

The Contemporary Indian Family in Gulmohar: A Semiotic Analysis of Thematic Representations

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Abstract:

This paper explores the semiotic and pragmatic dimensions of family dynamics as portrayed in the Indian film Gulmohar. By analysing key scenes and dialogues, it investigates how signs, both verbal and non-verbal, reveal underlying emotional tensions, generational conflicts, and evolving definitions of home and identity. Drawing from semiotics and pragmatics, the study examines the symbolic role of everyday settings, such as the dinner table, in expressing unspoken truths and suppressed emotions within Indian families. The paper further interrogates how Gulmohar subverts conventional family narratives by foregrounding voices and identities that have traditionally been marginalized, particularly those related to caste, gender, and queerness. By doing so, the film not only reflects but also critiques and reimagines normative understandings of family and belonging. Ultimately, the analysis highlights how regional and digital cinema are reshaping familial storytelling, offering nuanced reflections on belonging, identity and the silent conversations that define relationships.

Keywords: Symbol, Family, Archetype, Home, Semiotics

1. Introduction

Semiotics is the study of signs and sign-using behaviour. Although the word semiotics was used in this sense by the English philosopher John Locke in the 17th century, the idea of semiotics as an interdisciplinary field of study emerged only in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with the independent work of Ferdinand de Saussure and the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (Britannica 2024). It examines how meanings are created through gestures, images, and symbols, and explains that this process is not limited to words. Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, laid the foundation for semiotics (which he called *semiology*). In his book, *Course in General Linguistics* 1916, he defined semiotics as “A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable... I shall call it semiology.”(Saussure 67) This definition explains how and what ‘signs’ through language can play a role in society and on its people. He proposed the model of the sign, consisting of a Signifier (the form of the sign, e.g., a word or an image) and a Signified (the concept or meaning behind the sign). This model is used to understand the semiotics of novels, poems, literary symbols, character archetypes, or narrative structures.

Similarly, Roland Barthes, a semiotician, agreed with Saussure and published his findings in his book *Elements of Semiology* (1964). In this book, he introduced the idea of second-order semiotics, where signs carry denotative (literal) and connotative (cultural) meanings. Barthes examined how media, advertisements, and cultural symbols shape meaning, famously analysing how everyday objects become myths, reinforcing ideology. Barthes came to this conclusion through Saussure's work on semiotics.

There are three types of semiotics as deduced by Saussure and Charles Pierce.

1. Syntactic (Structure)

In semiotics, the syntactic level focuses on the structural relationships between signs, independent of their meaning (semantics) or interpretation (pragmatics). It deals with how signs are organised, combined, and follow specific patterns within a given system. The syntactic aspect of semiotics is crucial in understanding how meaning is conveyed through structured arrangements, whether in language, visual signs, or digital communication. Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist approach to language highlights the importance of syntax by emphasising that meaning emerges from differences between signs rather than from inherent properties. Similarly, Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic model of the sign (representamen, interpretant, and object) suggests that signs function within a network of relationships that follow syntactic rules. For example, in written language, words must be arranged according to grammatical rules to form coherent sentences. In visual semiotics, symbols in road signs or brand logos must be positioned correctly for their intended message to be understood.

Overall, the syntactic perspective in semiotics reveals that meaning is not only about interpretation but also about structure. Signs function within organised systems where relationships between elements determine their effectiveness in communication. Whether in language, media, or digital technologies syntactic rules shape how we perceive and process information, reinforcing the structured nature of meaning-making in human communication.

2. Semantics (Meaning)

Semantics refers to the study of meaning and how signs, symbols, and language convey messages. It focuses on the relationship between signifiers (words, images, gestures) and their signified concepts (the meanings they evoke). While syntax concerns the arrangement of signs, semantics deals with what those signs mean and how meaning is constructed within a cultural and contextual framework. Semantics in semiotics reveal that meaning is dynamic and socially constructed rather than static. It underscores how signs communicate ideas beyond their literal interpretations, influencing perception,

communication, and cultural identity. This makes semantic analysis essential in fields such as linguistics, media studies, advertising, and artificial intelligence, where understanding meaning is crucial for effective communication.

Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist approach to semiotics defines meaning as relational, emphasising that words do not have inherent meanings but derive significance from their differences within a language system. Similarly, Charles Sanders Peirce expands on semantics by introducing the triadic model, where meaning is determined by the relationship between the representamen (the sign), the interpretant (the meaning derived), and the object (the actual thing being referred to). This perspective suggests that meaning is not fixed but is interpreted differently depending on context and cultural background.

