



ISSN Print: 2664-9799
ISSN Online: 2664-9802
Impact Factor (RJIF): 8.97
IJHER 2025; 7(2): 259-263
www.humanitiesjournal.net
Received: 06-07-2025
Accepted: 07-08-2025

Abhijit Deb
PhD, Research Scholar of
English, ICFAI University
Tripura, India

Traversing the Sacred Cycle: An Archetypal and Ecocritical Study of Aman Chandra's Spiritual Journey in Saksham Garg's *Samsara*

Abhijit Deb

DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.33545/26649799.2025.v7.i2d.264>

Abstract

Saksham Garg's *Samsara* offers a compelling blend of Indian mythology, fantasy and spiritual philosophy through the transformative journey of Aman Chandra, a teenager transported from modern India to a hidden Himalayan valley. This study employs mythological and archetypal criticism, alongside psychoanalytical and Ecocritical approaches, to analyze how Aman's narrative symbolizes the soul's journey through Samsara - the cycle of birth, suffering, and eventual liberation. The protagonist's arc reflects archetypal patterns embedded within Indian traditions, intertwining with Vedic concepts such as *atman* (self), *karma*, and *moksha* (liberation) to explore themes of identity, faith, and cosmic duty. The narrative's engagement with the hero's journey and its reconceptualization within contemporary Indian social realities offers a rich ground for scholarly investigation. Additionally, the study foregrounds the integral role of nature, emphasizing how the sacred valley and its mystical environment act as essential catalysts for Aman's spiritual awakening and liberation. Psychologically, Aman's struggles with trauma and self-realization underscore the interplay of individual and collective mythic consciousness. Philosophically, the novel challenges and reinterprets ancient dharmic values in light of modern dilemmas. Through the multifaceted analysis, this paper positions *Samsara* as significant cultural text that revitalized mythological storytelling and spiritual discourse for a new generation, affirming the ongoing relevance of Indian mythology in contemporary literature.

Keywords: Archetypal Criticism, Ecocriticism, Indian Mythology, Spiritual Journey

Introduction

Saksham Garg's *Samsara: Enter the Valley of the Gods* represents a significant contemporary contribution to the landscape of Indian mythological fantasy literature. Rooted deeply in the rich soil of classical Indian mythology and philosophy, the novel embarks on an ambitious project to reimagine ancient spiritual concepts for the modern reader. Through the protagonist, Aman Chandra - a troubled teenager thrust into a mystical Himalayan valley - Garg weaves a narrative that is both an adventurous fantasy and a profound allegory of the soul's journey through the cyclical nature of existence (*samsara*), self-realization, and ultimate liberation (*moksha*). The novel's layered storytelling draws heavily from Vedic traditions, employing a mythological and archetypal framework that resonated with timeless themes of identity, faith, cosmic duty, and ethical transformation. Such an integration of classical elements with contemporary storytelling marks *Samsara* as an emblematic text for examining the evolving role of mythology in Indian literature today.

Within a broad context of mythic fiction, Garg's book falls within a stand reconnecting a given culture to a pre-existing inheritance by invoking a series of archetypal universals and symbolic structures highlighted by Northrop Frye and Carl Jung's archetypal critical theory [3, 5]. Aman's characterization emulates that of archetypal hero's journey pattern typical of ancient classics that positions him both as an individual hero figure but also a symbolic figure for Indian culture's perduring spiritual quest. As various scholars comment, such profound pattern encoded within myth enable present fiction to cross historical and philosophical divides to provide continuity to cultural identity even as they resonate with current social reality.

Corresponding Author:
Abhijit Deb
PhD, Research Scholar of
English, ICFAI University
Tripura, India

Moreover, *Samsara* integrates psychoanalytical dimensions, particularly Jungian concepts of the Shadow and the process of individuation, to enrich its portrayal Aman's psychological and spiritual growth. The protagonist's confrontations with internal doubts, traumas and fears reflect a critical psychological passage that complements the mythological symbolism threaded throughout the novel ^[5]. This fusion of inner and outer journeys augments the text's dialogic engagement with identity formation and transcendence.

