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INSECURE BOND, BROKEN MIRRORS: A CRITICAL READING OF NAHEED PHIROZE PATEL'S A MIRROR MADE OF RAIN

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Abstract: This paper examines Naheed Phiroze Patel's debut novel *A Mirror Made of Rain* through the lens of attachment theory. The novel traces the life of Noomi Wadia, a young woman growing up under the shadow of her alcoholic mother, Asha, whose inconsistent caregiving leaves lasting psychological wounds. Drawing on the foundational work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, this analysis argues that the mother-daughter relationship functions as a broken mirror that distorts Noomi's sense of self and shaping her patterns of unstable adult relationships, emotional dysregulation and self-destructive behaviour. This paper first examines how Asha's parenting contributes to insecure attachment through inconsistent responses, emotional unavailability and role reversal. It then traces how these childhood attachment patterns manifest in Noomi's adulthood, including her alcohol dependency, fractured identity and fear of repeating her mother's mistakes. The paper also identifies protective factors, particularly her father, Jeh's steady presence and Noomi's eventual capacity for reflective self-awareness and movement toward earned security that open pathways toward healing. The paper concludes that while the novel offers no easy redemption, it presents a realistic portrait of how insecure bonds can be understood and through conscious effort, partially repaired. Patel's work thus serves as a compelling literary case study for understanding the intergenerational transmission of attachment patterns and the slow, unfinished work of breaking the cycle.

Keywords: Insecure attachment, Earned security, Intergenerational transmission, Attachment theory, Mother-daughter relationship.

I.INTRODUCTION

Naheed Phiroze Patel's debut novel *A Mirror Made of Rain* talks about Noomi Wadia, a young woman growing up in the small Indian town of Kamalpur under the shadow of her mother, Asha's alcoholism, emotional volatility and chronic neglect. The novel traces Noomi's journey from an appalling childhood through a turbulent adolescence and into a troubled adulthood marked by unstable relationships, self-destructive behaviour and a growing fear that she has become exactly what she most despises: her mother. While the book has been received as a poignant family drama and a critique of patriarchal structures, its psychological depth calls for a systematic theoretical reading. This paper argues that *A Mirror Made of Rain* can be analysed through the lens of attachment theory as the novel demonstrates the formation, transmission and partial repair of insecure attachment patterns across generations.

The central problem the novel poses is both literary and psychological. How does a daughter's sense of self become shaped by a mother who is present but unavailable, caring in fragments but destructive in patterns? Noomi herself articulates this dilemma when she reflects, "A mother is the first mirror in which we see ourselves. But what if the mirror you look into is broken? You might see yourself always in pieces, no use to anyone, and take that as truth" (Patel 272). This metaphor of the broken mirror captures the novel's core concern: identity formation amid inconsistent caregiving. Attachment theory, particularly the

work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth and colleagues provides a precise vocabulary and explanatory framework for tracing how Asha's unreliable parenting produces specific, lasting psychological effects in Noomi, how those wounds manifest in Noomi's adult behaviour and how the novel's ending gestures toward the possibility of healing through what attachment researchers call "earned security".

Bowlby argues that attachment behaviour has a biological function and that the behavioural systems underlying it become organised during infancy to maintain proximity to an attachment figure (*Attachment* 179). The presence and availability of a principal attachment figure provide the child with a sense of security, particularly when the child is distressed or threatened (*Attachment* 209). Building on Bowlby's formulation, Ainsworth and colleagues demonstrated through *the Strange Situation* that infants display distinct patterns of attachment behaviour in response to separation and reunion with their caregivers. They identified three major patterns of infant attachment: secure, insecure-avoidant and insecure-resistant (Ainsworth et al. 312). Securely attached infants generally use the caregiver as a secure base for exploration and seek contact when distressed, whereas avoidant infants tend to avoid or minimise contact with the caregiver, and resistant infants show both proximity-seeking and resistance to contact. Ainsworth's observations further indicated that differences in the quality of caregiver responsiveness were associated with these patterns of infant attachment. Based on these findings, Bowlby argues that repeated interactions with caregivers contribute to the development of internal working models that shape individuals' expectations of themselves and others in close relationships across development (*Attachment* 129). The novel's detailed portrayal of Noomi's childhood, her relational difficulties and her eventual self-awareness offer a literary case study of these dynamics.

