



Navigating Adolescent Liminality: A Critical Exploration of the Threshold Experiences in Abha Dawesar's *Babyji*

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Abstract

This paper explores the application of liminality in Abha Dawesar's novel *Babyji*, focusing on the protagonist Anamika's journey through adolescence, sexuality, and societal expectations in 1990s Delhi. Liminality, a concept rooted in anthropology and later adopted in literary studies, describes the disorienting ambiguity and fluidity experienced by individuals in transitional states or thresholds. *Babyji* serves as a fertile ground for examining liminality, as Anamika navigates the thresholds between childhood and adulthood, traditional and modern values, and heteronormative and queer identities. Through a close reading of the novel, we analyze how Dawesar employs liminality not only as a narrative device but also as a means of critiquing rigid societal structures. Anamika's interactions with her lovers, her intellectual pursuits, and her struggle with her identity are marked by a constant state of in-betweenness, challenging conventional narratives of coming-of-age and identity formation. The novel's setting in a rapidly changing India further amplifies these themes, positioning Anamika's journey against the backdrop of a nation in transition. I argue that Anamika's liminal experiences reflect broader questions of power, agency, and resistance in a society grappling with the tensions between tradition and modernity. By situating the protagonist in various liminal spaces- be it in her relationships, her academic ambitions, or her socio-political context- Dawesar highlights the potential for transformation and self-discovery that liminality offers. Ultimately, *Babyji* presents a nuanced portrayal of adolescence as a liminal phase, inviting readers to reconsider the complexities of identity and belonging in a rapidly changing world.

Keywords: Adolescence, Liminality, Heteronormativity, Subversion, Self-Discovery.