

**THE PORTRAYAL OF SOCIAL CONFLICT IN MODERN  
INDIAN SOCIETY IN VIKRAM CHANDRA'S *SACRED  
GAMES***

**THESIS**

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM MALANG  
2025**

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**THESIS**

Presented to  
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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of *Sarjana Sastra (S.S)*

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2025**

## STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I state that the thesis entitled "*The Portrayal of Social Conflict in Modern Indian Society in Vikram Chandra's Sacred Games*" is my original work. I do not include any materials previously written or published by another person, except those cited as references and written in the bibliography. Hereby, if there is any objection or claim, I am the only person who is responsible for that.

Malang, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025

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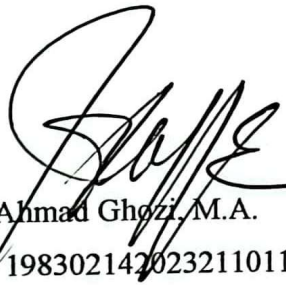
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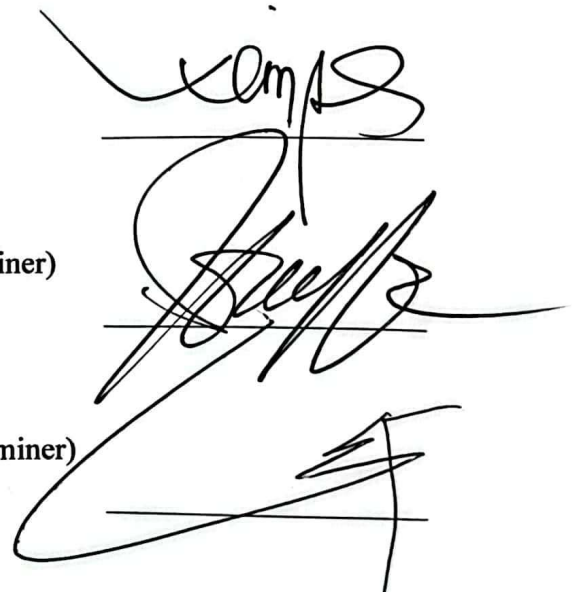
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## **MOTTO**

*“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know  
better, do better.” - Maya Angelou*

## **DEDICATION**

With sincere gratitude, I dedicate this thesis to my late grandmother, my parents, especially my mother, who has always supported me in every way, as well as my siblings, Abay and Adel. I thank Allah SWT for granting me the strength and good health that enabled me to complete this thesis.

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4. To my dear friends Audita, Cut, Jihan, Nuril, and Rei, thank you for sharing countless experiences and for always being a source of inspiration with your



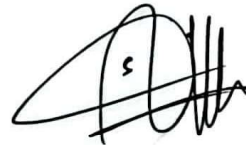
support and encouragement.

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6. Finally, I would like to thank myself for persevering through all the challenges. I am proud of how far I have come and for not giving up.

This thesis is the result of my four years of learning and growth during my studies. I would be deeply grateful for any feedback or suggestions that could help me improve in the future. I also hope this thesis will be beneficial to readers and future researchers as a source of reference and insight.

Malang, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025

The Researcher

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S D' with a large loop and a crossbar.

Shevira Damayanti

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## ABSTRACT

**Damayanti, Shevira (2025).** *The Portrayal of Social Conflict in Modern Indian Society in Vikram Chandra's Sacred Games*. Undergraduate Thesis, Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Advisor: Dr. Ahmad Ghazi, M.A.

*Keyword: Social Conflict, Resolution of Conflict, Modern Indian Society*

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Literature often uses social conflict as a universal theme to represent the social dynamics in society. This study explores how social conflict is portrayed in Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games* and how these social conflicts reflect the structural tensions within modern Indian society. This study employs Georg Simmel's conflict theory, which views conflict not only as a destructive force but also as a driver of social cohesion. This study aims to (1) identify the forms of social conflicts in the novel, (2) examine the strategies used to resolve them, and (3) analyze how these social conflicts reflect the complexities of modern Indian society. Using literary criticism as the methodological approach, the data were collected through close reading and thematic analysis of selected passages. The results reveal four types of social conflicts, namely antagonistic conflict, legal conflict, conflict of interest, and conflict in an intimate relationship. These social conflicts are resolved through victory, compromise, and reconciliation. Furthermore, the novel reflects the social conflict in modern Indian society in the form of criminality, the case system, and religious based communal tensions. In conclusion, the novel does not merely narrate a crime story but serves a mirror that critiques and exposes the contradictions of modern Indian society.

## مستخلص البحث

داماياتني، شيفيرا ( ٢٠٢٥). صورة الصراع الاجتماعي في المجتمع الهندي الحديث في رواية الألعاب المقدسة لفيكرا م شاندرام. أطروحة، قسم الأدب الإنجليزي، كلية العلوم الإنسانية، جامعة إسلام نيجيري مولانا مالك إبراهيم مالانج. المشرف: الدكتور أحمد غزي، ماجستي

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصراع الاجتماعي، حل الصراع، المجتمع الهندي الحديث

غالبًا ما يستخدم الأدب الصراع الاجتماعي كموضوع عالمي لتمثيل الديناميات الاجتماعية في المجتمع. تستكشف هذه الدراسة كيفية تصوير الصراع الاجتماعي في رواية الألعاب المقدسة لفيكرا م شاندرام وكيف تعكس هذه الصراعات الاجتماعية التوترات الهيكلية داخل المجتمع الهندي الحديث. توظف هذه الدراسة نظرية الصراع لجورج سيمل التي لا تنتظر إلى الصراع كقوة مدمرة فحسب، بل كمحرك للتماسك الاجتماعي. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى (١) تحديد أشكال الصراعات الاجتماعية في الرواية، و(٢) دراسة الاستراتيجيات المستخدمة لحلها، و(٣) تحليل كيف تعكس هذه الصراعات الاجتماعية تعقيدات المجتمع الهندي الحديث. وباستخدام النقد الأدبي كأسلوب منهجي، تم جمع البيانات من خلال القراءة المتأنية والتحليل الموضوعي لمقاطع مختارة. وتكشف النتائج عن أربعة أنواع من الصراعات الاجتماعية، وهي الصراع العدائي، والصراع القانوني، وصراع المصالح، والصراع في العلاقة الحميمة. ويتم حل هذه الصراعات الاجتماعية من خلال الانتصار والتسوية والمصالحة. وعلاوة على ذلك، تعكس الرواية الصراع الاجتماعي في المجتمع الهندي الحديث في شكل الإجراء، ونظام القضية، والتوترات الطائفية القائمة على أساس ديني. وختامًا، لا تروي الرواية قصة جريمة فحسب، بل هي مرآة تنتقد وتفضح تناقضات المجتمع الهندي الحديث.

## ABSTRAK

**Damayanti, Shevira (2025).** *Potret Konflik Sosial dalam Masyarakat India Modern dalam Novel Sacred Games Karya Vikram Chandra*. Skripsi, Program Studi Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Pembimbing: Dr. Ahmad Ghazi, M.A.

*Kata Kunci: Konflik Sosial, Resolusi Konflik, Masyarakat India Modern*

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Sastra sering kali menggunakan konflik sosial sebagai tema universal untuk merepresentasikan dinamika sosial dalam masyarakat. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana konflik sosial digambarkan dalam novel *Sacred Games* karya Vikram Chandra dan bagaimana konflik-konflik sosial ini merefleksikan ketegangan-ketegangan struktural di dalam masyarakat India modern. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori konflik Georg Simmel, yang melihat konflik tidak hanya sebagai kekuatan destruktif tetapi juga sebagai pendorong kohesi sosial. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk (1) mengidentifikasi bentuk-bentuk konflik sosial dalam novel, (2) mengkaji strategi yang digunakan untuk menyelesaikannya, dan (3) menganalisis bagaimana konflik-konflik sosial tersebut merefleksikan kompleksitas masyarakat India modern. Dengan menggunakan kritik sastra sebagai pendekatan metodologis, data dikumpulkan melalui pembacaan yang cermat dan analisis tematik terhadap bagian-bagian tertentu. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan empat jenis konflik sosial, yaitu konflik antagonis, konflik hukum, konflik kepentingan, dan konflik dalam hubungan intim. Konflik-konflik sosial ini diselesaikan melalui kemenangan, kompromi, dan rekonsiliasi. Selain itu, novel ini juga merefleksikan konflik sosial dalam masyarakat India modern dalam bentuk kriminalitas, sistem peradilan, dan ketegangan komunal berbasis agama. Kesimpulannya, novel ini tidak hanya menceritakan sebuah kisah kriminalitas tetapi juga menjadi sebuah cermin yang mengkritik dan mengekspos kontradiksi-kontradiksi dari masyarakat India modern.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the researcher presents the background of the research which includes several previous studies, research objectives, significance of the study, scope and limitations of the study, as well as definition of the key terms.