3. Pragmatics (Interpretation)

In semiotics, pragmatics is the branch that explores how signs and symbols function in real-life situations. It moves beyond the literal meaning of a sign and focuses on how that meaning changes depending on who is using it, where, when, and why. In other words, pragmatics looks at the relationship between the sign, the user, and the surrounding context. Charles Sanders Peirce emphasised that signs don't have fixed meanings, they take on meaning through use and interpretation. For instance, think of a simple thumbs-up gesture. In some cultures, it means 'good job' or 'I agree'. But in others, the very same gesture can be considered rude or even insulting. This example shows that the meaning of a sign isn't universal; it's shaped by cultural background, social interaction, and intention. Pragmatics also describes that communication isn't just about the words we say or the symbols we use; it's about how they're understood in a given situation. The same sentence, when said with a smile or a frown, can carry entirely different meanings. The tone, body language, and shared experiences all play a role in shaping how messages are received.

Roland Barthes, in his book *Elements of Semiology* (1964), introduced the terms Denotation (literal meaning) and Connotation (subjective or cultural meaning). "The first order of signification is that of denotation: at the level of the denoted message, the signifier is an image, and the signified is the corresponding concept." (Barthes, Roland. Hill and Wang 36). It simply means that denotation is the dictionary type meaning of what we see or read. "The second order of signification is that of connotation: at the level of the connoted message, the signifiers are constituted by the signs of the denoted system (the image, the object, the text), and the signifieds are wider cultural or symbolic meanings." (Barthes 36). Connotation is the hidden, cultural or subjective meaning. For example, A rose can have a denotative meaning of being a flower, whereas connotatively this rose can be

interpreted for love, romance. After understanding semiotics and its major parts, a question arises about how meaning is influenced by interpretation in social interaction and cultural background and how these interpretations help explain new perspectives about a movie.

Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, argued that language and meaning are developed through social and cultural interaction. He believed that our thoughts and understanding are shaped by the tools of our culture, especially language. Two people from different cultural backgrounds may have different ways of thinking and assigning meaning. This means that two people from different cultural backgrounds may have different ways of thinking and assigning meaning, even to the same word or action. He proposed this concept in his book, *Thought and Language*(1934). These interpretations of meaning in social interaction and cultural background are not limited to real life and daily conversations. These are often used in cinema and films to make the audience experience more entertaining and engaging, thereby increasing the excitement.

For semiotics to be used in cinema, we must assume film to be a certain kind of meaning, a cognitive conduct. That is, film theory scrutinises meaning as such, and does so in its cinematic specificity. (Ehrat, Pg 3). It emphasises that film theory is about theorising the nature of film itself, not about interpreting individual films. Film should be viewed as a specific form of meaning-making and cognitive conduct, and the role of theory is to examine this meaning in its cinematic specificity. Johannes, using Barthes' idea, suggests that a connotative meaning creates a more significant and valuable impact on its audience, as it reveals deeper, often unspoken layers of meaning that extend beyond the literal meaning. At first glance, any scene from the movie gives a literal or denotative meaning. But when explored deeper using its characters, themes, storyline and emotion, it shows a connotative or cultural meaning which is very different from the literal meaning. Semiotic codes are used to analyse the meanings connotatively. Semiotic codes are those objects, music, dialogues, lighting, colours, costumes and characters which at first may seem to be less important, but they are the one that creates an emotional attachment to communicate with the audience. Critics use these semiotic codes to question and reveal how cinema both mirrors and shapes society using these semiotic codes.

Ehrat, in their book *Cinema and Semiotic: Peirce and Film Aesthetics, Narration, and Representation* (2005), using Charles Pierce and his theories, devises a semiotic approach to explain fundamental questions about cinematic meaning rather than those isolated specifics like editing styles or cinematic metaphors which differs from other philosophies like Deleuze's, Cognitivism, or semiology. This approach has five theoretical approaches to explain, that are:

1. Epistemology solution: In cinema, the mind organises sensory input to make sense. It creates a bridge between the mind and reality.
2. Psychological solution: Reality is not assumed; instead, meaning is reconstructed within the psyche based on social and pre-given forms. It is a subjective approach that focuses on internal experience.
3. Temporal-Spatial Solution: This view sees the relationship between mind and reality as either spatial (a collection of parts) or temporal (a unified whole). Cinema allows both experiences but recognises that they are fundamentally different.
4. Linguistic solution: Reality is mediated entirely through language. It sacrifices both the notion of objective reality and the individual mind by solely focusing on the operations of language.
5. Semiotic Solution (Pragmaticism): This approach rejects traditional epistemology. Instead, it sees meaning and thought as emerging from action and behaviour. The focus is on habits shaped by norms (not arbitrary conventions), which are grounded in lived experience.

