

# DOON UNIVERSITY NEWS SERVICE

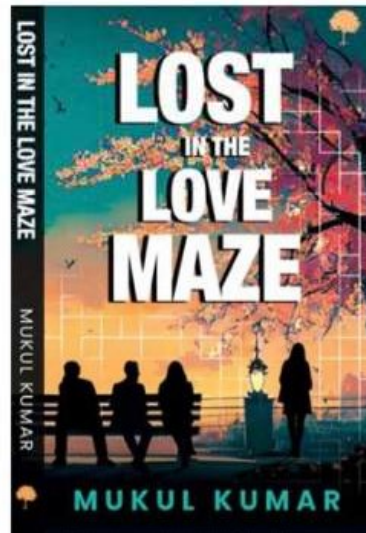
## REVIEW

### Navigating perpetual complexities of love

Crafting the narrative for the 2023 novel "Lost in the Love Maze," Mukul Kumar, a postmillennial writer, delves into the perpetual complexities of love. He emphasises commitment, seizing opportunities, and immersing in the space between conflicting interests and practices. The author skillfully dramatises contradictions within Mihir's character, addressing shyness and egotism, thereby adding dynamism and multidimensionality to his personality. Kumar's heightened awareness canonises the storyline, exploring internal conflicts, character development, and the potential for growth or transformation. This commitment to precision is evident in the author's exploration of themes such as identity, self-discovery, and the nuances of human behaviour. Kumar engages with cultural ramifications that contribute to the overwhelming separation of Jyoti and Mihir. Mukul skillfully dramatises the crises, vulnerabilities, and enduring efficacy of

commitment across aesthetic, ethical, political, filial, and religious dimensions. The author adopts a focus on poetic realism, exemplified through Mihir's dual dreams of becoming an IAS officer and a writer. This choice reflects the complexity of Mihir's aspirations and mirrors the multifaceted nature of human desires. Kumar's approach places emphasis on psychology and a broader exploration of the human fabric. The juxtaposition of bureaucratic ambition with the creative pursuit of writing highlights the tension between societal expectations and personal passion. Importantly, this poetic realism acknowledges the insights from modernism, learning from them rather than disregarding them. As a postmillennial writer, Kumar delves into the socio-cultural institutional structures of love, marriage, family, and caste. He navigates the difference between actual didactic institutions and the school of life through the "lived" realities in the creation and production of postmillennial

fiction. Jyoti's realisation of Mihir's melancholy suggests an underlying emotional struggle, possibly stemming from the conflict between conventional paths and unconventional aspirations. Mihir's analogy of life as a balloon with the potential to burst at any time conveys fragility and unpredictability, echoing existential themes. The reference to Albert Camus and absurdism adds a philosophical layer, deepening the thematic exploration of existential angst and the quest for purpose in the face of life's uncertainties. The writer shifts to relational aesthetics, turning away from utopianism and the aesthetics of confrontation towards an ethos of collaboration and dialogue. The struggles of characters to achieve meaningful empathetic connections challenge readers' assumptions. Characters like Jyoti and Mihir dislocate themselves outside narrow cultural models to imagine and maintain their empathies with others, challenging assumptions and embracing



collaborative approaches. They envision the experiences of the other while the writing seems to be in competition with reality. Acknowledging Mihir's divided love and obligations to his parents and Jyoti initiates a nuanced exploration of conflicting

responsibilities. The clash between parental selflessness and Mihir's love creates a moral dilemma, urging readers to ponder the navigation of societal norms and personal fulfillment. Mihir's sacrifice for Jyoti, while recognising his parents' sacrifice, adds moral and philosophical dimensions, influencing characters' choices and the narrative trajectory. This prompts readers to consider implications and question expectations when pursuing happiness within the constraints of obligation and parental love. The character of Sheetal introduces another angle to the paradigm of narcissistic ego, deception, and manipulation to achieve one's goals, implying a strategic and opportunistic approach to interpersonal relationships. Sheetal, also the author's favorite, serves as a catalyst, highlighting the dual and contradictory aspects of human behaviour and tensions between genuine emotions and concerns, especially in the pursuit of love. This adds depth to the establishment of the moral

fabric for postmillennial readers. The line of argument in the novel unfolds as a character-driven chronicle, seamlessly blending the cultural backdrop into the lives of its protagonists. Mukul Kumar's emphasis on the complex fabric of human existence elevates aesthetic commitments and aspirations into a moral form, crafting a nuanced depiction of identity and otherness that resonates not only with 20th-century readers but also transcends its temporal boundaries to endure in the new millennium. The author has indeed intensified exploration and succeeded in infusing virtue into potentially repetitive and recycled anecdotes, transforming the work into a psychologically nuanced and socially detailed masterpiece. This transformation, deeply rooted in enduring beliefs about character, authenticity, and agency, broadens the range of perspectives offered to readers and leaves a compelling and enduring impression. "Lost in the Love Maze" manages to leave a lasting

imprint with its exploration of human complexities, poignant thematic depth, and Mukul Kumar's skilled portrayal of characters navigating the delicate balance between collective expectations from life and personal desires. Despite minor flaws, the novel succeeds in delivering a thought-provoking and emotionally resonant experience.

*(Lost in the Love Maze' author Mukul Kumar is a bureaucrat, novelist, and poet. He serves as an Indian Railway Traffic Service Officer and is currently posted in the Ministry of Railways. Mukul has received the National Award for outstanding service to the Indian Railways, the Bharat Nirman Award for literary excellence from the Bharat Nirman Foundation, and the Poorvanchal Gaurav Samman for his contributions to society as both a bureaucrat and a writer. His latest work is his fourth fiction title. The reviewer, Chetana Pokhriyal, is the Head of Department of English, Dean, School of Languages, Doon University, Dehradun)*

News paper - The Pioneer  
Date - 21.01.2024