Perhaps one of the most unique contributions of *Samsara* lies in its ecological symbolism and sacred geography - an aspect that invited an Ecocritical reading. The natural environment of the hidden valley and its sacred mountains operates not merely as a backdrop but as a vital, spiritual agency that catalyzes Aman's transformation. The novel resonates with traditional Indian notions of nature as a living, divine entity integral to the path of *moksha*, reinforcing the interconnectedness of humanity, cosmos and natural world ^[9]. This aspect reflects growing scholarly interest in spiritual ecology within the study of mythological texts, where landscape and environment shape and symbolize the spiritual journey ^[10].

Finally, *Samsara* is also deeply philosophical, engaging with dharmic principles and ethical dilemmas against the backdrop of modern social upheavals. Garg's narrative invites readers to reconsider the relevance of ancient Indian philosophical tenets like *karma*, *dharma*, and *moksha* in today's world. Through Aman's trials and evolving sense of responsibility, the novel critiques not only individual but collective moral choices and their cosmic consequences ^[8,7]. In sum, this study applies an interdisciplinary approach combining mythological/archetypal criticism, psychoanalytical theory, Ecocriticism, and philosophical criticism to analyze *Samsara*. It aims to unpack how Garg revitalizes Indian mythological and spiritual traditions by framing Aman Chandra's journey as both universal and uniquely rooted in Indian ethos, underscoring the continuing potency of mythology in constructing contemporary cultural and spiritual identities.

Archetypal Patterns in Aman Chandra's Spiritual Journey

Saksham Garg's *Samsara* carefully charts the journey of the protagonist, Aman Chandra, within the timeless parameters of Indian mythological spiritual hero. Such a journey rich in mythological lore runs parallel to the archetypal Indian epical and spiritual portrayal of a spiritual journey embodying such dominant themes as conflict, transformation, and final transcendence.

Aman's story progression illustrates the portrayal Hero's Journey outlined by mythologist Joseph Campbell as a cyclical process of departure, initiation and return. Aman's forced abduction from his mundane surroundings into the mysterious valley of *Vanyasa* marks his call to adventure, shadowed by sentiments of reluctance and foreboding. This mirrors the archetypal motif of the soul's dislocation from ignorance and material entrapment, a primary condition in Indian philosophical thought symbolizing the beginning of *Samsara* - the cycle of birth and rebirth. Aman's initial alienation, when Garg mentions, "His reticence had festered over the years as he'd backed himself further and further into a corner" ^[1]. This marked by self-doubt and social

ostracism, is a metaphor for the soul's fragmented state prior to spiritual awakening.

Throughout his rigorous training in the valley, Aman engages with various mythological symbols and archetypes that chart his inner and outer development. For instance, the sacred "red thread," initially a mark of divine protection, becomes contested, symbolizing the tension between blind faith and questioning reason, essential elements within the spiritual journey ^[1]. This initiatory trial challenges Aman to reconcile inherited beliefs with personal experience, mirroring the archetypal "ordeal" phase where the hero confronts fears and limitations.

Further, Aman's encounters with deities and celestial challenges encapsulate his passage through the realms of cosmic consciousness, a motif recurrent in Indian mythology that aligns the hero with universal order and divine will. Aman also struggled with daily readings of the Upanishads ^[1]. These episodes draw heavily on classical imagery - such as the invocation of yogic powers and the confrontation with cosmic forces - reflecting his alignment with the archetype of the spiritual warrior, the *dharmayoddha*, who battles not merely external foes but internal impurities ^[1].