Overall, the semiotic approach in its Peircean form offers a dynamic, action-based understanding of meaning, rejecting simplistic or purely cognitive or linguistic models.

Using semiotics and its approach, the author explains that rather than treating a film as being similar to systems like language, psyche or dreams. It (cinema) should be understood as a unique form of signification, which is a process of becoming meaning. The semiotic approach, when applied to cinema, does not reduce to a static object; instead investigates how meaning emerges through relationships between signs, objects and interpretations. It allows a film to engage with reality and represent it in a nuanced way.

2. Discussion and findings

Gulmohar (2023) is an Indian movie directed by Rahul.V.Chittella. Set in Delhi, this is a story about an affluent Batra family who are preparing to move out of their ancestral home, Gulmohar Villa. One of the film critics, Dhaval Roy, in his article titled ‘Gulmohar Review: A bittersweet and profound story’, speaks about how this movie will tug at your heartstrings, and describes this movie as a bittersweet thought thought-provoking family drama about the Batra family’s final days in their ancestral home before redevelopment. There is a line in the movie which says, ‘a house is not built through brick and cement, but with relationships’. This shows the authenticity of this movie. The main characters includes Prabhakar Batra (late Father), Kusum Batra (Mother), Arun Batra(Son), Indira Batra (Daughter-in-law), Aditya Batra, Divya Batra, Amrita Batra, Jeetu, Reshma and Sudhakar.

For a better understanding, the plot of the movie is divided into three parts: In the first hour, the Batras' family is introduced and gathered for a farewell party as they are preparing to vacate their

34-year-old family home, Gulmohar. Everyone is happy, cheerful, and enjoying the party. But, there is a bit of sadness on every member's face at leaving the house. Kusum Batra, the matriarch, announces that she has bought a house in Pondicherry and will live there alone. Everyone is shocked, especially her son Arun Batra, who tries his best to convince his mother to change her mind. Further in the movie, Arun also reveals his emotional weight of leaving their family home. Later, tension arises between Arun and his son Aditya, who is determined to live an independent life with his wife. It can also be seen that the father-son relationship is not good from the start. Aditya has been struggling to find funds for his startup, which always upsets him. Arun Batra's daughter, Amrita, is also suffering as she is not able to concentrate and write songs. She also suffers with love, as she is unable to choose. She is in love with a woman named Kashish but struggles with the fear of coming out to her father, Arun Batra. With all these secrets unfolding and creating an undercurrent of conflict in the family, the first hour ends.

In the second hour of the movie, a major secret is revealed, which is related to Arun. He is not the real child of Kusum Batra. Kusum and her husband had decided to give the entire property to Sudhakar and his family, who is the brother of Prabhakar Batra, instead of Aun, his son. This was unknown to everyone. Aditya faces both professional and personal struggles as he seeks financial stability. Kusum reconnects with her late husband's memories and tries to cherish them. Other than the family members struggling, the staff members were also suffering as they had to leave the house they had served for many years. One of the household staff, Reshma, who has been working as a housemaid, was also going to leave the house and was unhappy about this. Thus, these incidents indicate how emotional confrontations lead to realisations about family bonds, love, and identity.

In the final minutes of the movie, Arun accepts his truth and embraces his place in the family. Arun's wife helped him, encouraged him to accept the truth and move ahead. On one side, when Aditya decided to give a job interview and leave his startup, his wife encouraged him to try once more and not give up so easily on his startup.

Amrita also accepts her choice of love and starts a relationship with Kashish. Even though the family was physically separated, they were also strengthening their emotional bonds. Everything was getting sorted. Kusum had a wish to celebrate the last Holi festival within this house with everybody, and then they would part ways. And exactly this is what happened. This movie also has the perspective, or rather, a theme of LGBT. Kusum Batra's real reason for moving to Pondicherry was her love for her friend, with whom she wanted to live the rest of her life happily. The same was the case with Amrita, Arun's daughter, who loved a girl named Kashish, whom she wanted to hide, but her grandmother

supported her. The Batra family, with happiness and joy, all several truths unfolded, celebrated Holi with great zeal, as the movie ended.