The novel's emotional force comes from its unflinching depiction of a vicious cycle of suffering and estrangement between mother and daughter. However, existing reviews and discussions have largely remained at the level of thematic commentary, focusing on issues such as addiction, shame and the burden of patriarchal expectations, without applying a coherent psychological framework to explain the mechanisms underlying their intergenerational transmission. This paper seeks to address the gap by analysing *A Mirror Made of Rain* through attachment theory. Such an approach moves beyond broad references to "trauma" and demonstrates how Asha's inconsistent caregiving contributes to the development of an insecure-resistant (ambivalent) attachment pattern in Noomi, characterized by chronic fear of abandonment, difficulty with self-soothing and a tendency to cling to others while rejecting intimacy in close relationships. It also examines how Noomi's father, Jeh, functions as a secure base that partially mitigates the effects of insecure attachment and how Noomi's geographical and emotional distance from Kamalpur provides the reflective space needed to begin breaking the intergenerational cycle.

The novel explicitly stages the intergenerational transmission of attachment patterns. Asha herself is hinted to have had a highly unstable childhood, "... she had to sleep with her fingers in her ears to block out the sound of her father whipping her mother with the metal part of his suspenders" (Patel 59), and her alcoholism is presented as both a symptom of her own unresolved trauma and a direct cause of her failure to provide consistent care. Even though Noomi distances herself from her difficult mother, she ends up becoming like her. Indeed, the novel shows Noomi drinking excessively, entering relationships with unavailable men and experiencing panic attacks; behaviours consistent with adult insecure attachment. Yet, attachment theory also allows for change. Bowlby's attachment theory suggests that early attachment experiences influence later relational patterns, but these patterns are not necessarily fixed or unchangeable. Later attachment researchers have shown that individuals with adverse childhood attachment experiences may develop an "earned-secure" attachment status when they are able to construct a coherent and balanced understanding of their early experiences. Roisman et al. describe earned-secure individuals as those who, despite reporting negative childhood experiences, are able to discuss these experiences in a coherent and contained manner, reflecting a secure state of mind regarding attachment (1205). The novel's ending, in which Noomi decides to raise her own daughter differently, embodies this possibility of repair.

For a comprehensive study the paper is divided into four sections. The first section analyses Noomi's childhood as a case of anxious-ambivalent attachment, drawing on specific episodes from the novel to illustrate Asha's inconsistent caregiving and its immediate psychological effects. The second section examines how the attachment patterns manifest in Noomi's adult life, particularly in her romantic relationships, her alcohol use and her fragile sense of identity. The third section identifies protective factors within the novel, most notably Jeh's steady presence and Noomi's eventual physical departure from home, that interrupt the pure reproduction of insecure attachment. The fourth and final section considers the novel's conclusion as a literary representation of earned security, arguing that Patel offers neither easy redemption nor deterministic despair but a realistic portrait of slow, incomplete healing. By anchoring this reading in attachment theory, the paper demonstrates that *A Mirror Made of Rain* is not merely a memoir-

like family chronicle but a sophisticated psychological text that can deepen our understanding of how early bonds, whether secure or insecure, shape the arc of a human life.

II. ASHA'S PARENTING AND THE MAKING OF INSECURE ATTACHMENT

The foundations of Noomi Wadia's psychological distress in *A Mirror Made of Rain* are laid in the earliest years of her life, within the walls of a home where love arrives unpredictably and safety is never guaranteed. Bowlby's attachment theory, further developed by Mary Ainsworth provides a useful framework for understanding the lasting effects of Asha's parenting. Bowlby contended that infants are biologically programmed to seek proximity to a primary caregiver and that, "the propensity to make strong emotional bonds to particular individuals [is] a basic component of human nature" (*A Secure Base* 3). He further argues that confidence in the accessibility and responsiveness of the attachment figure is the key feature of secure attachment (Bowlby *Separation* 235). Asha's parenting consistently undermines this confidence; she is unpredictably responsive one moment and cruelly indifferent the next, emotionally unavailable even when physically present. Bowlby writes that attachment behaviour "is characteristic of human nature throughout our lives - from the cradle to the grave" (*A Secure Base* 82), suggesting that the consequences of these early relationships extend well beyond childhood. Patel captures Noomi's experience of such inconsistent caregiving: "On the days when Asha's anger disappeared for a few hours, she transformed into the kind of mother one reads about in stories... One mother sang me to sleep, while the other woke me up with her screams" (Patel 25). Asha also reverses the parent-child relationship by making Noomi emotionally responsible for her moods. Together, these patterns of inconsistent care foster the insecurity that shapes Noomi's internal working model of relationships and forms the basis of her anxious attachment.

