often pick up on emotional cues or symbolism in ways that surprise adults. As Bhunte learns about the formation of pearls and reflects on his own life, he begins to realize that life is filled with suffering, much like how sand irritates the shellfish to form pearls. Children in difficult circumstances often struggle with reconciling their innocent worldview with the harshness of reality. Bhunte, having recently moved to the town, is still adjusting to the fact that his family has lost everything and that life in the town is much harsher than he imagined.

Children often internalize their family's struggles, even when they may not fully comprehend their reasons behind them. Bhunte's awareness of his family's financial troubles weighs heavily on him. He understands that his family has lost their land, and this loss is linked to his father's death. The emotional burden of being part of a family in a financial crisis, combined with the loss of a parent, affects Bhunte deeply. His silent, tearful departure at the end of the story highlights the emotional toll these struggles take on him. Bhunte's inability to speak when saying goodbye to his mother suggests a deep emotional conflict within him. This is characteristic of children who experience significant life changes, such as financial instability or parental loss. They may not have the words to express their emotions fully, but they feel them intensely. Bhunte's perspective on the pearls and his reaction to his family's situation reflect the tension between his childlike innocence and the harsh realities he is beginning to face. As he learns more about the world, his innocence is slowly replaced by a more complex understanding of suffering and hardship. This process is a natural part of growing up but is accelerated by the difficult circumstances in which Bhunte finds himself. Bhunte's observation that pearls are like "the graveyard of leeches" demonstrates his innocent yet profound attempt to make sense of the world's

complexities. While still childlike, his thinking reveals a growing awareness that life is not as simple as it once seemed.

Despite growing awareness of life's difficulties, Bhunte still relies on his mother for emotional support. His silent nod when his mother blesses him before he leaves for the village shows that, like many children, he seeks reassurance and comfort from his parents. His attachment to his mother and his emotional struggle at the moment of departure reflect a child's need for connection, especially during times of uncertainty. Bhunte's relationship with his mother, who blesses him and asks him to return if he ever returns to the town, shows that even as he begins to understand life's difficulties, he still looks to his mother for comfort and guidance. This dynamic reflects a child's reliance on parental figures for emotional stability.

In the story, Bhunte represents a child on the cusp of understanding the complexities of life. His curiosity, sensitivity, and emotional responses highlight the ways in which children process difficult realities and the impact of family struggles on their psychological development. Bhunte's journey of emotional growth and the delicate balance between his innocence and newfound awareness mirrors the universal experience of children as they grapple with the challenges of growing up in a difficult world. In "Tears That Could Not Become Pearls," Dev Kumari Thapa explores the profound connection between personal suffering and social hardship through the symbolism of pearls. The central symbol in the story is the pearl, which carries multiple layers of meaning. On the surface, pearls are a luxury item, but Thapa uses them to represent the pain and struggles endured by the characters. The pearls on Bhunte's mother's necklace are formed through the irritation of sand within shellfish, symbolizing how suffering (both physical and emotional) can create something valuable. However, in Bhunte's case, and for many others in the story, this suffering

does not result in material or emotional gain. The metaphor of tears turning into pearls emphasizes that not all suffering leads to beauty or value; some suffering, like the characters' hardships, remains without reward. As a symbol of lost dreams, the necklace reflects the broader economic struggles families like Bhunte face.

The story ends with the mother praying to be reborn as a shell in her next life, emphasizing the hopelessness of her situation. Her wish to transform her tears into pearls in the next life suggests that she sees no possibility of change in this one. This points to a larger commentary on how systemic poverty and emotional suffering are intertwined, leaving little room for upward mobility or personal fulfillment in societies where individuals like Bhunte and his mother are marginalized. Through Bhunte's family, Thapa highlights the social and economic realities of rural and urban life in Nepal. The family's move from the hills to the plains, and their subsequent financial struggles, reflect the challenges many rural families face, who lose their land and are forced to seek better opportunities in towns. The story critiques the economic system perpetuating poverty, leaving families in a debt and loss. Bhunte's family is emblematic of those who migrate to urban areas with hopes for a better future but find themselves facing the same, or worse, struggles as before.