The movie *Gulmohar* shows a modern Indian family in a thoughtful and detailed way. It both values and questions the meaning of family relationships. In the entire movie's plot, there were instances where familial bonds were challenged and embraced for their beauty. Since ancient times, in India, joint families have been prevailing as a tradition. In modern times, when families are shifting towards a nuclear family structure, still the old tradition of joint families does exist. *Gulmohar* presents a joint family, the Batras, a well-off and influential household, who were preparing to vacate their ancestral home. A multigenerational cohesion and conflict could be seen. Kusum Batra, the matriarch, symbolises the older generation's wisdom and emotional depth, while also holding secrets that challenge the family's perception. Arun Batra, son of Kusum Batra, represents the middle generation struggling between respecting traditions and adapting to new changes. In the younger generations, Aditya brings out themes of aspirations, independence, and conflicts among his parents. Moving out of their ancestral home becomes a metaphor for emotional and personal transition, prompting the characters to reflect on what truly matters: memories, relationships, or unresolved conflicts. The film challenges the idea that Indian families must stay united under one roof, suggesting that true connection goes beyond physical space.

The film also breaks stereotypes by showing emotionally vulnerable male characters (Arun and Aditya) and strong female figures (Kusum, Indu and Divya). This challenges the stereotype of women being confined to household chores and men always appearing strong. *Gulmohar* avoids melodrama, rather choosing to portray realistic family interactions, from passive-aggressive dinner conversations to quiet gestures of care. It mirrors the evolving urban Indian families, where modern values coexist with cultural traditions, and relationships are more fluid. Through its multidimensional characters and interwoven narratives, the film captures the delicate balance between honouring traditions and embracing change, offering a mirror to contemporary familial experiences in India.

Gulmohar not only portrays the modern Indian family, their multigenerational cohesion, rather it also shows how, with understanding and maturity, the relationships could mend. The movie portrays how, with time, they accept new changes or their younger generation's perceptions on love, relationships. This was seen in the character of Amrita, daughter of Arun and granddaughter of Kusum. Amrita was in a homosexual relationship with one of her friends. Due to the heterosexual norms of the Indian society and family, Amrita couldn't accept her feelings and was unable to reveal this truth. In India, topics like these have always been taboo to speak about; people hesitate and are also reprimanded by society and even by their families. The situation here was different when Kusum

unintentionally got to know about Amrita's feelings, instead of berating or scolding her. She stood with her and supported her. At one point in time, Kusum also had the same situation; that time she couldn't stand for her, but today she supported her granddaughter, which depicts the dynamics of change in perspectives with time.

Considering the idea of semiotics, this paper unfolds the connotative meaning of the movie for the purpose of research, the unlayering is characterised into 3 parameters: symbols, character archetypes and scenes. As per the categorisation, symbols are: Gulmohar tree, Gulmohar villa, Holi festival and the Will.

The 'Gulmohar tree', also known as the Flame Tree or Royal Poinciana, is native to Madagascar. It is used as a powerful symbol of familial roots, memory and the ever-evolving nature of relationships. In the context of Indian culture, Gulmohar is often found in schools and gardens where it is considered the symbol of endings and new beginnings. This was the scenario within the plot, where hardships, the silence of characters were broken, and a new beginning began with everyone being happy. Gulmohar is used as a strong metaphor in the movie for the intricate family dynamics and changing identities within a joint family. The tree's vibrant colours and unique structure reflect the diverse personalities and experiences of each family member. The usage of this tree in the movie showcases a deep significance in India, often associated with passion, resilience and endurance. It sees everything, joy, heartbreak, departures, yet stands still. Like family, it sheds leaves and blossoms again, holding space for both change and return. Likewise, this movie also portrays these themes. There is passion among every character to save their family from breaking apart. The family members' secrets were the reasons for hardships and struggles, but those struggles were the reasons that brought them back together as a family and resolved the entire matter. In their entire hardships, this tree stood with them, watching from afar. It represents a witness to generations, holding on quietly while everything else changes. As the family prepares to leave the house, the gulmohar tree becomes a metaphor for what stays rooted: identity, legacy, and unresolved emotions, even when people move on.

In *Gulmohar*, characters evolve through emotional and generational shifts. Kusum breaks traditional norms, supporting her granddaughter's identity with a progressive mindset. Arun reflects the dual role of son and father, grappling with identity and legacy, while Aditya embodies the ambitious, modern youth prioritising independence. Indira remains the quiet, sidelined yet stabilising force, and Jeetu, the househelp, subtly exposes class divides while being central to the family's everyday survival.