#### **A. Background of the Study**

Human beings exist as social creatures who need constant interaction with others to survive. Social interactions form the basis which leads to the development of societal structures. However, the interactions between people lead to conflicts due to the differences in backgrounds, values, and interests (Coser, 1956). Social interaction creates conflict as a natural social process which functions to preserve stability and advance societal (Simmel, 1904). Therefore, human social life contains conflict as an essential element which affects both personal relationships and collective groups.

Social conflict refers to a situation where conflict arises within a social structure. Social conflict occurs when two or more parties have clashing interests, desires, or ideologies. It stems from many forms of inadequacies and inequalities that exist in society (Setiadi, 2013). Moreover, social conflict encompasses more than mere clashes between individuals, extending to deeper and more critical levels of social relations, such as economic rivalry, cultural differences, or power struggles. According to Wieviorka (2013), social conflict tends to highlight many concealed



injustices that societies suffer from, such as economic matters, racial discrimination, and political exclusion. Therefore, social conflict serves as both a mirror and a catalyst for social evolution and societal transformation.

Social conflict in India is deeply rooted in its historical legacy and complex sociocultural environment. As a nation transitioning from British colonialism, India continues to deal with issues arising from its vast range of religions, economic disparities, and persistent caste system. Tensions often stem from communal conflicts between Hindu and Muslim communities, the ongoing marginalization of Dalits and lower-caste groups, and the growing significance of regional identity politics, all of which create continuous social instability (Engineer, 2004). Moreover, the demands of rapid urban expansion and market-oriented economic policies have heightened competition for resources like employment, housing, and social mobility, worsening intergroup tensions (Kumar, 2018). These ongoing confrontations reflect structural inequities, as well as the instability and fracturing of India's democratic and institutional frameworks.

Literature often uses social conflict as a universal theme to demonstrate the complexity and dynamics of social relations within society. The selected novel, *Sacred Games* by Vikram Chandra, shows a recurring social reality in India. The novel offers the portrayal of the many dimensions of social conflict encountered by its characters. These conflicts emerge from interactions among individuals and groups with different religious, social, and political backgrounds. It reflects broader structural tensions in Indian society, where legal authorities, religious institutions, and criminal networks

operate within overlapping spheres of influence. Furthermore, the characters in the novel do not only present conflict as a personal phenomenon but also as a systemic condition shaped by historical and contemporary forces. The connection between the social conflicts in the novel and the real situation in modern Indian society is important because literature often reflects the real world around it. As Wellek and Warren (1956) explained, literature is both a product and a reflection of society. Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing the social conflicts experienced by the characters in *Sacred Games*, how those conflicts are resolved, and how the reality of social conflict in modern Indian society is reflected through the novel's representation (Chandra, 2007).

The concept of conflict as a form of social interaction proposed by Georg Simmel offers a relevant perspective for analyzing the social dynamics reflected in this novel. Georg Simmel did not formally formulate a theory of social conflict, but rather viewed conflict as an integral part of the socialization process, where confrontation serves not only to divide but also to strengthen social relationships through negotiation, compromise, and the reconstruction of social structures. In *Sacred Games*, the characters face various forms of conflict that illustrate how individuals and groups struggle to maintain, redefine, or reshape their positions within an unstable social order. Furthermore, conflict can act as a catalyst for social change when individuals or groups seek to defend, reform, or reestablish their roles in the social structure (Simmel, 1955). Therefore, Simmel's concept of social conflict serves as an appropriate analytical framework to understand the complex social relations depicted in *Sacred Games*.

There are several previous studies that use the same object. First, in Sabu and Mudaliar (2023), titled *Slow Violence in Vikram Chandra's Sacred Games: An Ecocritical Reading*, the researchers analyzed the slow violence depicted in the novel through an ecocritical perspective. Slow violence is shown in urban waste, environmental damage, and social inequality, which are normalized by both characters and the system.

Second, the research conducted by Sharma (2022), titled *Demonstration of race snobbery and its influence on modern youths: in Vikram Chandra's Sacred Games*. According to the research findings, caste prejudice still has a major impact on contemporary culture and shapes the lives and experiences of characters like Aadil and Dipika in the novel *Sacred Games*. Third, the research written by Ashraf (2021), “*Only I Am the Brahma*”: *Religion and Narrative in the Netflix Thriller Series Sacred Games (2018-2019)*, where the researcher talked about how Ganesh Gaitonde's life is shaped by political and religious ideologies, specifically Hindu nationalism and the doctrine of Guruji.

Fourth, a study entitled *A Comparative Evaluation of Election Succeeding Tactics in Vikram Chandra's Sacred Games and Chetan Bhagat's Revolution 2020* by (Sharma, 2021). It aimed to analyze fictional political tactics as a reflection of election practices in India. Using a social realism approach, the researcher highlighted how characters in both novels used illegal power, manipulation, and political alliances to win elections. In this novel, the alliance between Bipin Bhonsle and Ganesh Gaitonde exemplified criminal exploitation for electoral purposes. The analysis showed that both

novels strongly criticized corruption and moral degradation in the modern Indian political system.

Fifth, a study entitled *Exposition of Increasing Violation in Decorum for Aspirations and Material Gains: Vikram Chandra's Sacred Games* by (Sharma & Sharma, 2021) which aimed to reveal how violations of social norms and cultural values in modern Indian society were represented through characters and events in the novel *Sacred Games*. The researchers focused their study on how the characters in the novel, especially the younger generation, sacrificed cultural and ethical values for materialistic ambitions. The results of the analysis showed that the violation of social values, including ethics, decency, and cultural norms, was the main trigger for the increase in corruption, violence, family disintegration, and moral identity crisis among the novel's characters.

The next previous studies are research that analyze social conflict in literary works. Sixth, the research conducted by Hamdani et al., (2024) entitled *Social Conflict in the Novel Dua Barista by Najhaty Sharma: A Literary Sociology Approach* that uses Karl Marx's approach. This study identified three forms of social conflict, namely (1) interpersonal conflict in the form of overthinking, (2) social class conflict due to differences in status, and (3) individual versus community conflict involving slander. The study used a descriptive qualitative method with data triangulation techniques, and concluded that the conflict in the novel reflects structural social tensions that are relevant in people's lives.

Seventh, the research by Sembiring et al., (2024) entitled *Social Conflict in Margot Lee Shetterly's Hidden Figures Novel*. This research aimed to identify the types of social conflict experienced by African-American women in the novel. Using Soerjono Soekanto's social conflict theory, this study found five types of conflict, namely international, political, social class, racial, and personal conflicts. The most dominant conflicts are social class and gender conflicts, which have an impact on the formation of group solidarity, character change, and social inequality. This research showed that conflict can lead to disintegration and forms of social resistance.

Eighth, the research by Kirana (2022) in *Social Conflict in Okky Madasari's Year of the Voiceless Novel* examined forms of social conflict, such as personal conflict and class conflict. Using Soerjono Soekanto's theory, this study concluded that the causes of conflict include family disorganization, poverty, and environmental problems. The conflicts that arise reflect contemporary social challenges in Indonesian society.

Ninth, the research by Oktavia and Asri (2021) entitled *Social Conflict in a Collection of Short Stories Mata yang Enak Dipandang Karya Ahmad Tohari* used a literary sociology approach and Soekanto's social conflict theory. This study identified the form, cause, and resolution of social conflict, which is dominated by personal conflict and conflict between social classes. The conflicts in short stories are often caused by economic factors and resolved through domination or submission, which reflects the inequality of power in the structure of society.

The tenth previous study is a thesis entitled *The Main Character's Social Conflict in Burton's Wednesday Film Series (2022)* written by Ardan (2024). The tenth

previous research is a thesis entitled *The Main Character's Social Conflict in Burton's Wednesday Film Series* (2022) written by Ardan (2024). This research used Georg Simmel's social conflict theory that views conflict not only as opposition, but also as part of social interaction that can strengthen relationships and trigger positive changes. In the series *Wednesday* (2022), the main character experienced four forms of social conflict, namely antagonistic, legal, interest, and intimate relationships. The conflicts occurred with various characters such as Bianca, Larissa Weems, Sheriff Galpin, as well as his family and friends. Wednesday resolved the conflict through three ways according to Simmel's theory, namely victory, compromise, and reconciliation. The results showed that conflict not only has a negative impact, but also encourages character development and strengthens social relationships.