Secure attachment depends on the caregiver's reliable and appropriate responses to the child's signals of distress or need. Bowlby argues that "intimate attachments to other human beings are the hub around which a person's life revolves, not only as an infant or a toddler or a schoolchild but throughout adolescence and years of maturity as well, and on into old age" (*Attachment* 11). Emphasizing the qualities of secure attachment, Ainsworth and her colleagues observe that securely attached infant expects that his mother will be accessible, understanding and helpful (131). When these responses are erratic – sometimes warm, sometimes hostile, sometimes absent altogether, the child cannot develop a stable expectation of safety. Noomi's childhood is defined by this very unpredictability. Asha repeatedly oscillates between intoxication, rage and emotional withdrawal, creating an environment in which affection is inconsistent and emotional security remains uncertain. As a result, Noomi learns to anticipate rejection rather than comfort and becomes increasingly anxious in her attempts to obtain maternal affection. As Sroufe observes that attachment is the leading edge of development (179), suggesting that early caregiving relationships profoundly shape later emotional functioning. Thus, Asha's inconsistent parenting prevents Noomi from developing a secure internal working model and instead fosters the anxiety and uncertainty that characterize insecure attachment. The novel captures this dynamic with painful clarity when Noomi reflects, "Cruelty was a language I learned at my mother's knee" (Patel 164). The metaphor suggests that cruelty is not merely experienced but internalized through repeated interactions, becoming the primary emotional language through which Noomi understands relationships. As Bretherton explains, children's repeated interactions with caregivers lead to the development of internal working models that shape their expectations of themselves and others (760 – 761)). Thus, Noomi comes to anticipate rejection and gradually internalizes a diminished sense of self-worth, reflected in her adult conviction that she "was never enough" (Patel 274). This insecurity is further reinforced by the family's performance of normalcy. At the novel's outset, Noomi and her father, Jeh tell everyone that Asha is "home sick" to explain her absence from Sheila Sehgal's party (Patel 4). This concealment protects the family's social standing, but it also teaches Noomi that her mother's condition is shameful and must be hidden. As a result, she learns not only that her mother is unreliable but also that emotional distress should be suppressed rather than acknowledged, leaving her to interpret her experiences without guidance or reassurance.

Even when Asha is not actively hostile, she is emotionally unavailable. The term emotional unavailability in attachment theory refers to a caregiver's inability to tune into the child's emotional state, to offer comfort or to provide a secure base from which the child can explore the world. Bowlby describes the concept of a "secure base" as a parental presence that provides the child with a sense of safety as they explore their surroundings. He writes, "all of us, from the cradle to the grave, are happiest when life is organized as a series of excursions, long or short, from a secure base provided by our attachment figure(s)" (Bowlby *A Secure Base* 62). Cassidy explains that children's expectations about themselves and others are shaped by caregivers' consistent emotional responsiveness, making sensitive caregiving central to the development of security (20). Similarly, Waters and Cummings emphasize that a secure base enables

children to explore their environment confidently while relying on caregivers for comfort during times of distress. (164 – 166). Asha's alcoholism ensures that she is often physically present but psychologically absent, leaving Noomi without a dependable source of comfort or emotional security. The effects of this emotional neglect become increasingly evident in Noomi's adult life. Rather than developing confidence in close relationships, she remains emotionally drawn to familiar patterns of instability. As she reflects, "What feels familiar is always comforting, in its own terrible way" (Patel 242). This insight captures the enduring influence of insecure attachment: although these patterns are painful, they remain psychologically familiar. Thus, Noomi's attachment to familiar emotional instability reflects the persistence of these early relational patterns rather than a conscious choice.