The last parameter to be used is scenes. Those scenes are: dinner-table conversations, the truth about the 'Will', Arun facing his real truth, Arun-Aditya's heated argument, Arun's Quiet Moment in the House, the Packing up of the house, and the concept of interpersonal space. In Indian families, dinner table conversation(9:05) holds deep cultural and emotional significance. More than just a time to eat, they function as a daily ritual that reinforces family bonds, transmits values, and provides a space for emotional sharing and decision-making. The dinner table and the conversations held during mealtime have been an ancient practice in India, where all family members come together to have meals. Meals at the dinner table have traditionally served as a time for family members to share and discuss their day. In earlier joint family systems, dining was a communal experience where members of all ages gathered, often sitting on mats on the floor. Elders were typically served first, reinforcing values of hierarchy and respect, while younger members were expected to serve and show deference to their seniors.

With urbanisation, the concept of the modern dinner table became a symbol of upward mobility and middle-class aspirations. Although shared meals are still prevailing, togetherness and timings have become flexible. Due to busy lifestyles, even today, Indian families prioritise at least one meal, usually dinner. The dinner table, whether modern or traditional, continues to be a space for emotional bonding, intergenerational learning and preservation of family values. In the movie, such dinner table conversations also played a significant role. These scenes are more than just moments of daily routine; they function as key storytelling devices that reveal hidden tensions, unresolved histories, and evolving relationships. At the beginning of the movie, the Batra family is packing to leave their house, 'Gulmohar villa', enjoying family time and meals at the dinner table. Kusum Batra, the matriarch, shocks everyone with her decision to live alone in Pondicherry. This revelation of Kusum Batra's decision to move out emerges not in isolation, where family members share meals and are physically together, but emotionally scattered. These conversations subtly unravel the seeming unity of the Batra household.

Sometimes, in an Indian household, dinner-table conversations become a battleground between generations. Arun, who struggles with both his professional identity and his place within the family, often finds himself at odds with his son Aditya or his mother Kusum. Usually, during meals, when all members of the family are gathered to have dinner, the elder ones confront the younger of their plans, which somewhere creates a drift in the bonds. Through their exchanges, viewers witness the conflict between tradition and modern aspirations, echoing a broader theme of a family negotiating with change. Silence at the dinner table speaks as much as the words that are said. Moments of awkward pauses, sidelong glances, and tense body language convey what remains unsaid. This technique reflects

how Indian families often grapple with expressing deeper emotions, using mealtime as a veil under which true feelings stir just beneath the surface. The conversations that seem normal and casual over food often stand in stark contrast to the emotional ruptures brewing underneath. As the family prepare to leave their ancestral home, the act of sitting together for dinner highlights their lingering emotional ties. It shows the audience that despite conflict, hurt, and impending physical separation, the dinner table remains a symbol of belonging, a reminder of the shared history that binds them. It portrays how the conversations are not always spoken, but sometimes those conversations are felt without uttering a word.

Not only do dinner-table conversations in the movie depict just emotional or familial connection, but also a place to describe their 'social class' in society. In the movie, housemaid Reshma, who cooks food for all the members of the family, is not allowed to eat with them. This is a common class tradition prevalent in India for many years. Their quiet presence acts like a mirror to the audience: they witness emotional outbursts, family tensions, and secrets being revealed, but they remain silent, reminding us of their marginal position in the household hierarchy. This silence is not out of respect, but it reflects centuries-old conditioning about "knowing one's place" in Indian domestic life. There were scenes when Kusum's brother-in-law, Sudhakar Batra, would not even drink a glass of water from Reshma's hands. Despite progress, advancement, and transformation in Indian society, some individuals still cling to the old traditions of class and caste discrimination. The perspective of the servants during dinner table conversations is a quiet yet powerful commentary on social hierarchy, emotional exclusion, and the invisible labour that supports privileged families. Their physical proximity to the family contrasts sharply with their emotional distance, exposing the class divisions that persist even in emotionally liberal households. The contrast between the Batras' emotionally expressive dinners and the hidden struggles of Reshma and Jeetu underscores the class-based emotional asymmetry.