The economic struggle is central to the story's critique of broader social inequalities. The psychological toll of suffering is evident in both Bhunte and his mother. Bhunte's innocence is slowly eroded as he confronts the harsh realities of life in the plains, while his mother reflects on her life with a growing sense of hopelessness. The story portrays how economic struggles and emotional pain intertwine, shaping the inner lives of individuals who feel powerless to change their circumstances. Bhunte's decision to return to the village, despite knowing that the

conditions there are not much better, speaks to his psychological need for familiarity and a sense of control in an otherwise uncontrollable situation.

In "Tears That Could Not Become Pearls," Dev Kumari Thapa uses the metaphor of pearls to explore the relationship between suffering and value, challenging the idea that all hardship leads to growth or beauty. Through the story of Bhunte and his mother, Thapa critiques the societal and economic structures that trap individuals in cycles of poverty, while also reflecting on the personal and psychological impacts of unfulfilled dreams. The story's melancholic tone and emphasis on the lack of transformation offer a powerful commentary on the nature of suffering, both personal and collective, in a world where tears, unlike pearls, hold no material value. Thapa's stories align with Piaget's stages of cognitive development, demonstrating children's growth through curiosity, empathy, and moral dilemmas. Socio-cultural factors like poverty, family dynamics, and societal expectations heavily influence the psychological development of child characters. Symbolism enriches the narratives, reflecting the emotional and cognitive struggles of children. Dev Kumari Thapa's portrayal of child psychology in her stories offers a compelling lens to understand the interplay between cognitive growth, emotional resilience, and societal challenges, contributing to literary and psychological discourse. Piaget's theory of cognitive development gives meaning to intelligence, knowledge and the relationship between students and the surrounding environment (18).

Piaget considers certain processes underlie all learning, whether in simple organisms or humans. On the one hand, the two essential processes are adaptation to the environment and, on the other, the organization of experience by means of action, memory, perceptions, or other kinds of mental activities. But, whereas in a simple organism, adaptation is a matter of living to satisfy elementary needs, and

organization is rudimentary, the human child, as he develops, adapts to a succession of environments with the increasing complexity of the organization. From observations and experiments with his own three children Piaget concluded that at birth infants were endowed with only a few reflexes, such as sucking and grasping, and innate tendencies to exercise the reflexes and to organize their actions. In other words, the infants did not inherit any ready-made mental abilities but only a manner of responding to the environment. In their study, Fazal Hayat, Megabit Khan, Shahji Ahmad, Muhammad Kamran, and Maleeha demonstrate the impact of Piaget's theory on the development psychology of children:

Piaget's theories have had a significant impact on development psychology but there have been disagreements about their acceptance. A few issues with Piaget's hypothesis include the underestimation of baby ability and the overestimation of teenage aptitude. Piaget also disregarded the ways in which social and cultural contexts influenced children's cognitive and thinking development. Piaget also conducted research on his own children, which was a methodological error that created ethical and biased questions about his theory (126).

Based on these observations, it can be concluded that the stories "Securing Future," "Puppy," "Ritthe's Question," and "Tears that Could Not Become Pearls" by Dev Kumari Thapa intersect with Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development. The author takes up several themes, including innocence, curiosity, and societal hardship, portraying how children like Naresh in "Securing Future" Madhukari in "Puppy," Ritthe in "Ritthe's Question," and Bhunte in "Tears That Could Not Become Pearls" negotiate with the natural course of growth and the unexpected encounter with the world and the immediate environments. The characters struggle with the concepts of

war and peace: their affection towards their pet dog, their hatred towards their parents, etc., explains the dynamics of their psychological being that is in constant flux. Their pragmatic approach towards survival in the immediate hardship they face exhibits their ability to process tangible realities. Thus, Thapa's stories capture the essence of children's psychological development and illuminate how their cognitive growth is linked with their emotional responses to external contexts. Her stories exhibit how innocence and curiosity interact, aligning with Piaget's theories of psychological development, viewed in this context through the study of literature.

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