Perhaps the most insidious dimension of Asha's parenting is the reversal of roles – what psychologists call parentification. In a healthy family, the parent contains the child's anxieties, provides structure and models emotional regulation. In the Wadia household, these roles are inverted. Noomi learns to manage her mother's moods, to anticipate her outbursts and to tiptoe around her fragility. Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark describe parentification as a disruption of generational boundaries in which children assume responsibilities that properly belong to parents, often at the cost of their emotional development (151 - 160). The novel makes this dynamic explicit through the metaphor of the mirror. Noomi reflects, "A mother is the first in which we see ourselves. But what if the mirror you look into is broken? You might see yourself always in pieces, no use to anyone and take that as truth" (Patel 272). Winnicott argues that a child's sense of self develops through the caregiver's capacity to reflect and respond to the child's emotional experience. When this emotional mirroring is absent or distorted, the child's developing self is similarly fragmented (111-118). Asha's mirror is broken: it reflects not Noomi's needs but Asha's own chaos, anger and neediness. The child, looking into this distorted reflection, does not see herself; she sees her mother's pain, her mother's demands. She learns to define herself not by her own feelings but by her mother's reactions. This role reversal is compounded by the fact that Noomi's father, Jeh, although loving, is unable to protect the family's dysfunction. As a result, Noomi turns to him, to her ayah Shanta Bai and to her grandmother, Lily Mama for comfort and emotional support. Yet, these figures, however nurturing, cannot replace the security that should have come from a consistently responsive mother. Jurkovic explains that children who are parentified frequently carry an excessive sense of responsibility into adulthood, making them more vulnerable to anxiety, depression and unhealthy relationship patterns (17-24). The long-term effects of this role reversal are evident in Noomi's relationships. She enters into romantic partnerships that replicate the pattern of caregiving for an emotionally unavailable figure. She drinks to manage anxiety, just as her mother did. She experiences panic attacks and depression, the somatic markers of a chronic stress response that began in childhood. This is the tragedy of insecure attachment; the child, desperate not to become the parent, because the patterns are encoded not in conscious choice but in the deepest structures of the psyche.

III. THE LASTING WOUNDS: NOOMI'S INSECURE ATTACHMENT PATTERNS IN ADULTHOOD

The wounds of childhood do not simply fade with time; they become woven into the fabric of adult life, shaping how a person loves, copes and sees themselves. In *A Mirror Made of Rain*, Noomi Wadia's journey from a lonely girl to a troubled woman offers a powerful illustration of this psychological truth. The insecure attachment forged in her early years does not remain confined to the past. Instead, it manifests in adulthood through a pattern of self-destructive behaviour: unstable romantic relationships, alcohol dependency, emotional dysregulation and a persistent fear that she has become her mother. The novel traces how Noomi carries her childhood wounds into every adult relationship, repeating the very patterns she most despises.

Bowlby's concept of internal working models helps explain why Noomi's adult relationships are so fraught with difficulty. He argued that "starting during his first months in his relation to both parents, [the child] builds up working models of how attachment figures are likely to behave towards him in any of a variety of situations and on all those models are based all his expectations and therefore all his plans, for the rest of his life" (*Attachment* 369). Noomi's working model, shaped by Asha's unpredictability and cruelty teaches her to expect rejection, inconsistency and pain from those closest to her. These expectations later guide her interpersonal behaviour, reinforcing the very insecurity she anticipates. She enters romantic relationships that are unstable and short-lived. Patel writes that Noomi "could never tell if she was trying to find her mother in her lovers, or trying to run away from her" (173). This ambivalence reveals the core dilemma of her adult attachments: she craves intimacy but fears it, seeks love but sabotages it. Research on attachment continuity similarly indicates that internal working models established in childhood continue to influence expectations and behaviour in later close relationships, contributing to continuity across development (Waters et al. 684 - 686).

The most visible inheritance from Asha is Noomi's relationship with alcohol. Patel writes that Noomi "drank not to forget, but to remember less sharply" (198). She does not drink to escape entirely; she drinks to dull the sharp edges of a pain that is always present. Attachment research suggests that individuals with insecure attachment often rely on maladaptive emotion-regulation strategies, including substance use, when healthier forms of emotional regulation have not developed (Mikulincer et al. 189 - 191). Noomi's drinking fits this pattern precisely. She uses alcohol as a substitute for the emotional regulation she never learned. In a moment of self-awareness, she admits, "I drink because it makes me feel like I can breathe. But then I wake up and I can't breathe at all" (Patel 201). Her drinking is not imitation but compulsion – a learned response to a chronically dysregulated nervous system.

