



Exploring the Significance of Minor Characters in *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida*

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ABSTRACT :

This research paper explores the role of minor characters in Shehan Karunatilaka's novel *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida*. It focuses on how these smaller characters help and strengthen the social and moral values of the story. Characters like Jackie (Maali's loyal friend) and DD (his boyfriend) support Maali's mysterious and supernatural journey on an emotional level. Through them, the novel shows the deep impact of war on ordinary people and the strength of human relationships. In addition, supernatural characters like Dr. Rancee help and guide Maali through the world after death. These characters symbolise the search for justice and the hidden truth that come after violence. When we compare these sensitive characters to the violence and hopelessness present in the story, it becomes clear that the value of human life and moral strength still survive—even when society seems completely broken. This literary analysis shows that the minor characters in Karunatilaka's novel are not just side roles. They add depth to the story by helping and understand memories, emotional pain, and the struggle to survive—especially in post-war Sri Lanka.

Key Words: Afterlife, Justice, Violence, Literary analysis, Post-war Sri Lanka, Social values, Moral values.

Introduction

The study of minor characters in modern literature shows that they also add depth and meaning to the story, even though they are generally overshadowed by the main characters. In Shehan Karunatilaka's famous and award-winning novel *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida*, which is set in the politically troubled and violent Sri Lanka of the 1980s, such minor characters play an important role in moving the story forward and adding emotional and moral depth. While the main character, Maali Almeida, is at the center of this supernatural mystery, the surrounding minor characters help build the social, emotional, and moral background, making the complex story easier for readers to understand.

Minor characters, who play supporting roles instead of being the main focus of the story, are important not just for what they do in the plot, but also for how they reflect, question, and influence the main character's journey. In this novel, there are many such characters — Maali's close friends, his family, many supernatural beings, and people who represent the larger political and social problems of Sri Lanka. By placing these characters in a magical realist setting, Karunatilaka gives space to many voices that speak about past violence, personal pain, and shared suffering. This helps the novel explore deep themes like memory, justice, and healing in a more powerful way.

The importance of studying these minor characters is pointed out because more than just roles in the story are played by them—they are also imbued with deep symbolic meaning. For example, emotional truth is brought to the story by Jaki and DD—Maali's loyal friend and boyfriend—and grief, loyalty, and strength amid chaos are expressed through their actions. Character like Dr. Rancee, who serves as the registrar in the afterlife, is positioned as a guide, and assistance is provided to both Maali and the readers in understanding the novel's supernatural and morally complex world. Through these characters, different perspectives are presented, and the deep effects of violence are revealed, while a reminder is also given that hope continues to survive.

This research paper aims to carefully study the roles and meanings of the minor characters in *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida*. It also tries to understand what these characters mean from a literary and moral perspective. The main goal is to show that these minor characters are very important for moving the story forward, shaping the novel's moral ideas, and expressing its historical and social messages. Using theme-based literary analysis and background research, the paper tries to explain how character roles, storytelling methods, and history are all connected. This connection shows that minor characters still play an important role in modern literature.

Categories and Functions of Minor Characters

Social and Moral Anchors

In *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* by Shehan Karunatilaka, important social and moral roles are played by minor characters. Emotional depth is added by them, and the main story about war-torn Sri Lanka is made more human. Maali's unusual journey after death is connected to real human emotions such as loyalty, grief, and strength through characters like his boyfriend DD and his friend Jaki. In contrast to the violent and chaotic setting of the civil war, the personal effects of war are shown by these characters, and the enduring strength of human bonds—even after death—is emphasised. Through their roles, a deeper emotional layer is brought to the narrative by revealing how political violence is experienced on a personal level and by showing that kindness can still be found during harsh and traumatic times. DD, who is Maali's boyfriend, shows how personal relationships can be complicated, especially during times of conflict. Their relationship had deep love but also included betrayal and pain. Maali loved DD, but generally cheated on him. This imperfect relationship shows how human connections can still survive, even in difficult situations. Maali's search for the truth becomes more emotional because it is driven by love that is connected to a complicated past. DD's strong desire to find out what really happened to Maali encourages the living to face the effects of violence. It also shows that love, loyalty, and grief can continue even after someone has died.