The previous studies that discuss social conflict in literary works generally focused on the type of conflict and its causes, and used classical theories such as Karl Marx, Lewis Coser, and Soerjono Soekanto. The majority of the studies emphasized that conflict reflects social inequality that causes the disintegration of society. Meanwhile, the use of Georg Simmel's social conflict theory has been carried out by Ardan (2024) in the analysis of the *Wednesday* series to see the types of conflicts experienced by the main character in the series and how they are resolved.

On the other hand, there are several studies that analyze the novel *Sacred Games* from various perspectives of ecocriticism, political and religious identity, racial issues, and comparisons between novels. Nonetheless, there has been no research that specifically uses Georg Simmel's conflict theory to analyze the types of conflicts and

how they are resolved by the characters in the novel, as well as how the conflicts in modern Indian society are reflected in the novel.

This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the social conflicts experienced by the characters in the novel *Sacred Games* using Georg Simmel's theory, and examining how the conflict reflects the structure of modern Indian society through the concept of thought from A.M. Shah. By focusing on the identification of conflict and its resolution, this study provides a deeper understanding of how the novel reflects the social dynamics in modern Indian society. Thus, this study contributes to the development of social conflict studies in literary works.

### **B. Problems of the Study**

Based on the explanation above, the research problems in this study are:

1. What are the social conflicts in the novel?
2. How are the social conflicts resolved in the novel?
3. How do the social conflicts in the novel reflect modern Indian society?

### **C. Significance of the Study**

This research has theoretical and practical significance in the development of literary studies through the sociology of literature approach. Theoretically, this research expands the application of the concept of conflict as a form of social interaction according to Georg Simmel in literary analysis, by emphasizing that conflict is not only destructive, but also has an integrative role in social structure. In addition, by using A.M. Shah's thoughts on the structure of modern Indian society, this research

contributes to understanding how the social tensions and conflicts that occur in the novel reflect the reality in modern Indian society. Practically, the results of this study can be a reference for future researchers in analyzing the representation of social conflict in literary works, as well as providing a broader understanding of the dynamics of modern Indian society through a literary approach.

#### **D. Scope and Limitations**

This research focuses on analyzing the social conflicts experienced by the characters in the novel *Sacred Games* by Vikram Chandra. The main focus of this research includes identifying the forms of social conflict and how they are resolved using Georg Simmel's social conflict theory, which views conflict as part of the social interaction process. In addition, this study discusses how the conflicts experienced by the characters in the novel reflect the reality of social conflict in modern Indian society, with reference to A.M. Shah's concept on the structure of Indian society. This study does not discuss all aspects of the narrative or the psychological development of the characters in depth, but is limited to social conflicts that are relevant to the context of Indian society represented through the novel. This limitation is set so that the focus of the study is maintained on the relationship between social conflict in the novel and the social reality of modern Indian society.

#### **E. Definition of Key Terms**

The researcher provides some important terms to avoid misunderstanding regarding the topic covered in this research:



## **1. Conflict**

Conflict is a form of social interaction that can strengthen relationships, define group boundaries, and initiate social transformation (Simmel, 1955).

## **2. Social Conflict**

Social conflict is a form of conflict that occurs when groups or individuals compete with each other to maintain value, status, power, or limited resources, where each party tries to defeat or eliminate the other (Coser, 1956).

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

In this chapter, the researcher presents theories that serve as a framework to answer the research questions in detail and scientifically. These theories serve as a framework to interpret and analyze data in a structured theoretical context. Therefore, this chapter is structured into several sub-chapters that discuss sociology of literature, Georg Simmel's theory of social conflict, and A.M. Shah's concept of modern Indian society.

#### **A. Sociology of Literature**

Sociology of literature starts from the understanding that literature and society have a reciprocal relationship. Literature reflects various aspects of social life, so it can be said that literature acts as a reflection of the reality of life (Ghozi, 2018). Literature is not only the result of the author's imagination, but is also influenced by the surrounding social environment. Sociology itself is a science that studies social behavior, norms, and social structures, while literature is a form of cultural expression that reflects values, ideologies, and conflicts in society (Damono, 1978). Thus, the sociology of literature focuses on how literary works represent social conditions, reveal social inequality, and provide a picture of the dynamics of human life in a society.

Swingewood (1972) stated that there are three main approaches in the sociology of literature. First, the sociology of the author which examines the social background

of the author, including economic status, ideology, and the environment that influences his work. Second, the sociology of literary works which analyzes how the content and structure of literary works reflect social phenomena that occur in society. Third, the sociology of readers which examines the impact and reception of literature in society and how literary works influence social change. Thus, this study focuses on the extent to which literary works reflect the social context and dynamics of societal development. In addition, this study will explore how the values contained in literature are closely related to the social values that apply in society.

## **B. Conflict Theory**

Conflict is one of the fundamental aspects of social interaction that affects the structure and dynamics of society. In sociology, conflict is not only seen as a form of opposition, but also as part of the social mechanism that forms social relations in society. Simmel (1904) asserted that conflict is a form of social interaction that cannot be avoided because humans live in various groups with interests and values that are often in conflict. Conflict, according to him, is not just a destructive phenomenon, but also has a function in maintaining social balance and reforming more stable social relations (Simmel, 1955).

Georg Simmel argued that conflict does not only cause division, but also contributes to the formation of social groups and collective identities. He emphasized that social interaction consists of elements that are simultaneously conflicting and uniting. Simmel rejected the idea that conflict should always be seen as something

negative (Rössel, 2013). Instead, he saw conflict as a force that can clarify the boundaries of social groups and strengthen internal solidarity. This perspective shifted the traditional view that considers conflict only as an event that threatened social stability.

Simmel (1904) stated that conflict is part of the ongoing social process in society. He explains that conflict arises due to various factors, including differences in interests, economic competition, and power imbalances. In his analysis, Simmel distinguishes two main forms of social interaction: convergent (harmonious) relationships and antagonistic (conflictual) relationships. Convergent relationships reflect cooperative interactions, while antagonistic relationships contain conflicts that can trigger social change.

In this context, Georg Simmel explained that conflict has two inseparable sides, namely positive and negative aspects. Conflict can strengthen social structures by creating clear boundaries between different groups, but it can also result in social disintegration if not properly addressed (Featherstone, 1991). In other words, conflict is a dialectical force which can destroy and build simultaneously. Weinstein and Weinstein (1990) asserted that Simmel's theory provides a new view of how society develops not only through harmony, but also through tension and conflict that occurs in social life.

By understanding conflict as part of the social mechanisms that shape the dynamics of relationships in society, it is important to further explore how conflict is categorized and how it can be resolved. Simmel identified various types of social

conflict that arise in social interactions, each with its own characteristics and impacts. In addition, he also outlined various forms of conflict resolution that can determine the direction of social change, whether in the form of negotiation, one-party domination, or even ongoing conflict without resolution. Understanding the categories of conflict and their resolution mechanisms is important because it provides insight into how social tensions can be managed and directed in a social system. Therefore, the following discussion will focus on social conflict, types of social conflict, and the resolution of social conflict.

### **C. Social Conflict Theory**

Social conflict in Georg Simmel's view is an integral part of social life that cannot be avoided. Simmel places conflict as a form of social interaction that has two sides, namely destructive and constructive. According to Simmel (1955), conflict is a form of social relationship that aims to unite differences. Although it occurs through opposition or elimination of opposing parties, conflict remains a way to achieve unity or harmony in a society. In other words, conflict is a social process that serves to resolve differences and can ultimately produce a new form of social order, even through tension or opposition.

Furthermore, Georg Simmel views that conflict should not always be considered as something negative. Conflict can serve as a social glue that strengthens relationships within groups (Simmel, 1955). In this context, conflict is not a phenomenon that is intended to stop social order or break the continuity of community

life, but instead becomes part of the social mechanism that creates dynamics and transformation. Simmel (1955) stated that social conflict is part of social interaction that creates boundaries between groups by strengthening internal awareness that distinguishes and alienates the group from other groups.