Aman's transition from a passive, frightened boy to a self-realized spiritual being is an illustration of Indian *atma-gyan* (knowledge of the self), a seminal moment within *moksha*'s quest. Aman's progression points to a movement from an ego-based life to a wider, expansive interrelated consciousness figured through mythic imagery such as light, purity, and dance of the cosmos - imagery that manifests throughout his ordeals ^[1]. Such symbolic death and rebirth parallel both Jungian principles of individuation as well as Indian soteriological tales.

Garg's narrative finally situates Aman as a present-day embodiment of the perennial archetypal hero, linking ancient with present. The cyclical trajectory, augmented with mythological imagery and Vedic philosophical penetration, elevates the novel beyond being fantasy to being a spiritual allegory. In *Samsara*'s Aman, mythological paradigms are integrated into the present-day scenario, illustrating how archetypal forms continue to impact Indian culture and spirituality.

Interaction with *Samsara*'s Vedic ideological Concepts

Saksham Garg's *Samsara* creates a complex interplay between mythological and philosophical components by foregrounding core Vedic ideas such as *Samsara* (the birth-death-rebirth cycle), *Atman* (the individual soul or self), and *Moksha* (deliverance from such cyclical life). These ideas work not only as thematic bases but also as storytelling structures informing the protagonist Aman Chandra's journey as well as the novel's cosmological framework.

In Vedic thought, *Samsara* is the ongoing wheel of misery proceeding from ignorance and attachment, a predicament poignantly depicted in Aman's initial condition. He leads a life of misery, social withdrawal, and emotional turmoil, embodying the soul captured by worldly deceptions (*Maya*) and the lethargy present in *Samsara* ^[1]. As Aman is pushed towards the valley of *Vanyasa*, his journey is a parallel to the conventional search for the soul to break free from such confines. The valley itself symbolizes a transitional zone where transcendence is possible, reminiscent of ancient Indian practices of sacred geography as such sites for religious illumination and rebirth.

The representation of the *Atman* in the novel is nuanced yet impactful. Aman's journey from a fragmented sense of self to a state of spiritual completeness embodies the understanding of the atman's intrinsic essence as eternal and divine, existing beyond both physical and mental limitations. His internal conflicts, uncertainties and eventual enlightenment closely correspond with Vedantic principles that underscore the importance of self-examination and realization as essential stages toward liberation ^[1]. Instances in which Aman faces his fears and illustrates them parallel the philosophical practice of *Vivek* (discernment), which is an essential discipline for identifying the difference between the impermanent and the everlasting self.

Furthermore, the pursuit of *Moksha* is deeply embedded within the ethical and cosmological structure of the novel. Aman's journeys, which encompass the *Mahayatra* and encounters with cosmic entities, represent the challenging journey of the soul towards liberation through *Karma Yog* (selfless action) and *Gyan Yog* (knowledge). The narrative emphasizes that moksha transcends mere personal freedom; it is also about achieving a congruent alignment with cosmic dharma, which aids in maintaining universal equilibrium. This focus on *dharma* reinstates individual spirituality within the broader social and cosmic framework, mirroring the integrative perspective of classical Indian philosophy regarding liberation.

Garg's retelling stands out by including fundamental Vedic principles under the purview of current fantasy literature, which surprisingly brings ancient philosophy within reach and interest to contemporary readers. In blending mythological themes with a rite-of-passage tale, it encourages reflection regarding the continuing relevance of these age-old verities towards identity, morality and existential importance within contemporary society. In embodying such complexities into the narrative itself, *Samsara* plays a fundamental role to reintroduce spirituality discourse into popular Indian literary corpus.

Finally, *Samsara* locates the story of the present protagonist within Vedic spirituality's perennial frame by using *samsara*, *atman*, and *moksha* as living, storytelling principles that enable development. Such integration emphasizes the strength and persistence of pre-modern Indian religious traditions amidst a landscape of new literary cultures.