Emotional dysregulation is another enduring consequence of Noomi's insecure attachment. She suffers from panic attacks, depression and a constant sense of unease. Patel describes how "Noomi's heart would race for no reason, her palms would sweat and the world would tilt sideways" (215). These somatic symptoms are the physical markers of an attachment system that has never learned to self-soothe. Bowlby argues that loss of the attachment figure in childhood is associated with a greatly increased risk of developing depressive disorders in adult life (*Separation* 237). Noomi's anxiety is not a response to any immediate threat; it is the chronic activation of a system that was wired for danger. She cannot calm herself because she never had a caregiver who modelled calm. Her father, Jeh, however loving, could not undo the damage that Asha's inconsistency had already wrought. Noomi's emotional life is a battlefield she cannot control. She describes herself as "a ship without an anchor, drifting from one storm to another" (Patel 189). This metaphor captures the essence of insecure attachment in adulthood: the absence of a secure base leaves her unable to find stability within herself or in her relationships.

Perhaps the deepest wound is the erosion of Noomi's sense of self. She grows up believing she is unlovable and this belief persists into adulthood. Patel writes that Noomi "looked in the mirror and saw a stranger, someone she didn't recognize, someone she didn't like" (234). This alienation from herself is the psychological legacy of a broken mirroring relationship. She cannot trust her own perceptions, her own worth or her own choices. She reflects, "I have spent my whole life trying to be anyone but myself. And now I don't know who that person is" (Patel 240). This brokenness manifests in her career choices, her friendships and her inability to envision a future. She drifts from one relationship to the next, never quite settling because she does not believe she deserves to be settled.

A particularly poignant dimension of Noomi's adult struggle is her relationship with motherhood itself. She fears that she will become her mother and this fear shapes every decision she makes. Noomi says, "I wanted not, when I looked in the mirror, see the image of my mother hanging like a veil upon my face" (Patel 68). This moment of recognition is both terrifying and clarifying. She knows that if she does not change, she will pass on the same wounds to her own child. Yet change feels impossible. Ainsworth and her colleagues emphasize the importance of the caregiver's responsiveness in shaping the child's expectations, observing that "an infant whose experience in interaction with his mother has not given him reason to expect her to be accessible to him when out of sight or responsive to his signals is more likely to experience anxiety" (22). Noomi is caught in this cycle: she cannot imagine being a good mother because she has never experienced one. She says, "I don't know how to love without destroying" (Patel 260). This statement encapsulates the tragedy of insecure attachment: love and destruction have become fused in her mind because that is what she learned from Asha. The path is familiar and familiarity, however painful, offers a kind of comfort.

IV. SOURCES OF SECURITY FOR NOOMI

Despite the overwhelming darkness of her childhood, Noomi Wadia's story in *A Mirror Made of Rain* is not one of complete psychological collapse. Attachment theory, while explaining the deep wounds inflicted by insecure caregiving, also acknowledges that certain experiences can mitigate damage and even open pathways toward healing. Rolfe identifies these as *protective factors*: relationship-based experiences that build resilience and help individuals cope with adversity (Rolfe 10 - 11). The novel presents several such factors in Noomi's life: her father, Jeh's steady presence, the support of other caring adults, her physical departure from Kamalpur and her eventual capacity for reflective self-awareness. Each of these elements, viewed through the lens of attachment theory, offers a small window of security through which light can enter an otherwise fractured existence.

The most significant protective factor in Noomi's childhood is her father, Jeh. Unlike Asha, who is erratic and cruel, Jeh remains calm, dependable and affectionate. In attachment terms, he functions as a secure base – a figure from whom the child can draw comfort while exploring the world. Bowlby describes the secure base as "a base from which to explore the world and to which to return for safety" (*Attachment*

129). Although Jeh cannot fully compensate for Asha's failures, his consistent warmth provides Noomi with at least one reliable relationship in an otherwise unstable environment. Ainsworth's research likewise demonstrates that caregiver's sensitivity and consistent responsiveness promote emotional security in children (45). Jeh's presence therefore serves as a protective factor that moderates, though does not eliminate, the effects of insecure attachment. Research on resilience also suggests that the presence of at least one dependable and supportive adult significantly improves children's capacity to cope with adversity (Werner and Smith 45-47).