Conflict is an essential part of social dialectics, where social structures are continuously experiencing tension and change. The presence of opposition or conflict forms the foundation of all social life, in other words, no society is entirely free from disagreement or resistance (Simmel, 1955). This implies conflicts and tensions are normal and inevitable parts of social connections, meaning that social life is never entirely harmonious. In these circumstances, conflict is crucial for setting limits, strengthening internal cohesion, and functioning as a trigger for the development of new social institutions that better represent shifting conditions and values.

Simmel (1955) asserted that social conflict has the capacity to promote the emergence of new, more flexible social structures within the context of social development. The tension that never disappears from social life is a prerequisite for the sustainability of society. A stable culture is not only shaped by equal and harmonious interactions, but also by the existence of tension, because tension is an integral part of human life and will continue to exist until a group no longer exists (Simmel, 1955). Therefore, social change is not solely born from consensus, but is more often mediated by conflict, because this is where the process of negotiation, adjustment, and social innovation emerges.

Thus, in Georg Simmel's perspective, social conflict and social change cannot be separated. Both have a part in establishing the dynamics of a social life. Conflict serves as a force that allows society to adapt, reorganize its internal structure, and form a stronger group identity. Understanding conflict from this perspective provides a comprehensive analytical framework. This viewpoint on conflict offers a thorough analytical framework for understanding interactions with others as evolving processes.

### **1. Types of Social Conflict**

Georg Simmel proposed four types of conflict that can lead to different social consequences, which are antagonistic conflict, legal conflict, conflict of interest, and conflict in an intimate relationship (Simmel, 1955).

#### **a. Antagonistic Conflict**

Antagonistic conflict is the most intense form of conflict, in which each party seeks to defeat, humiliate, or even destroy the other party with no room for compromise. This conflict is often personal and emotional, fueled by deep-seated hatred and resentment, further perpetuating the cycle of hostility. The hostility in this conflict goes beyond mere differences of interests or goals, as it is often rooted in identities, principles, or fundamental values that are considered very important to each party. Any action taken by one party is seen as a direct threat by the other party, who then responds with even more violent action, intensifying the escalation of the conflict. As a result, this conflict not only destroys social relationships but also spreads wider tensions in society, as there is no room for dialogue or negotiation. Antagonistic

conflict not only damages relationships between individuals or groups involved, but can also lead to instability in the wider social structure (Simmel, 1955).

#### **b. Legal Conflict**

Legal conflict is a type of social conflict that occurs in legal jurisdiction and is governed by objective legal principles. In this conflict, the disputing parties try to resolve differences through established legal mechanisms, such as the trial process in court (Levine, 1971). Each party conveys its claims with full objectivity, using legitimate methods, and remains focused on the legal aspects without being influenced by emotional factors. This conflict arises from differences in claims or rights that are considered important, often triggered by a sense of justice or an effort to defend rights against violations of the law. Unlike other forms of conflict, legal conflict aims not only to defeat the opponent, but also to reach a legally valid decision and maintain balance in society (Simmel, 1955).

#### **c. Conflict of Interest**

Conflicts of interest occur when the parties involved have different interests that cause disagreement, both objective and influenced by highly subjective personal aspects. According to Soekanto and Yudho (1986), this type of conflict is caused by differences in interests that ultimately lead to problems that stem from the most subjective personal aspects. Not all disputes come from personal issues; some conflicts arise due to differences in goals, values, or needs that cannot be reconciled. However, often the subjective aspects of the parties amplify dislike and complicate conflict



resolution. Because of this, conflicts of interest tend to be difficult to resolve by simple means such as ordinary negotiation, especially when the interests at stake are deeply embedded in personal identities or values. Such conflicts can be long-lasting and affect social relations at large, even triggering changes in societal norms and structures (Simmel, 1955).

#### **d. Conflict in an Intimate Relationship**

Conflict in an intimate relationship occurs in personal social interactions, such as in relationships between couples, families, or friends. It is not always destructive; instead, when managed well, conflict can strengthen social bonds by providing an opportunity for individuals to better understand each other's needs, expectations, and perspectives (Simmel, 1955). Strong relationships often do not fear conflict, because both parties recognize that minor disagreements or disputes will not damage their relationship. Instead, conflict can be a means to deepen understanding and build emotional closeness. However, in some cases, conflict in an intimate relationship can also lead to a split, especially when differences in values or expectations cannot be reconciled. Intense resentment sometimes develops after a relationship ends, caused by feelings of hurt or disappointment that are difficult to accept (Simmel, 1955).

## **2. The Resolution of Social Conflict**

There are three ways to resolve conflict, which are victory, compromise, and reconciliation (Simmel, 1955).

**a. Victory**

Victory is the most direct method of conflict resolution, where one party dominates the other to the point of submission. This resolution does not always take the form of physical domination, but can also occur when the losing party voluntarily admits defeat before reaching the point of total destruction. In some situations, the losing party prefers to retreat in order to preserve dignity or avoid worse consequences, thus maintaining control over their decisions. This form of victory reflects that defeat does not necessarily mean losing everything, but can be a strategy to avoid more destructive consequences (Simmel, 1955).

**b. Compromise**

Compromise is a conflict resolution that is oriented towards mutual agreement, where both parties are willing to reduce their demands in order to reach a middle ground. Compromise can be an effective solution when both parties have a desire to end the conflict and are willing to make concessions on their interests. However, compromise is difficult to achieve when the subject of the conflict has high symbolic or emotional value, such as in conflicts rooted in ideology or non-negotiable moral principles. Under ideal conditions, compromise allows each party to retain most of its interests while maintaining social balance (Simmel, 1955).

**c. Reconciliation**

Reconciliation focuses on recovering relationships without prioritizing victory or formal compromise. It attempts to defuse conflict through increased understanding,

tolerance, and openness. Reconciliation occurs when both parties realize that maintaining the conflict will not yield long-term benefits, and so they choose to repair the relationship through dialogue and cooperation. Reconciliation also allows the conflicting parties to adjust their perspectives and rebuild trust lost due to the conflict (Simmel, 1955).

#### **D. Modern Indian Society**

India as a country colonized by the British experienced a very complex change in the dynamics of its society, especially after its independence in 1947. The modernity that emerged was not a form of universal Western modernity, but rather a result of negotiations between traditional social structures such as the caste system, patriarchy, and religious communities with new values such as democracy, urbanization, and the market economy. Modern Indian society did not move linearly towards modernity, but experienced an incomplete and often contradictory transition. As stated by (Shah, 2019), the hope of a casteless society in India seems like an illusion. The caste structure that should have been eliminated in an egalitarian society instead continues to live in new, more complex, and hidden forms in various layers of modern society, from education to electoral politics. The rapid urbanization process in India did not immediately erase traditional social boundaries, but strengthened social differentiation in new forms. Cities, which are often considered centers of modernity and social integration, actually show symptoms of sharp social segregation and fragmentation. The communal aspect of the caste system is more visible in cities than in villages (Shah,

2019). This shows that cities are not neutral spaces, but rather places where collective identities such as caste and religion are maintained, even politicized.

Amidst ethnic diversity and increasing social mobility, urban communities still show patterns of exclusion, such as settlements based on religion and caste, as well as unequal economic access. Not only that, the role of the state as a regulator of modern life is not entirely neutral. Shah (2019) highlighted how state policies such as quota systems and caste censuses actually strengthen social categories that were originally expected to be deconstructed. Moreover, the state often indirectly supports traditional elites by posing as protectors of oppressed groups, as he criticized in the Gujarat government's policy of funding religious ritual training for Dalits. The government actually helps upper-caste groups who act as priests, even though they appear to be helping marginalized lower-caste groups (Shah, 2019). Thus, the social structure of modern Indian society is in a state of intense tension between continuity and change.

As a result of this ongoing tension between tradition and change, various forms of social conflict have emerged within modern Indian society. The most apparent is antagonistic conflict, involving open clashes between social groups based on identity or ideology. Communal violence, such as the Gujarat riots in 2002, highlighted by Jaffrelot (2018), illustrates how religious identity can become a source of extreme violence when politicized. These conflicts are deeply rooted in historical trauma, ongoing political manipulation, and persistent social exclusion, making them not only recurring but also difficult to resolve.