Reforming Mythological Frameworks and Integrating Modern Indian Contexts

In *Samsara*, Saksham Garg skillfully re-crafts the classically established schema of the Hero's Journey amidst a present-day Indian environment, incorporating appropriately relevant conflicts and tests. Whilst remaining constant is the overall structure - defined by a hero's exit from the norm, initiation via a series of ordeals, and final return to a higher place of existence - Garg refashions mythical elements to frame the unique social circumstances falling to Indian adolescents today.

Aman's exit should not be interpreted as a voluntary display of bravery; rather, it represents an involuntary kidnapping - serving as a metaphor for the intrusive encounters with trauma, shame and alienation that pervade contemporary society. His odyssey challenges the presumption that spiritual journeys are self-selected; instead, it highlights suffering and external conditions as fundamental catalysts

for change, mirroring the psychological strains of modern existence ^[8].

The initiation process takes place within the sacred, mysterious alley, where Aman is faced with not only typical mythological tests - encounters with gods, performing ancient rites, and learning yogic practices - but also real-world problems such as harassment, sorrow and questioning inherited traditions. These events take place against a contemporary frame of reference: events involving the red thread serve as allegories that challenge passive acceptance of customs, whereas his attempts to create bonds investigate issues of trust, belonging and self-esteem that will be familiar to youngsters today. Aman's tests represent not only spiritual barriers but also practical problems with stigma and seeking individual independence ^[7].

What distinguishes Garg's narrative are his instances on the community-based aspect of the hero's progress. In contrast to individualistic heroism so commonly highlighted within Western fiction, Aman's development is conditioned upon collaboration, tutelage, and renewal of bonds with family and society, consistent with Indian society's collectivist ideals ^[1]. His broadening grasp of *dharma* - a concept that encompasses both cosmically mandated duty and socially conditioned obligation - is capped with moments of service and generosity that counter individuation so commonly a part of canonical heroic literature.

Moreover, Garg is frank in his characterization of villains and cosmological beings as emblems of contemporary problems - like corruption, social fragmentation and ecological desolation - meaning that good vs. evil continues to take its stand in complex and unexpected forms. Such transformations function not merely to anchor the mythological structure to real conditions but to express a normative position: emancipation (*Moksha*) has to be gained not individually but through prolonged interactivity with both society and the environment.

Consequently, Garg's *Samsara* reinvigorates mythological frameworks by situating them within contemporary challenges and ethical demands, thereby rendering the Hero's Journey an effective mechanism for navigating concepts of identity, obligation and community in contemporary India. This work underscores the persistent malleability of myth and the ability of literature to mirror and reinterpret shared experiences through the lens of personal change.

Individual Psychology and Collective Mythic Consciousness in *Samsara*

Aman's traversal in *Samsara* is something more than a progression of external tribulations; instead, it is a deep inner process of psycho-maturity that is reflective of and responsive to common mythic awareness. Saksham Garg's account utilizes psychoanalytical as well as mythological literary theories to demonstrate where individual tragedy, self-knowledge, and symbolic behavior cross over with broad archetypes of a culture and with a universality of responsibility.

From the beginning, Aman is illustrated as being bearing psychological weights: feelings of shame arising from familial dishonor, ongoing harassment, and a fractured relationship with his father. These emotional wounds serve as triggers for his eventual metamorphosis; underscoring psychoanalytic concept that trauma frequently catalyzes the hero's journey by necessitating a confrontation with

'shadow' - the concealed dimensions of the self articulated in Jungian psychology^[5]. During his period of training and challenges, Aman is compelled to confront his internal uncertainties: he experienced a profound sense of discomfort in his chest, aware that he was never sufficient for either them or himself^[1]. This internal struggle establishes the groundwork for individuation, a psychoanalytic process essential for self-integration and spiritual development.

Symbolic actions throughout the novel also demonstrate Aman's seeking after meaning as well as his seeking after unity with the collective unconscious that Jung believes houses archetypes to which anyone has access. Rituals involving the red thread encounter with mythic beings, and meditative practices represent stages not only of personal development but also of shared mythic structure. The valley's whisper told him he was part of a greater story - a pulse beneath all things^[1]; underscoring the protagonist's realization that personal liberation interlocks with a cosmic rhythm.