Beyond Jeh, Noomi finds support from other caring adults who step into the gaps left by Asha's neglect. Noomi turns to her ayah Shanta Bai and her grandmother at different points in her upbringing. The novel mentions Noomi's grandmother, Lily Mama, who belongs to a family of old money and whose social standing secures Noomi's place in Kamalpur's high society. These figures, while not replacing the mother, offer alternative attachment relationships that provide comfort and validation. Bowlby recognized that children can form multiple attachment bond and that the presence of a reliable caregiver can significantly reduce the harmful effects of an insecure primary attachment. (*Attachment* 235). Shanta Bai and Lily Mama offer Noomi what Winnicott called the "mirroring" function that Asha failed to provide. Winnicott proposed that "the mother's capacity to mirror her baby's states through her gaze locates the establishment of the self firmly in the matrix of their dyadic relationship" (Winnicott qtd. in Joyce 9). In Asha's broken mirror, Noomi sees only chaos and rejection. In the faces of Jeh, Shanta Bai and Lily Mama, she glimpses something different: a reflection that suggests she is worthy of care and attention. These small windows of positive mirroring help Noomi maintain a fragile sense of self-worth despite her mother's cruelty.

The crucial turning point in Noomi's journey is her physical departure from Kamalpur. She leaves for Mumbai and later New York, distancing herself from the environment where her insecure attachment was forged. With her options in her hometown growing increasingly limited, Noomi leaves for Mumbai and quickly becomes a successful journalist. This geographical separation is not merely an escape; it is a necessary condition for psychological change. Bowlby's theory suggests that attachment patterns, while enduring, can be modified through new relational experiences (*Attachment* 369). By leaving Kamalpur, Noomi removes herself from the daily reinforcement of her mother's destructive patterns. She gains the space to see her childhood more clearly and to begin the slow work of separating her own identity from Asha's. Distance allows her to observe her own behaviours with a critical eye and to recognize the patterns she inherited. This recognition, painful as it is, marks the beginning of conscious change.

Perhaps the most profound protective factor in Noomi's story is her eventual capacity for reflective self-awareness. By the novel's end, she is able to articulate her fears, her patterns and her desire to parent differently. Noomi realizes that her worst fears have come to pass – she is trapped in the same cycle of self-destructiveness as her mother and she must battle her impulses or risk losing it all. This capacity to reflect coherently on painful childhood experiences corresponds to what attachment researchers later described as earned security, a pattern in which adults acknowledge adverse early relationships while demonstrating a coherent and secure understanding of those experiences (Roisman et al. 1205 - 1206). Rather than erasing the past, earned security involves acknowledging adverse childhood experiences while constructing a coherent and secure account of those experiences (Roisman et al. 1206-1207). Noomi's decision at the end of the novel to raise her own daughter differently is not a magical cure; it is a conscious choice to break the cycle. As Rolfe observes that attachment theory links the experiences of secure attachment with the development of resilience (137). Noomi's resilience is not about denying her pain but about integrating it into a coherent narrative that allows her to move forward.

V. CONCLUSION: FROM BROKEN MIRRORS TO A NEW REFLECTION

Attachment theory, provides a powerful lens for understanding the psychological architecture of *A Mirror Made of Rain*. Through the theoretical framework established by Bowlby and empirically Ainsworth, the novel reveals how inconsistent caregiving, emotional unavailability and role reversal forge insecure attachment patterns that persist from childhood into adulthood. Noomi's unstable intimate relationships, alcohol dependence, emotional dysregulation and fractured sense of self are not mere character flaws but predictable outcomes of an attachment system wired for danger rather than safety. The novel does not shy away from portraying the full weight of this inheritance. Ahad and Najar observe that the book examines the multi-layered depiction of trauma and its intergenerational transmission through Asha's character, showing how unresolved traumas and addiction lead to her tumultuous relationship with her daughter (85). The cycle of suffering that binds mother to daughter is rendered with unflinching honesty, leaving no room for easy sentimentality.

Yet the novel also insists that broken mirrors can be reshaped. While Noomi carries her mother's wounds, she also finds small windows of security – in Jeh's steady presence, in the support of other caring adults, in her physical departure from Kamalpur and finally in her capacity for reflective self-awareness. Basnet argues that the novel ultimately suggests the possibility of interrupting intergenerational cycles of trauma through self-awareness and conscious choice (Basnet). Noomi's decision to raise her own daughter differently does not instantly erase the past but it represents a deliberate effort to break the pattern. In an interview, Patel has explained that the novel explores children's struggle not to repeat the emotional patterns they inherit from their parents. This struggle is never fully resolved; healing, the novel suggests, is slow, incomplete and always ongoing. But the very act of recognizing the pattern, of seeing oneself clearly in the broken mirror – is itself a form of resistance. Noomi's journey affirms that while the past cannot be undone, it can be understood and that understanding becomes the first step toward breaking the intergenerational cycle.

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