In addition to antagonistic conflict, legal conflicts have also become central to the contestation of rights and representation in Indian society. The legal system, rather than acting solely as a neutral arbitrator, often becomes a battleground for competing group interests. For instance, upper-middle-class communities like the Jats and Patidars have mobilized against affirmative action policies, viewing caste-based reservations as unfair (Mullally, 2004). Similarly, high-profile cases such as Shah Bano (1985), which involved the intersection of Islamic law and women's rights, demonstrate how legal disputes are often entangled with issues of identity, religion, and social justice in India's multicultural context.

Furthermore, conflicts of interest have escalated as various groups compete over limited economic and political resources. The liberalization of India's economy post-1991, while promoting growth, has also intensified inequality. Access to public sector employment, educational subsidies, and political representation are often contested terrains between dominant majority groups and marginalized minorities. As Fernandes (2000) noted, the urban middle class has largely benefitted from the new economic order, while lower-caste and poor communities remain on the fringes of opportunity.

Alongside these structural conflicts, interpersonal conflicts also shape everyday life in modern India. Social hierarchies manifest in daily interactions, whether in public spaces, workplaces, or educational institutions. Discrimination against Dalits continues, despite their increased access to education. (Jaffrelot (2018) explained that even well-educated Dalit youth face systemic biases and stereotyping that hinder their

social mobility. These forms of everyday exclusion highlight how broader social structures are internalized and reproduced in personal relationships.

When seen together, these social conflicts illustrate that modern Indian society is not a harmonious, post-traditional space. Instead, it is a deeply contested arena where old and new values intersect, often unequally. The persistence of conflict underscores that modernity in India is not merely about institutional development or economic growth, but also about how power is redistributed or maintained within a changing social landscape. Rather than signaling the failure of modernization, these tensions reveal how certain groups have adeptly used modern institutions to reinforce their dominance, resulting in a contradictory form of progress that preserves structural inequality while outwardly embracing change.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **RESEARCH METHOD**

In this chapter, the researcher outlines the methodology used in the study. The methodology provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how the study was conducted. The chapter is divided into several main sections, each of which addresses a specific aspect of the research process. These include research design, data source, data collection, and data analysis.

##### **A. Research Design**

This research uses a literary criticism approach to analyze the social conflicts experienced by the characters in Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games*. Literary criticism is an analytical method in literary studies that aims to interpret the text in depth by focusing on the structure, meaning, and function of the elements that make up the literary work. This approach not only pays attention to narrative and aesthetic aspects, but also examines how literary texts reflect and criticize the social, cultural, ideological, and philosophical realities behind them (Tyson, 2006). Furthermore, Georg Simmel's conflict theory is used as a theoretical foundation in analyzing and identifying various forms of social conflict experienced by the characters in the novel and to analyze how these conflicts are resolved. According to Simmel (1955) conflict is a natural part of social relations as well as a force that drives change in society. In addition, this research utilizes A.M. Shah's (2019) concept regarding the structure of modern Indian society

to examine how the social conflicts experienced by the characters in the novel reflect contemporary India's social reality. Therefore, by applying these theories, this research attempts to reveal the dynamics of social conflict in literary work and its relationship to the structure of the society represented.

## **B. Data Source**

The data sources in this study are divided into two, namely primary data and secondary data. The primary data is in the form of written, which is a printed novel. The novel *Sacred Games* by Vikram Chandra was published in 2007 with a total of 947 pages. Meanwhile, secondary data in this study were obtained from various sources that support the analysis of the novel *Sacred Games*. These sources include books that discuss conflict and modern Indian society. The secondary data serves to enrich the understanding of the social conflicts experienced by the characters in the novel, as well as strengthen the study with relevant theoretical perspectives.

## **C. Data Collection**

The data collection process in this study was carried out through several stages. The first stage began with a thorough reading of Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games* to understand the storyline and the social settings that influence the emergence of conflict in the novel. Second, careful and in-depth re-reading was done to identify specific textual evidence that shows the forms of social conflict experienced by the main character Ganesh Gaitonde. In this stage, the researcher took notes of significant quotations, marked the parts of the text that showed the conflict and conflict resolution,



and categorized the findings according to Georg Simmel's conflict theory. After that, the researcher correlated the conflicts experienced by the characters in the novel to the situation of modern Indian society. All data that has been collected is then arranged and classified for further analysis at the data analysis stage.

#### **D. Data Analysis**

After all the data was collected, the researcher classified the data that showed various forms of conflict experienced by the main character, Ganesh Gaitonde. The data were classified based on Georg Simmel's (1955) theory of conflict such as antagonistic conflict, legal conflict, conflict of interest, and conflict in an intimate relationship. Furthermore, the researcher analyzed how the conflict was resolved. In the next stage, the researcher analyzed how the social conflicts that occur in the novel reflect the social realities that exist in modern Indian society. Finally, the researcher concluded the findings to answer the problem formulation in this study.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In this chapter, the researcher presents answers to respond to the problem formulations in this study. This chapter consists of three sub-chapters, namely the social conflicts that occur in the novel, ways of overcoming the social conflicts, and the portrayal of social conflicts in modern Indian society.

#### **A. Social Conflicts Occured in the Novel**

Conflict is an essential element in social interactions involving more than one individual, considering that conflict cannot occur independently by one party alone (Simmel, 1955). Based on the analysis of the novel, the researcher managed to find answers to the first problem formulation related to the forms of social conflict experienced by the main character, Ganesh Gaitonde.

There are four types of social conflict experienced by the characters in the novel, namely antagonistic conflict, legal conflict, conflict of interest, and conflict in an intimate relationship. In this sub-chapter, these forms of social conflict will be explained.

#### **1. Antagonistic Conflict**

Antagonistic conflict is a form of social conflict characterized by direct opposition and open hostility between individuals or groups, which often leads to acts of physical or psychological violence. This conflict involves tensions that are

destructive and confrontational, where the parties try to defeat each other openly in order to maintain their respective interests or power (Soekanto & Yudho, 1986).

This antagonistic conflict begins with the journey of Ganesh Gaitonde, who at the age of nineteen made an extreme decision by murdering his boss, Salim Kaka, and fleeing with the gold from their criminal operations. He realized that the gold needed to be quickly converted into cash in order to purchase land, which he saw as a key investment in the criminal world. To do so, Ganesh approached Paritosh Shah, a powerful fence in Mumbai, who helped him sell the gold. This transaction became Ganesh's gateway into a larger criminal network. Paritosh not only assisted in turning the gold into money but also introduced him to influential figures, including Chotta Badriya, who was initially Paritosh's bodyguard. With their support, Ganesh purchased a neglected plot of land in Gopalmath, marking the first step in building his power base.

However, his ambition to expand control over the Gopalmath area soon triggered a new conflict. The land he had bought was also claimed by Anil Kurup, a local gang boss who had long held power in the area. Feeling threatened by Ganesh's growing influence, Kurup demanded a meeting to resolve the dispute. This confrontation marked the beginning of a major conflict between two criminal figures, each driven by influence and ambition.

*"You're a baccha from nowhere," Anil Kurup shouted at me when I called. "And you think you're going to come into my village and spit into my face. Maderchod, one hen doesn't get sold here without me knowing about it. I'll put a truckload of cement up your gaand and send you back to whatever gutter you came out of."*

*"Four days later I went to see him in Gopalmath. That afternoon, though, with Anil Kurup, I was trying to keep what was mine." (p. 108)*

According to the data above, antagonistic conflict arises after Ganesh purchases land in the Gopalmath area. Anil Kurup, who claimed authority over the territory at that time, attempted to maintain his control. In their conversation, Anil Kurup used harsh language and direct threats, firmly stating that no activity could take place in the area without his knowledge. He expressed his anger with an intimidating tone and violent threats, indicating that he felt disturbed by Ganesh's presence and was determined to defend his territory at all costs.

In this incident, Ganesh and Anil Kurup are in direct and open conflict over control of the land. The conflict is not merely about property ownership, but also about dominance and social influence in the Gopalmath area. Anil Kurup's aggressive stance shows that the confrontation is highly intense. Both parties involved share the same goal to dominate. This conflict marks the beginning of a larger and more serious rivalry.

The news of the confrontation quickly spread after Anil Kurup's gang clashed with Ganesh's group in the gang war. After emerging victorious, Ganesh gained a reputation among other criminal gangs in Mumbai. He established a name for his enterprise, calling it G-Company. Under this name, Ganesh and his gang expanded their business operations and frequently struck deals with other criminal groups. This development sparked a new antagonistic conflict between Ganesh's gang and the gang led by Suleiman Isa. Suleiman Isa was known as the most powerful crime boss in Mumbai, having defeated numerous rival gangs, solidifying his position as the city's number one underworld figure. Upon hearing that Ganesh had succeeded in multiple business ventures and gang wars, Suleiman and his men began to take an interest in

Ganesh's growing power. This interest manifested in acts of sabotage against Ganesh's business, carried out by Suleiman Isa through his connections within the police force.

