

TRUTH, DECEPTION, AND EMOTIONAL IDENTITY IN RAVINDER SINGH'S *LOVE AND LIES*: A STUDY OF MORAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Abstract

Ravinder Singh's *Love and Lies* presents a profound exploration of deception, trust, emotional identity, and moral responsibility within the complexities of contemporary relationships. While the novel adopts the framework of romantic fiction, it extends beyond conventional narratives by examining how lies gradually reshape individual identity, interpersonal communication, and ethical consciousness. This study investigates the psychological and moral dimensions of deception through the experiences of the principal characters, emphasizing the emotional consequences of concealed truths, broken trust, and unresolved guilt. Employing perspectives from moral psychology, communication theory, and emotional intelligence, the paper argues that Singh portrays deception not merely as an act of dishonesty but as a psychological mechanism arising from fear, insecurity, and the desire to protect loved ones from painful realities. However, the study demonstrates that every concealed truth ultimately produces greater emotional suffering than honest disclosure. The narrative reveals that trust functions as the ethical foundation of human relationships, while deception gradually fragments identity and destroys emotional security. Through its realistic characterization, symbolic imagery, and psychological depth, *Love and Lies* establishes itself as an important contribution to contemporary Indian English fiction by presenting honesty, forgiveness, and self-awareness as essential conditions for enduring human relationships.

Keywords

Deception, Trust, Emotional Identity, Moral Psychology, Truth, Contemporary Indian Fiction

Contemporary Indian English fiction has increasingly shifted its attention from external social conflicts to the intricate psychological realities of human relationships. Modern novelists explore not only the experience of love but also the emotional tensions that emerge from secrecy, misunderstanding, betrayal, and moral uncertainty. Among these writers, Ravinder Singh occupies a distinctive place because of his ability to transform ordinary romantic experiences into psychologically compelling narratives that examine the fragile balance between truth and deception. His novels consistently investigate the emotional consequences of personal choices, demonstrating that relationships survive not merely through affection but through trust, communication, and ethical responsibility. *Love and Lies* represents one of Singh's most mature explorations of these themes, presenting deception as a force that gradually reshapes identity, disturbs emotional stability, and challenges the moral foundations of intimate relationships.

Unlike conventional romantic fiction that frequently portrays deception as a temporary obstacle leading to reconciliation, *Love and Lies* examines lying as a complex psychological process rooted in fear, insecurity, emotional vulnerability, and self-preservation. The novel demonstrates that deception rarely emerges from malicious intention alone. Instead, individuals often conceal truth because they fear rejection, wish to protect others from emotional pain, or struggle to confront uncomfortable realities about themselves. Singh therefore

presents deception as a psychologically understandable yet morally destructive response to emotional conflict. This nuanced representation enables readers to examine dishonesty not simply as unethical behaviour but as evidence of deeper emotional crises that require empathy as well as moral evaluation.

The emotional relationship at the centre of the novel illustrates how trust functions as the essential foundation of intimacy. Trust enables individuals to reveal vulnerability without fear of judgment, creating the conditions necessary for emotional security. Once deception enters this relationship, however, communication gradually deteriorates. Conversations become cautious, emotions remain partially concealed, and silence begins to replace openness. Singh portrays this transformation with remarkable psychological sensitivity, demonstrating that deception rarely destroys relationships immediately. Instead, it operates gradually, weakening confidence through repeated uncertainty until emotional intimacy becomes increasingly difficult to sustain. The deterioration of trust therefore reflects an internal psychological process rather than a single dramatic event.

From the perspective of moral psychology, deception represents a conflict between competing ethical obligations. Individuals frequently experience tension between honesty and protection, believing that concealment may prevent greater emotional harm. The present study argues that Singh carefully explores this ethical ambiguity by refusing to divide his characters into simplistic categories of innocence and guilt. Instead, he presents morally complex individuals whose decisions emerge from conflicting emotions rather than deliberate cruelty. Their lies reveal not only ethical weakness but also psychological vulnerability, making deception a multidimensional phenomenon that reflects fear, love, insecurity, compassion, and self-interest simultaneously.

