

ഇശൽ
വൈത്യകം
ത്രൈമാസിക ലക്കം: 46

Ishal Paithrkam

Online issue 31

print issue 46

June 2026



Mahakavi Moyinkutty Vaidyar

Mappila Kala Akademi

Department of Cultural Affairs

Government of Kerala-India

June 2026

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പകർപ്പാവകാശം: പ്രസാധകർക്ക്

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Ishal Paithrkam

E-ISSN: 2582-550X

Peer-Reviewed

Two issue per year

Bilingual

Issue: 46

Online issue: 31

June: 2026

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Editor

Dr. Shamshad hussain. KT

Publisher

The Secretary, Mahakavi

Moyinkutty Vaidyar mappila

Kala Academy, Department of

Cultural affairs, Government

of Kerala, Kondotty Post

Pin: 673638

India

Ph: +91 483 2711432

Printed at

Kerala state C APT

Kozhikode

പ്രസാധകർ

മഹാകവി മോയിൻകുട്ടി വൈദ്യർ

മാപ്പിള കലാ അക്കാദമി

കൊണ്ടോട്ടി: 673 638

ഫോൺ: 0483 2711432

www.mappilakalaacademy.org

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**The Power of Dreams: Transformative
Reflections on Savi Sharma's
*This is Not Your Story***

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Dr. R. Dhanalakshmi**

Savi Sharma's *This is Not Your Story* (2017) explores the relationship between aspiration, selfhood, and personal transformation through the interconnected lives of Shaurya, Miraya, Anubhav, and Kasturi. The novel foregrounds the emotional and psychological struggles experienced by individuals attempting to negotiate societal expectations, personal crises, and the pursuit of meaningful aspirations. This study examines how the characters reconstruct their identities through the pursuit of dreams, resilience, and self-discovery. The research employs Dan McAdams's Narrative Identity Theory (McAdams, 2001) as a theoretical framework to analyse how individuals shape their identities through evolving life narratives that integrate past experiences, present conflicts, and future aspirations. Using a qualitative interpretative approach, the study investigates how narrative reconstruction contributes to identity formation and emotional transformation within the novel. The paper further examines how the characters' aspirational journeys reflect broader questions of self-realisation, personal choice, and psychological resilience in contemporary motivational fiction. By situating the novel within the framework of narrative psychology and identity studies, the study seeks to

contribute to the emerging academic discussion on contemporary Indian popular fiction and its representation of selfhood, transformation, and emotional resilience.

Keywords: Narrative Identity Theory, Selfhood, Personal transformation, Motivational fiction, Dream pursuit, Psychological resilience, Contemporary Indian fiction, Identity formation

Introduction

Savi Sharma is a contemporary Indian writer known for her works in motivational fiction that focus on themes of self-discovery, personal struggle, and the pursuit of dreams. Her novel *This is Not Your Story* (2017) presents the interconnected lives of Shaurya, Miraya, Anubhav, and Kasturi, each of whom faces personal and emotional challenges while trying to understand their life direction and goals. The novel focuses on how individuals respond to difficulties and how their choices shape their sense of identity over time. The novel engages with themes such as aspiration, identity formation, emotional struggle, and personal change. It shows how individuals move through experiences of failure, loss, and uncertainty while attempting to construct a meaningful sense of self. In this process, dreams function as a central element in shaping how characters interpret their lives and future possibilities. Although motivational fiction has gained a wide readership in contemporary Indian literature, it has received limited critical attention in academic literary studies, particularly in relation to narrative psychology and identity formation.

This study addresses this gap by examining Savi Sharma's *This is Not Your Story* through a theoretical framework grounded in Dan McAdams's Narrative Identity Theory (McAdams, 2001). According to this theory, individuals construct identity through internal life narratives that integrate past experiences, present circumstances, and future expectations. These narratives provide meaning to life events and influence personal development. In this study, the framework is applied to analyse how the characters in the novel construct and reconstruct their identities through lived experiences and decision-making processes.