Similarly, Jaki, who is a close female friend of Maali, is a strong and steady example of loyalty and determination. Her effort to find out the truth about Maali's death supports DD's work, and together they form a kind of chosen family that fights the loneliness caused by loss. Through Jaki and DD, the novel shows how social relationships can survive even when systems break down and there is political chaos. Their deep emotional connection with Maali helps readers understand the personal pain caused by war and shows how important human relationships are, especially when cruelty spreads, reminding us that every person's life still matters.

Besides these close relationships, social and moral values are demonstrated by other minor characters through their varied reactions to violence and injustice. For example, in the afterlife, guidance and order are maintained by characters such as Dr. Raneer, who is portrayed as a spiritual registrar in the magical realist world of the story. Through her actions, understanding of the unknown realm Maali inhabits after death is facilitated. Doors to morality and knowledge are opened by these characters, and Maali's awareness of his condition is deepened, while the importance of responsibility in a broken world is emphasised. Through Dr. Raneer's presence, the intellectual and moral emptiness left by the victims of the civil war is revealed, and a reminder is given of the human cost of political conflict and the challenges faced in seeking justice.

The moral and social complexity is further intensified as the novel is filled with feelings of meaninglessness and violence. The importance of being human is conveyed in an unusual way by Karunatilaka, through the depiction of violent characters and a dark atmosphere, which causes the qualities of kindness, loyalty, and perseverance shown by certain characters to be focused more strongly. Cruelty is balanced by minor characters—especially Maali's close friends and family—through the demonstration of hope, patience, and unwavering morals, even amid chaos. Reflections on how personal morality can endure and even be strengthened during the darkest historical periods are prompted in the readers by their roles. In this way, deeper significance is given to the novel's exploration of moral questions. In short, a story filled with political violence and supernatural events is made to feel human by the social and moral characters in *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida*. Maali's journey is transformed from merely a lonely ghost story into one about enduring love, loyalty, and the pursuit of justice through characters like DD and Jaki. At the same time, moral guidance in a broken world is represented by characters such as Dr. Raneer, and a clearer understanding of the novel's complex ideas about right and wrong is provided to both Maali and the readers. Through these small but significant characters, the message is conveyed by Karunatilaka that even amidst the horrors of war, social bonds and personal integrity are upheld as strong foundations for humanity and meaning.

Agents of Exposition

Characters like Dr. Raneer, the afterlife registrar, play a role in explaining things and guide Maali through the rules of the unknown world he is in. These characters help readers understand the magical realist world of the novel and also point to the intellectual and social losses in Sri Lanka. (Super Summary).

3. Political and Historical Entanglements

Karunatilaka's minor characters also represent political groups, ethnic identities, and social systems, reflecting the complex civil war in Sri Lanka. Corrupt politicians, soldiers, and NGO workers show the real-world power structures and their involvement in violence. These minor characters help reveal the cruelty of the system. (Shaheen et al.)

4. Supernatural and Allegorical Figures

The afterlife is full of ghosts, demons, and murdered souls, each telling the story of Sri Lanka's conflict, loss, and shared pain. These characters add to the magical realist style of the novel, using hidden meanings and symbols that reflect both national and personal fears and memories. (Shaheen et al.)

Their stories are pieces of a broken society, coming together to form the voices of the dead.

Thematic Resonances

Through minor characters, the main themes such as the value of human life and the lasting impact of violence and injustice are revealed by Karunatilaka. The normalization of cruelty is shown through violent and hopeless minor characters, but they are contrasted sharply with those who demonstrate kindness and resilience. (Gorlee). By this contrast, the novel's moral ideas are deepened, and important ethical questions are raised—even through characters who are not central to the story.

Narrative Techniques

Minor characters appear in short scenes and ghostly meetings, which is typical of magical realism—a style that mixes real and unreal to reveal deeper truths about society. Each minor character's brief but strong presence adds color, feeling, or mood to the story. This matches Peirce's idea of "Firstness," meaning the quick, deep impression that art can capture. (Asian Review of Books) Their presence creates many small hidden meanings, making the story more beautiful and thoughtful.

Conclusion

The minor characters in *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* do much more than just support the story. They show the main character's inner struggles, share historical messages, carry moral responsibilities, and represent magical realism. Their separate stories come together to create a bigger picture of Sri Lanka's broken reality and its ongoing pain. (NYTimes 28 July 2025.)

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