*"Bhai, there's trouble." Chotta Badriya was knocking urgently at the door. I called him in and he said it again. "Very big trouble." "What?" "Tonight's shipment, bhai. The police have it. They were waiting at Golghat. They were above the beach, behind that line of trees. They waited until all the maal was loaded into the trucks, then they came out and arrested everyone and took it all." "Who was it?" "Zone 13 officers. Kamath, Bhatia, Majid Khan, those fellows. Parulkar's boys."*

*"Parulkar had just come in as Assistant Commissioner in Zone 13, and he was said to be close to Suleiman Isa. And Suleiman Isa and his brothers headed the most politically connected, best-armed, largest gang that Bombay had ever seen. Maybe they saw us as a growing threat, and maybe they were trying to eat us. I am going to kill them all." (p. 266-267)*

From the data above, it is evident that the conflict between Ganesh and Suleiman Isa stems from competition over control of business operations and influence in their respective territories. Suleiman takes advantage of his connections with law enforcement to disrupt Ganesh's activities by ordering the arrest of his men and the seizure of goods in transit. This situation poses a serious threat to Ganesh, who is striving to build and maintain his criminal network.

At the same time, one of Suleiman's gang members named Khot manages to infiltrate Ganesh's gang by pretending to work under him. Khot later betrays Ganesh by informing Masood Meetha, Suleiman's right-hand man, about an illegal shipment planned by Ganesh's crew. This act of betrayal becomes a crucial turning point in the conflict, escalating the tension between the two factions even further.

*"So we fought Suleiman Isa through the summer, and into the monsoon floods. When we collected our bodies from the morgue, carried them through the white waterfalls of water, it seemed as if we had been fighting them forever, that the war had always existed. They hurt us, but they couldn't kill us."*

*"They had been expecting a war meeting. Whenever we had lost someone in this fight, after the funeral we always gathered to pick our hits for the next day, the next week. Who to kill, and how, that's what we talked about." (p. 274)*

After Ganesh Gaitonde's initial attack on Suleiman Isa's men, the conflict between the two gang leaders escalated into a larger and more intense battle. What may have started as a limited rivalry transformed into a prolonged open war. In the quoted section, Ganesh describes how the fighting lasted from the summer through the monsoon season, marked by a tense and exhausting atmosphere. Both sides suffered significant losses, and their gang members died one by one in tragic and gruesome ways.

During this conflict period, Ganesh and Suleiman convened meetings after each gang member's death to strategize retaliatory actions. They openly discussed who should be targeted and how the murders would be carried out, reflecting the extreme level of violence and hostility between the two groups. The conflict was no longer merely about business interests or territorial disputes, it had evolved into a war fueled by hatred and direct, public revenge.

Due to the direct, open, and physically violent confrontation between two hostile factions, this conflict falls under the category of antagonistic conflict. The clash between Ganesh and Suleiman involved real and ongoing enmity that placed lives at risk, which is a defining trait of antagonistic conflict.

As the war between Suleiman's and Ganesh's gangs intensified, internal issues began to arise within Ganesh's own organization. Ganesh's silence after a group from Janpura killed two of his men was one source of tension. One of his subordinates said the killings were revenge for a Janpura gang member being shot. This conflict eventually led to the eviction of Muslim residents from Gopalmath, including the

families of Chotta and Bada Badriya. Seeing Ganesh's lack of action, Bada Badriya began to view him as an unjust leader. At the same time, Bada grew close to Suleiman Isa's men and even attended a party with them, which enraged Ganesh and sparked a personal conflict between the two.

*"Why did you do it?" I asked. "Do what?" he said, raising a hand towards me, palm up. Until that moment I hadn't an exact plan. I had just wanted to look into Bada Badriya's eyes, and now, looking, seeing the shifty innocence he was trying to paste over his fear, this pathetic acting he was attempting, I grew huge with rage. It grew in my belly and my ribs hurt from it, and I shouted, I roared, "I saw you. I saw you, maderchod. I saw you dancing." "Dancing? What, where?". (p. 401)*

This conflict began when Ganesh Gaitonde discovered the betrayal of Bada Badriya, who was the older brother of Ganesh's close friend, Chotta Badriya. Bada Badriya had started associating with Suleiman Isa's gang, who was Ganesh's main rival. Ganesh obtained this information through a videotape that showed Bada Badriya dancing with members of Suleiman Isa's group. This revelation shocked and deeply disappointed Ganesh because the betrayal came from someone he considered close and trusted.

After learning of the betrayal, Ganesh ordered his men to capture Bada Badriya so he could confront him directly. When they finally met, Ganesh demanded an explanation for Bada Badriya's actions, but Bada denied the accusations and tried to deflect responsibility. This evasiveness only fueled Ganesh's anger. In their exchange, it was clear that Ganesh felt a deep sense of betrayal, and he expressed his rage with intensity and force.

This conflict can be classified as an antagonistic conflict, not only because of the betrayal itself but also because of the significant divergence in goals between Bada

Badriya and Ganesh Gaitonde. Bada Badriya's actions showed that his loyalty no longer aligned with Ganesh's leadership and vision. This difference intensified the tension and created a serious rift, turning the conflict into one marked by deep enmity and personal hostility.

## **2. Legal Conflict**

Legal conflict is a form of social conflict that arises due to violations of legal norms and efforts to enforce rules by authorized institutions. This conflict occurs when formal norms and the legal system conflict with the interests of individuals or groups, resulting in a clash between the offending party and law enforcement officials. Soekanto and Yudho (1986) asserted that legal conflict reflects the tension that occurs between legal norms and inappropriate social behavior.

In the novel *Sacred Games*, legal conflict arises due to the vested interests of certain parties. Additionally, the ongoing war between Suleiman's gang and Ganesh's gang intensifies this conflict. From the beginning, Suleiman had a strong network of connections with influential figures in the government, including the police. He used this power to eliminate anyone who posed a threat to his business and his position. As Ganesh's gang grew more successful and influential, Suleiman kept a close watch on him, constantly looking for an opportunity to have Ganesh imprisoned. His ultimate goal was to weaken Ganesh's power and destroy his criminal empire. Therefore, when Ganesh let his guard down, Suleiman acted on his authority as the most powerful crime boss in Mumbai to ensure Ganesh was arrested.



*“Parulkar Saab got a warrant issued this morning. I have to arrest you.” “Your Parulkar Saab is mad, the maderpat,” I said. “He doesn’t have a single proof against me. Not one witness.” “Now he does,” he said. “We lifted that chutiya Nilesh Dhale from Malad last week. He had a pistol on him, and another one in his suitcase. So Parulkar Saab has you for harbouring criminals and complicity in criminal acts, and also for being in possession of illegal weapons. And it being in the suitcase means it was being transported, so movement and selling of armaments also. He’ll add on anti-national activities. What else does he need? After two slaps across the face, Dhale is singing like a bird. By tomorrow Parulkar will have you involved in the conspiracy to kill Mahatma Gandhi.”. (p. 450)*

This conflict occurs at a critical moment when Ganesh Gaitonde, who had become the leader of one of the largest criminal gangs in Mumbai, experiences his first arrest by the police. The arrest did not happen suddenly but was the result of long-term surveillance and planning by Parulkar, a senior police officer and the head of Zone 13, who had close ties and hidden interests with Suleiman Isa, Ganesh's main rival in the criminal underworld. From the beginning, Parulkar carefully monitored Gaitonde’s activities and those of his network, constantly searching for a legal loophole that could be used to formally bring down the gang leader through the justice system.

This situation reflects a complex legal conflict in which institutional power is used to eliminate opponents through manipulative legal procedures. When one of Ganesh’s subordinates, Nilesh Dhale, was arrested in Malad with two illegal firearms, one in his possession and one in his suitcase. Parulkar seized the opportunity to link Ganesh to several serious legal charges. These included harboring a criminal, complicity in criminal acts, possession of illegal weapons, trafficking arms, and even anti-national activities. Although Ganesh believed he had no direct connection to the evidence, the legal system had been orchestrated in such a way that he was trapped. Thus, this conflict illustrates how legal norms, which are meant to uphold justice, can

instead be exploited as tools of power to destroy those considered threats. Ganesh's arrest was not simply an application of the law but the result of a calculated power play between formal institutions and criminality that are deeply intertwined within the social structure of Mumbai.