The purpose of this paper is to examine how narrative identity is formed and reshaped in *This is Not Your Story* through the characters' experiences and personal choices. It also seeks to investigate how the novel represents identity development through emotional challenges and changing life situations. The study situates the novel within contemporary Indian motivational fiction and contributes to ongoing discussions on narrative identity and selfhood in literary studies.

Literature Review

Narrative identity has been widely discussed in narrative psychology as a key framework for understanding how individuals construct meaning in their lives. According to Dan McAdams, identity is formed through internalised life stories that integrate past experiences, present situations, and future expectations (McAdams, 2001). These narratives help individuals organise life events into a coherent sense of self and provide direction for personal development. Scholars in narrative psychology emphasise that identity is not fixed but continuously shaped through interpretation and meaning-making processes. Research in narrative psychology further highlights the role of time, agency, and coherence in identity formation. Life events are not only experienced but also interpreted and reorganised into personal narratives that influence how individuals understand themselves. This perspective has been widely used in psychological and literary studies to examine how individuals construct meaning from emotional experience, relationships, and life transitions.

In literary studies, narrative identity theory has been applied to explore how fictional characters reflect processes of self-construction similar to real-life identity formation. Characters in literature often undergo emotional struggles, personal transformations, and decision-making processes that resemble narrative restructuring. Such studies demonstrate that fiction serves as a space for representing and examining the psychological and emotional dimensions of identity. Motivational and contemporary popular fiction, particularly in the Indian context, often focuses on themes of aspiration, self-discovery, and personal transformation. These narratives commonly depict characters who face emotional challenges, social expectations, and personal setbacks while attempting to build meaningful lives. However,

such texts have received limited sustained academic attention compared to canonical literary works, especially in relation to psychological frameworks such as narrative identity theory.

Within this context, Savi Sharma's fiction represents a relevant site for examining identity construction through motivational storytelling. Her novel *This is Not Your Story* reflects themes of aspiration, emotional struggle, and personal transformation, which align with key concerns in narrative identity studies. However, academic engagement with such contemporary motivational fiction remains limited, particularly in relation to systematic theoretical analysis. Therefore, this study positions the novel within the broader framework of narrative psychology and identity studies. It draws on McAdams's theory to examine how characters construct meaning through lived experiences, emotional challenges, and evolving life goals. This approach enables a deeper understanding of how identity is represented and transformed within contemporary Indian fiction.

Methodological Approach

Storytelling is widely understood as a fundamental way in which individuals make sense of their experiences and interpret their lives. Human beings organise both past and future events through narrative structures, where experiences are shaped into meaningful sequences. In narrative psychology, this process is closely linked to identity formation, where individuals construct a sense of self through evolving life stories. Dan McAdams's Narrative Identity Theory explains that individuals form identity by constructing internalised life stories that integrate past experiences, present situations, and future expectations. According to McAdams (2001), these narratives begin to develop during adolescence and continue to be revised throughout life. Identity is therefore not fixed but continuously reconstructed through interpretation and meaning-making.

This study applies McAdams's framework as an interpretative tool to analyse identity formation in Savi Sharma's *This is Not Your Story*. Although direct scholarly research on Savi Sharma's fiction remains limited, studies on narrative psychology and motivational literature provide a useful interpretative foundation. Within this framework, the novel is approached as a narrative space where identity is

shaped through emotional experiences, relational influences, personal decisions, and evolving life goals. The four main characters, Shaurya, Miraya, Anubhav, and Kasturi, are treated as narrative subjects whose life experiences function as turning points in the construction of identity. Rather than focusing on plot description, the study uses their experiences as interpretative points to understand how identity is continuously reshaped through changing life circumstances. Taken together, these characters portray that identity is formed through a continuous process of narrative construction. The novel demonstrates how individuals interpret experiences, respond to emotional and relational challenges, and reconstruct their sense of self through evolving life stories.

Theoretical Framework

This study examines how Savi Sharma's *This is Not Your Story* represents the pursuit of dreams as a process of self-discovery and identity formation. Using Dan McAdams's Narrative Identity Theory (McAdams, 2001), the researcher analyses how the characters construct and reconstruct their identities through lived experiences, emotional challenges, and life decisions. The framework views identity as a continuously evolving narrative shaped by the integration of past events, present circumstances, and future aspirations. Within this approach, the study further explores how ambition, resilience, and personal relationships contribute to the formation and transformation of selfhood in the novel.