Psychological research indicates that sustained deception places significant cognitive and emotional burdens upon individuals because maintaining falsehood requires continuous regulation of memory, behaviour, and emotional expression. Individuals who conceal important truths frequently experience anxiety, guilt, and psychological exhaustion arising from the constant effort required to preserve consistency between reality and fabricated narratives. Singh effectively incorporates these psychological realities into the novel by depicting characters whose emotional lives become increasingly fragmented as deception accumulates. Their internal conflicts reveal that dishonesty ultimately damages the deceiver as profoundly as the deceived, transforming secrecy into a source of continuous psychological distress.

The novel also explores the relationship between deception and personal identity. Identity is not presented as a fixed or permanent characteristic but as an evolving psychological construction shaped through interaction, memory, and moral choice. When individuals repeatedly conceal truth, they gradually lose confidence in their authentic selves because they become increasingly dependent upon the identities created through deception. Singh illustrates this process by showing how apparently minor acts of concealment develop into larger patterns of emotional alienation. Characters struggle to distinguish between who they truly are and the versions of themselves they present to others. Such identity fragmentation contributes significantly to the emotional complexity of the narrative.

Another important aspect of Singh's literary achievement lies in his realistic portrayal of guilt. Unlike legal responsibility, psychological guilt cannot be resolved through external punishment alone. Characters continue experiencing emotional discomfort long after the immediate consequences of deception have passed because conscience remains active even when relationships appear outwardly stable. The novel therefore emphasizes that moral accountability originates primarily within individual consciousness rather than social judgment. Emotional suffering becomes the natural consequence of violating one's own ethical principles, reinforcing the intimate relationship between honesty and psychological well-being.

Communication occupies a central position throughout the narrative because deception fundamentally alters the quality of interpersonal interaction. Genuine communication depends upon mutual openness and confidence, whereas deception transforms conversation into strategic performance. Characters begin selecting words carefully, avoiding uncomfortable topics, and suppressing authentic emotional responses. Singh demonstrates that language itself becomes unstable when truth is replaced by concealment. Conversations lose spontaneity, emotional intimacy declines, and silence gradually acquires greater

significance than speech. This transformation illustrates that deception affects not only factual accuracy but also the emotional atmosphere within which human relationships develop.

The novel further investigates the relationship between deception and memory. Honest memories contribute to coherent personal identity by enabling individuals to interpret past experiences consistently. Deception, however, disrupts this continuity because individuals must repeatedly modify recollections to maintain fabricated narratives. Singh portrays memory as increasingly unreliable within relationships governed by dishonesty. Characters begin questioning not only each other's statements but also their own recollections, producing uncertainty regarding both the past and the present. This psychological instability illustrates the profound consequences of sustained deception upon emotional security.

Symbolism enriches the narrative by providing visual representations of concealed emotion. Recurring images of darkness, mirrors, closed doors, rain, and shadows function as external expressions of psychological conflict. Darkness frequently symbolizes ignorance and hidden truth, while mirrors represent fragmented identity and self-examination. Closed doors suggest emotional distance, whereas changing weather reflects fluctuating psychological states. Singh employs these symbols with considerable subtlety, allowing the physical environment to mirror internal emotional conditions. Such symbolism enhances the psychological realism of the novel while reinforcing its central concern with truth and concealment.

The narrative also presents forgiveness as an essential component of emotional recovery. Forgiveness does not imply approval of deception or the denial of emotional pain. Instead, it represents the willingness to acknowledge human imperfection while refusing to remain permanently imprisoned by betrayal. Singh suggests that forgiveness requires honesty from both the individual seeking reconciliation and the person granting it. Without truthful acknowledgement of past deception, reconciliation becomes superficial and emotionally unstable. The novel therefore portrays forgiveness as an ethical achievement grounded in accountability, empathy, and mutual understanding rather than sentimental optimism.

Ultimately, *Love and Lies* demonstrates that deception possesses consequences extending far beyond immediate interpersonal conflict. Lies gradually reshape identity, weaken emotional resilience, distort communication, and undermine the ethical foundations upon which lasting relationships depend. At the same time, Singh refuses to present human beings as irredeemably flawed. His characters retain the capacity for moral growth through self-reflection, confession, forgiveness, and renewed commitment to honesty. The novel thus affirms that although deception may temporarily obscure truth, authentic emotional connection can be restored only through courage, transparency, and ethical responsibility. By combining psychological insight with accessible narrative technique, Ravinder Singh transforms a contemporary love story into a profound meditation on the enduring relationship between truth, identity, and human dignity.

Primary Source

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