### 3. Conflict of Interest

Conflict of interest is a form of social conflict that arises when individuals or groups have conflicting goals, needs, or interests. This type of conflict is caused by differences in interests that ultimately cause problems that stem from the most subjective personal aspects (Soekanto & Yudho, 1986). Therefore, conflicts of interest are often complex and strongly related to the needs and expectations of different individuals and groups.

The conflict of interest in the novel begins when Ganesh attempts to sell his gold to Paritosh Shah. Ganesh wants the gold to fetch a high price, while Paritosh Shah believes that the price he offers is already fair. Both of them have their own goals and desires that clash with one another. As a result, a disagreement arises between them, as each tries to hold firmly to what they want.

*"You could've tried selling those to any Malwari jeweller. Why come to me?"*

*"I want a fair price. And I can get you more."*

*"Market price is fifteen thousand for fifty grams."*

*"That's the market price. This is why gold gets smuggled." (p. 61)*

Paritosh Shah, a fence and businessman accustomed to dealing in illegal goods, reveals his economic interests during his interaction with Ganesh Gaitonde, who wishes to sell his gold. In this exchange, Paritosh insists on maintaining the market

price as a fixed standard which is fifteen thousand for fifty grams because, for him, adhering to market rates is key to preserving profit stability in his business. He is unwilling to take a loss or offer a higher price simply due to pressure or personal ties. On the other hand, Ganesh expects a better price from Paritosh, arguing that the gold holds higher value and that he can supply more. Tension arises as Paritosh, holding the upper hand in the transaction, questions why Ganesh did not approach another dealer, indicating that he believes Ganesh needs him more. In the negotiation, Paritosh firmly states, *“Market price is fifteen thousand for fifty grams,”* reinforcing his authority in determining the value.

This conflict highlights a clash of interests: Paritosh aims to maintain profit by keeping the price low, while Ganesh wants to maximize the value of what he is selling. This friction creates a conflict of interest, where both parties stubbornly defend their expectations and personal gains. More broadly, this conflict reflects how relationships within the criminal underworld are not free from harsh economic dynamics, where trust can easily turn into confrontation when self-interest is at stake.

In addition, a deeper and more dangerous conflict of interest emerges between Guru-ji and Ganesh. This divergence of interest is initially unknown to Ganesh. He considers Guru-ji his spiritual guide and someone he deeply trusts. Their relationship begins when Ganesh, feeling lost and overwhelmed by the voices in his mind, encounters Guru-ji. Their bond grows stronger, and Ganesh feels his life improves after meeting him. Guru-ji’s teachings on peace and love convince Ganesh that he is a kind and enlightened person.

However, behind this facade, Guru-ji harbors a dangerous agenda. He holds extremist views rooted in religion, believing that the world must be destroyed to create a better civilization. Knowing Ganesh's criminal background, Guru-ji exploits their relationship to further his own plan.

*"I was calling you, and there was no reply," I said. "But it was only when you lost some dollars that you cared to call me." "It's not the dollars, Ganesh," Guru-ji said. "It's the inconvenience. I am in the middle of a big project. I need the cash to make certain payments. I don't care about money, but the rest of the world wants hard currency." "What is this project?" "I will tell you that it is a big project, Ganesh." "Did you make me a part of it?" "Everyone has a part in it." "Don't play games with me. Answer me. Answer me." I fought for control over myself, lowered my voice. "You had us bring in some kind of nuclear material. Don't tell me you didn't. My men died." He sighed. "Yes, Ganesh. That is true enough." (p. 835-836)*

The conflict of interest between Ganesh Gaitonde and Guru-Ji arises from fundamentally opposing goals and motivations. Guru-Ji, who initially appears to be a spiritual teacher and role model for Ganesh, is revealed to have a hidden agenda that is far more dangerous and expansive. In the context provided, Ganesh realizes that Guru-Ji is involved in a large-scale operation involving nuclear materials, which has already led to the deaths of several of Ganesh's men.

The relationship, once rooted in trust and spiritual influence, shifts into conflict due to Guru-Ji's extreme objectives, which sharply contrast with Ganesh's intentions. Guru-Ji not only involves Ganesh in his plans without his full knowledge but also exploits Ganesh's resources and loyal followers to further his own cause. This creates intense tension, as Ganesh feels both betrayed and endangered by Guru-Ji's actions, which pose a serious threat to many lives.

This situation falls under the category of conflict of interest because it involves a clash between two opposing agendas. Ganesh's personal interest in protecting himself

and those around him stands in direct contrast to Guru-Ji's radical and ideological goals. This difference in objectives leads to a fundamental incompatibility that generates conflict not only on a personal level but also on a broader scale with far-reaching consequences.

#### **4. Conflict in an Intimate Relationship**

Conflict in an intimate relationship is a form of social conflict that occurs in interpersonal interactions between individuals who have emotional and social closeness, such as family, spouses, or close friends. This conflict involves disagreements stemming from differences in needs, expectations, and feelings in close personal relationships (Soekanto & Yudho, 1986). These conflicts often contain intense emotional dimensions and can profoundly affect the quality of the relationship.

In the novel *Sacred Games*, a conflict rooted in an intimate relationship arises between Chotta Badriya and Ganesh Gaitonde. Chotta Badriya, a loyal member of Ganesh's gang, experiences deep emotional turmoil following a violent incident between Ganesh's group and a youth faction from Janpura. This conflict is triggered by the actions of one of Ganesh's men, who stabbed a young man from Janpura, sparking a cycle of revenge and mass violence. The retaliation leads to the destruction of buildings in Gopalmath, including a mosque, and the deaths of several residents. As a result of the violence, many Muslim inhabitants, including Chotta Badriya's family, are forced to flee the area out of fear and social pressure.

What deeply angers and disappoints Chotta, however, is not just the tragedy itself, but the response of Ganesh's men, who proceed to take over the abandoned properties of the displaced Muslim community without showing any empathy or moral consideration. As a Muslim who had long served Ganesh's group without ever invoking religion as a dividing factor, Chotta feels a profound sense of betrayal. He had given his unwavering loyalty and support to the group regardless of religious differences, yet when his own community suffers, he sees no solidarity or respect from his peers. This generates a strong emotional conflict within him, revealing the fragility of trust and belonging in the face of communal violence.

*"Chotta Badriya's face was rigid. He was immensely respected in our company, and until now his religion had never mattered. I took him by the arm, walked him away. 'Don't listen to these fools,' I said. 'Don't take it to heart. They're young and their heads have been turned by all this. They don't know what they're saying.' But his eyes were full. 'I would have given my life for any of them,' he said. 'But now I'm only a landya for them? Bastards. Will they want my house also?'. (p. 386)*

Based on the data above, Chotta is portrayed as being extremely angry with Ganesh and his men. His rigid and tense facial expression indicates that the incident was deeply disappointing for him. This shows that the pain he felt was not only due to the loss of his home, but also due to the loss of the meaning of solidarity and unity he had built over time. This conflict falls under the category of intimate relationship conflict, as it involves mutual trust, friendship, and betrayal between individuals who share emotional closeness and long-term loyalty.

Next, the conflict between Jojo and Ganesh occurs within a close relationship. Their friendship developed because Jojo, a brothel madam, regularly sent girls to

Ganesh. Their relationship had lasted for a long time due to mutual benefit. Ganesh's growing closeness to his spiritual mentor, Guru-ji, further strengthened his relationship with Jojo. At one point, Ganesh asked Jojo to send him a virgin girl at the request of Guru-ji.

The conflict between Jojo and Ganesh escalates when Ganesh discovers Guru-ji's plan to carry out a bombing. In response, Ganesh abducts Jojo and forces her to stay with him in an underground bunker. Jojo perceives this action not as protection, but as an act of excessive control. Known for being independent and outspoken, Jojo reacts strongly to the situation. She feels trapped and disrespected as a person with agency over her own life. Tension escalates into a painful emotional argument, where Jojo attacks Ganesh's self-worth with insults and harsh words.