Discussion

The characters in Savi Sharma's *This is Not Your Story* construct their identities through experiences of conflict, emotional change, and evolving personal choices. From the perspective of Narrative Identity Theory, these experiences function as turning points that reshape how individuals understand themselves and their life direction. Shaurya's narrative reflects the conflict between external expectations and personal aspiration, as he initially pursues Chartered Accountancy due to parental pressure before choosing filmmaking as a self-determined career path. This shift represents a restructuring of his life narrative from conformity to personal meaning-making. Miraya's narrative reflects identity disruption and reconstruction through mari-

tal and emotional conflict. Although she marries her college partner, differences in career success and personal expectations lead to relational strain and emotional instability. Her professional growth further complicates the relationship, illustrating how both personal achievement and interpersonal dynamics influence identity. The accidental death of Anubhav's parents during their travel to meet him marks a traumatic turning point in his narrative. This event creates a crack in his life story and leads to emotional disorientation and re-evaluation of life goals. In narrative identity terms, such disruptions function as critical moments that require individuals to reconstruct meaning and reorient their life trajectory over time. Kasturi functions as a relational anchor within the narrative structure. As Shaurya's neighbour, she provides emotional support and stability during his process of self-transformation. Her role demonstrates how interpersonal relationships contribute to identity development by offering emotional grounding and continuity. Over time, her relationship with Shaurya evolves into a mutual emotional bond, reflecting how relational narratives can influence and sustain personal identity formation during periods of transition. Collectively, these character arcs demonstrate that identity in the novel is not static but continuously reconstructed through lived experiences. The novel illustrates how individuals interpret emotional events, respond to relational influences, and reorganise their life stories over time. Through the lens of Narrative Identity Theory, it highlights identity formation as a dynamic process shaped by emotional experience and evolving life narratives.

Conclusion

The novel *This is Not Your Story* by Savi Sharma presents narratives of personal struggle, emotional transition, and identity reconstruction through the interconnected lives of Shaurya, Miraya, Anubhav, and Kasturi. The study examined these character developments using Dan McAdams's Narrative Identity Theory, which explains identity as a continuously evolving life story shaped by experience and interpretation. The current paper shows that the characters' identities are not fixed but are reshaped through key life events such as career decisions, relational changes, and emotional disruptions. Shaurya's pursuit of his dream in filmmaking and his return to his

hometown reflect a self-directed process of identity formation, where goal-oriented, brave decisions beyond fear and personal aspiration become central to life direction. Miraya's narrative reflects the rebuilding of both personal and professional life; after experiencing a strained marital relationship, she develops a new relationship with Anubhav while continuing to succeed in her career as an interior designer. This changeover illustrates how identity is reconstructed through emotional recovery and professional progress. Anubhav is portrayed as rebuilding his business life after the loss of his parents, showing recovery through his support system, Miraya, with a renewed purpose and direction. Kasturi is presented as a strong supporting character whose emotional stability and relational presence play a significant role in the development and transformation of Shaurya. Along with her cousin Miraya and Anubhav, who initially appears as a stranger but later becomes a friend, she forms a close support system. All four characters collectively function as a strong mutual support network, positively influencing one another's lives. Together, these developments demonstrate that identity is shaped through continuous reconstruction influenced by personal choices, emotional experiences, and interpersonal relationships.

The study highlights that the novel represents identity formation as a dynamic process shaped by evolving life experiences rather than fixed traits. It also indicates that motivational fiction constructs meaning through transitions that reflect broader processes of self-understanding and life restructuring. By applying Narrative Identity Theory, the study contributes to an understanding of how contemporary Indian motivational fiction represents identity development through storytelling structures. The findings suggest that the characters' experiences reflect broader patterns of meaning-making and self-construction in narrative form. Further research may extend this framework to other novels by Savi Sharma and to similar contemporary motivational fiction, exploring identity formation through narrative and psychological perspectives.

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