The next scene to be discussed is the concept of interpersonal space, both physical and emotional, plays a central role in exploring the complexities of family relationships. As the Batra family prepares to leave their ancestral home, the physical closeness of shared living collides with emotional distance, creating a layered portrayal of how space influences connection, conflict, and self-discovery within a family. The Batra family lives under one roof, often seen in shared spaces like the living room, corridors, and dining table. However, despite this physical proximity, many of the characters experience emotional isolation: Arun struggles to connect with his son Aditya, despite daily interactions. Kusum, though surrounded by family, holds deep personal secrets like her adoption and her decision to live independently that she keeps hidden for most of the film. This contrast between

being close but feeling far is a recurring theme, highlighting how familial space doesn't always guarantee emotional intimacy. It brings out another semiotic code that can be considered for analysis. Younger characters like Aditya and Divya crave autonomy and emotional openness. Older characters like Arun and Kusum tend to internalise emotions, creating emotional walls even within shared spaces. This tension is visible in how different generations inhabit and retreat from spaces for example; Aditya often escapes to private areas with his wife or to the terrace, seeking space from his father's expectations. Kusum's quiet but radical choice to move into her flat is an assertion of personal space and autonomy. For decades, she has inhabited the role of the dutiful matriarch, but now she claims her own emotional and physical space, challenging traditional ideas of widowhood and dependency.

This decision of hers symbolically redefines what family space can mean not just a place of duty, but one of choice and self-expression. The Batra family home itself acts as a metaphor for interpersonal space: Its open verandas, shared rooms, and echoing hallways represent a life of togetherness but also the lack of privacy.

The impending sale of the house symbolises not just the end of a shared living arrangement but the fragmentation of relationships, pushing each member to reassess personal boundaries. In *Gulmohar*, interpersonal space is not just about where people sit or live, it's about how they relate, withhold, and express. The film beautifully captures the tension between shared history and personal identity, revealing how both proximity and distance can coexist within families. As each character negotiates their own emotional space, the film gently questions what it means to belong.

The next key scene is Aditya's confrontation with His Father, Arun (50:13)—a heated argument between father and son. This scene symbolises the struggle for individual identity and generational expectations. Aditya's frustration isn't just about what's said, but about the pressure to conform, the weight of legacy, and his yearning to break free and be seen on his terms. This suggests a child's mindset to stand tall and make his family proud. Especially for a son to make his father proud of him is what every child dreams about. Whom he admired and made his idol in his entire childhood, making that person proud of him, is the greatest achievement that an individual can achieve. But Aditya was not able to; he was lacking, failing, which strained the father-son relationship. This depicts a child's burden of making family proud and a men's burden to being successful in material terms.

Therefore, exploring *Gulmohar* through the semiotic lens it can be understood how symbols, character roles, and scene depictions go beyond surface meaning to reflect the deeper emotional and cultural layers of Indian society today. Key symbols such as the Gulmohar tree, the festival of Holi, the ancestral home, the handwritten will, and old family photographs each carried emotional weight. These weren't just props or background they stood in for memory, loss, rebirth, and transition. For

example, the Gulmohar tree itself became a metaphor for rootedness and fragility, blossoming even in moments of chaos and endings. The characters too served as modern archetypes. Kusum, the matriarch, was not just a mother or grandmother, but the emotional anchor of the family, holding stories, secrets, and strength within her silence. Arun, caught between duty and personal longing, embodied the inner conflicts of a man raised to follow tradition but yearning for emotional clarity. Aditya, with his dreams and ambitions, showed the pressures faced by younger generations to "do better" while often feeling adrift. Indira, a quiet yet constant presence, was the lens through which we saw how some characters observed more than they spoke. And Jeetu, so often underrepresented, reminded us how some family members are pushed to the margins yet carry their narratives quietly. Amrita's queer identity brought a much-needed contemporary lens into the story. Her inclusion was not treated as a dramatic twist but presented gently, reminding viewers that queerness exists not outside the family unit but within it, and deserves acceptance, conversation, and space. This marked an important shift in Indian storytelling, where diverse identities are beginning to be woven into the fabric of domestic life rather than being treated as exceptions or taboos. Thematic concerns like generational conflict, suppressed truths, emotional healing, and inheritance weren't explored in black-and-white terms but through moments of stillness, glances, silences at the dinner table, and family rituals. These connotative signs allowed the film to communicate what words sometimes cannot—the unspoken pain of unresolved relationships, the quiet resilience in rebuilding trust, and the constant tug-of-war between preserving tradition and embracing change. *Gulmohar* depicts how films can do more than entertain, they can teach, challenge, comfort, and hold a mirror to our everyday lives.

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