As Aman progresses, his development aligns with collective ideals of *dharma* his duties to the community and cosmos. A key moment arises during the *Mahayatra* ritual, where Aman chooses selflessness over self-preservation. He understood, finally, that liberation was not escape but engagement with others' pain^[1]. This echoes the Indian spiritual axiom that *moksha* must harmonize personal enlightenment with service and righteousness, not mere withdrawal.

Garg skillfully links individual psychology to mythic consciousness and cosmic responsibility, presenting Aman not just as a solitary seeker but as a conduit for collective renewal. The protagonist's healing and self-realization, facilitated by symbolic actions, serves as narrative of hope and restoration for the broader community, mirroring the mythological pattern where the hero's transformation benefits the world at large^[2].

In *Samsara*, personal trauma and triumph thus interface with archetypal myths, ritual symbols, and collective cosmic duties, reaffirming the text's multi-layered approach. The interplay between inner and outer worlds positions Aman's journey as both uniquely individual and eternally universal - a testament to the enduring power of myth and psychology in shaping spiritual literature.

Nature as Catalyst for Liberation in *Samsara*

In *Samsara*, Saksham Garg (2022) elevates the natural landscape from mere setting into an active spiritual agent, intertwining ecological symbolism and sacred geography with the protagonist's quest for liberation. The valley of Vanyasa, nestled within the mystical folds of the Himalayas, acts not only as a backdrop but as a force guiding and testing Aman Chandra's transformation^[1]. Drawing inspiration from ancient Indian traditions, where mountains, lakes and flora hold profound spiritual significance, Garg renders the natural world a living mythic presence.

The valley itself is depicted almost as sentiment, its geography echoing Aman's inner turmoil. Early in the novel, Aman's dream of a luminous tree by a sacred lake foreshadows his destined connection to Vanyasa and to nature's divine essence. Sacred mountains such as Sarp Poonch and Kalanag serve as symbolic thresholds toward higher consciousness, paralleling classical mythic motifs of the hero's luminal journey into enlightenment.

Recurring motifs - the serpent, fire, and the blue rose - tie Aman's spiritual progress to natural phenomena. The serpent symbolizes both danger and renewal, representing the necessity of confronting suffering to transcend it^[1]. The blue rose embodies hope, sacrifice, and *moksha* for the Eka: But in the valley fortified by the one that slithers, for the sake of home, that flower must wither^[1]. Here, liberation is portrayed as harmonizing the self with collective natural rhythms through sacrifice.

The teaching of *Atmayog*, delivered by Acharya Ashwini, accentuates the soul's lightness and eternal nature in contrast to the physical form, reinforcing nature's role in spiritual awakening: "You are not flesh, bones or blood. You are, in fact, very light, weighing no more than a pinch of cotton. All you are is a soul"^[1]. The challenges offered by the valley - storms, cold, wildlife - symbolize the soul's need to engage with nature's lessons to attain *moksha*.

Aman's final confrontations within the valley involve rites and sacrifices demanded by nature itself, positioning the natural environment as a crucial force in spiritual transformation. Thus, nature is a teacher and catalyst, essential for liberation, reflecting the Indian spiritual view that self-realization is inseparable from ecological harmony. In sum, *Samsara* reimagines nature as an indispensable guide in the spiritual quest, making liberation as much an ecological odyssey as a metaphysical one. Vanyasa's vitality asserts landscape's centrality in Indian spiritual and literary traditions.

Conclusion

Saksham Garg's *Samsara: Enter the Valley of the Gods* serves as a remarkable fusion of myth, philosophy, psychology, and ecology, forming a multidimensional literary tapestry that resonates deeply with Indian cultural and spiritual heritage. Through the protagonist Aman Chandra's transformative journey, the novel reinterprets traditional archetypal patterns of the spiritual hero, embedding them in a contemporary Indian context. Aman's character development is a profound exploration of universal mythic themes - identity, struggle, and enlightenment - rooted in the rich symbolic legacy of Indian mythology and Jungian psychological theory. This synergy underscores the enduring relevance of archetypes in narrating the soul's quest for meaning and transcendence.

The novel's engagement with foundational Vedic philosophical concepts such as *Samsara*, *atman*, and *moksha* elevates the narrative beyond fantasy into a profound spiritual allegory. Aman's progression reflects the Vedantic vision of liberation, where self-realization is intertwined with duty, community and cosmic order. This philosophical underpinning invites a modern readership to reconnect with timeless spiritual ideas through accessible and immersive storytelling. The integration of dharmic values emphasizes that spiritual awakening is not an isolated endeavor but a responsible participation in the harmony of the universe.

Garg's adaptation of mythic structures to contemporary social realities adds further depth. Aman's journey confronts modern psychological traumas, social alienation and ethical challenges, transforming the classical hero into a figure deeply attuned to collective struggles. The narrative's emphasis on communal bonds, mentorship and reconciliation reflects India's collectivist cultural ethos, challenging Western individualist paradigms of heroism. This culturally embedded reinterpretation of myth affirms

literature's power to reflect, reformulate and revitalize collective identity in changing times.

The portrayal of nature as an active spiritual agent is a unique strength of *Samsara*. The sacred Himalayan valley is depicted not simply as a backdrop but as a living, mythic force shaping Aman's spiritual awakening. Ecological symbolism, sacred geography, and natural metaphors reinforce a vital Indian worldview that places spiritual liberation in consonance with ecological harmony. This ecological dimension enriches the narrative's spiritual arc and invites reflection on humanity's relationship with the natural world.

Finally, the psychological depth explored through Aman's trauma, doubts and eventual healing reveals the intricate interplay between individual consciousness and collective mythic narratives. His transformation encompasses both personal healing and a broader cultural regeneration, exemplifying myth's power to embody and communicate collective truths.

In summation, *Samsara* stands as a significant literary work that revitalizes ancient Indian mythological and philosophical traditions while engaging critically and creatively with contemporary realities. Saksham Garg crafts a narrative that is at once timeless and timely, inviting readers to embark on a heroic spiritual journey reflective of both personal and collective quests for liberation. The novel's rich intertwining of myth, philosophy, ecology and psychology offers fertile ground for ongoing scholarly exploration, demonstrating myth's continued vitality in shaping cultural imagination and spiritual understanding today.

References

1. Garg S. *Samsara: Enter the Valley of the Gods* ("India's answer to Harry Potter"). 2022.
2. Campbell J. *The hero with a thousand faces*. Novato, CA: New World Library; 2008.
3. Frye N. *Anatomy of criticism: Four essays*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; 2020.
4. Gor R. A study of archetypal patterns in select Indian texts. *Rangmati Publ.* 2023;1(4):15-22.
5. Jung CG, Von Franz ML. *Man and his symbols*. New York: Dell; 1964.
6. Milkyway Media. *Summary of Joseph Campbell's The Hero's Journey*. Milkyway Media; 2024.
7. Onmanorama. Saksham Garg's *Samsara* tries to reinvent Hinduism for a divisive world [Internet]. 2022 Oct 9 [cited 2025 Sep 18]. Available from: <https://www.onmanorama.com>
8. Parekh K. *Samsara* by Saksham Garg - book review [Internet]. 2024 Jul 12 [cited 2025 Sep 18]. Available from: <https://kinjalparekh.in>
9. Penguin India. Bringing you an original first-of-a-kind mythological fantasy [Internet]. 2022 Sep 22 [cited 2025 Sep 18]. Available from: <https://penguin.co.in>
10. Smith J. *Spiritual ecology and mythology*. London: Green Press; 2021.