*"Enough. Be quiet. Understand – I am trying to help you. I am trying to save your life." "They laughed at you, gaandu. They made jokes together, about what a pathetic, weak little rat you are. You think you're anything in front of a woman like Zoya? She told us that she never got one good night in bed out of you." "That's a lie. Zoya liked me." "Gaitonde, you fool, you think she was some virgin you impressed with your huge manliness. You chutiya. She had had a dozen men before you, and many afterwards, and you were the most pathetic. You were, you were smallest." "Liar. She was a virgin. You told me. She told me." "A virgin?" "Yes." "You idiot. How do you think she survived in this city before she came to you? You bhenchod men always pay more for virgins, so she became a virgin for you." (p. 856)*

Based on the data above, Jojo calls Ganesh a weak man and reveals that the women she had been sending him were not virgins, contrary to what Ganesh believed. This revelation is a heavy blow for Ganesh, as the belief in their virginity was a significant aspect of the spiritual teachings he followed from Guru-Ji.

This conflict illustrates how relationships based on emotional closeness and mutual dependence can devolve into intense hostility when trust is broken and personal

dignity is at stake. Jojo feels betrayed by being forcefully confined, while Ganesh feels deceived and emotionally humiliated. Their exchange, filled with anger, accusations, and the unveiling of painful truths, reflects the depth of their emotional wounds and disappointment. This is classified as a conflict within an intimate relationship because it involves two individuals connected not just professionally, but personally through trust, emotional closeness, and shared experiences in a harsh and dangerous environment. When this emotional bond is broken, the resulting conflict becomes unavoidable and far more painful than ordinary disputes, as it touches the most personal and vulnerable aspects of each individual.

The next conflict occurs between Ganesh and Guru-Ji. From the earliest days of their acquaintance, Ganesh saw Guru-Ji as a mentor, a role model, and a source of meaning in his life, particularly following his downfall in the criminal world. Guru-Ji was not only a spiritual refuge but also gave Ganesh a new direction through philosophical teachings blended with mysticism and nationalism. However, Ganesh's trust is shattered when he discovers that Guru-Ji had been hiding a dangerous plan all along, a nuclear bombing plot that would sacrifice millions of lives in Mumbai.

*"No. I won't be part of this." "You are already a part of it, Ganesh. You made it possible, you ran part of it, and whatever you do now, you will help it to happen. Whether you act or don't act, the war will come, the blood will flow. You can't stop it. You can't stop yourself, Ganesh." "I will tell . . . I will tell the authorities." "And they will believe you, Ganesh? A gangster who has told a hundred lies to them, killed a thousand men?" "I'll kill more of your sadhus." "They all must die some day. What difference is a few days?" I had nothing more to threaten him with. (p. 839)*

In the data above, the conflict reaches its peak when Ganesh firmly declares that he does not want to be involved in the plan. He feels betrayed, as he did not receive



any information from the start about his involvement in the operation. Ganesh realizes that his involvement in Guru-Ji's network has trapped him in a situation that is not only illegal but also contradicts the moral values he has been trying to rebuild. When he threatens to report Guru-Ji's actions to the authorities, Guru-Ji responds in a belittling and manipulative manner. He claims that no one would believe the confession of a gangster like Ganesh and suggests that death is merely a small component of a much larger, unstoppable plan. As a result, Ganesh feels powerless, unable to stop Guru-Ji's ideological dominance.

The next conflict arises between Paritosh and his daughter, Dipika. During the wedding of Paritosh's first child, Dipika approaches Ganesh, who is a friend of her father. She confides in Ganesh that she is in love with a young man who happens to be a Dalit. In the Indian caste system, Dalits are considered the lowest group. Upon learning this, Ganesh informs Paritosh, and as expected, Paritosh strongly disapproves of the relationship.

*'Dalit,' she said. 'And he's poor.' 'Have you met that bastard maderchod?' Paritosh Shah asked. He was angry now. 'You won't marry her to this fellow?' 'No. I can't. You know that. Kill him,' he said. 'Just kill him.' (p. 260)*

Based on the data above, Paritosh Shah's furious reaction upon learning that his daughter Dipika was in love with a Dalit man reflects a form of conflict within an intimate relationship between a father and his daughter. As a father and a representative of the upper social class, Paritosh perceived his family's honor and social standing to be threatened by an inter-caste romantic relationship. In India, the caste system remains a deeply entrenched social structure, with Dalits occupying the lowest position and

often facing systemic discrimination both socially and economically. When Ganesh revealed the identity of the young man, Paritosh's anger escalated drastically. He not only rejected the relationship but also went so far as to instruct that the young man be killed.

This conflict is not merely a difference in opinion between parent and child; it represents a clash between individual rights and social authority. Paritosh was not only disappointed in his daughter for crossing the boundaries set by societal norms and family expectations, but he also perceived her actions as a personal affront to the family's status. On the other hand, for Dipika, choosing to love someone outside the caste system was an act of emotional freedom that stood in direct opposition to her father's values. The emotional tension arising from conflicting values, expectations, and social backgrounds classifies this as a conflict within an intimate relationship. A father-daughter bond, ideally grounded in love and understanding, becomes a space of intense pressure and opposition due to the clash between traditional social structures and personal autonomy. Thus, this conflict illustrates how macro-level social dynamics like the caste system can penetrate even the most private relationships, deeply influencing their quality and stability.

### **B. Ways of Overcoming the Social Conflicts in the Novel**

Social conflict resolution is an important aspect in understanding the dynamics of relationships between individuals and groups in society. Based on Georg Simmel's conflict theory, there are three ways to resolve conflicts that can be used to relieve

tension and find solutions to conflicts that occur. Based on the data findings, there are three ways the characters use, namely victory, compromise, and reconciliation.

### 1. Victory

According to Simmel (1955), victory in a social conflict does not only mean physically defeating the opponent or complete domination, but can also be interpreted as success in achieving certain goals through strategic conflict management and resolution.

In the life journey of Ganesh Gaitonde, several social conflicts were resolved through his ability to achieve victory. Three significant victories experienced by Ganesh in the novel *Sacred Games* include, first, his triumph over Anil Kurup, which led to his successful acquisition of land in the Gopalmath area, establishing it as the base of his power. Second, his victory over the threat to his men during a shipment operation that was intercepted by the police following a report from Suleiman Isa to Parulkar, a police officer and Ganesh's close associate. Third, his triumph over the betrayal of Bada Badriya, who was executed after forming an alliance with Suleiman Isa during a party.

*"Anil Kurup was dead, with blood seeping over his cheek."*

*"News of my victory against Anil Kurup spread through the neighbouring localities, and people started to come to me to settle matters, to give them jobs and protection, to help them deal with the police and the local government. My war with him had been short and decisive, and I realized only after it was over that I had needed to fight it not only for territory, but for legitimacy. I was now recognized as Ganesh Gaitonde of Gopalmath, and nobody could dispute my right to stay in the city. I had succeeded in more ways than one." (p. 110-111)*

In the data above, the conflict concludes with Ganesh Gaitonde's victory over Anil Kurup. It is described that Anil Kurup dies with blood running down his cheek,

signaling the end of the feud between them. Following the incident, news of Ganesh's triumph spreads widely throughout the area, drawing people to him for protection, employment, and assistance in dealing with the police or local government. The war between Ganesh and Anil Kurup is relatively brief but yields highly satisfying results.

By defeating Anil Kurup, Ganesh not only gains control over the Gopalmath territory but also earns recognition and legitimacy as the dominant figure in the region. This victory marks his success in securing and expanding his power in the city, affirming his status as a respected and feared leader in the area.

The next victory occurs as Ganesh's gang and business operations continue to expand. The conflict between Ganesh's gang and Suleiman's gang lasts a long time and claims many lives. Nevertheless, Ganesh and his men manage to win the war, which is marked by the killing of a traitor from within Ganesh's group along with six of Suleiman Isa's men.

*"...it was Khot who picked up the phone and called Masood. Don't dispose of the body yet," I said. "We'll send it back to Suleiman tomorrow. Afterwards." The next day, between eight in the morning and four in the afternoon, we killed Vinay Shukla, Salim Sheikh, Syed Munir, Munna, Zahed Mechanic and Praful Bidaye. (p. 274)*

In the data, it is explained that Ganesh and his men killed six individuals from the opposing side, such as Vinay Shukla, Salim Sheikh, Syed Munir, Munna, Zahed Mechanic, and Praful Bidaye within the span of a single day as a form of warning. This act of retaliation was not only symbolic but also highly strategic, sending a strong message to all parties that Ganesh had full control over his territory and network, and that he would not hesitate to use violence to defend his position.

Ganesh's actions represent a form of victory that is not merely physical or militaristic, but also encompasses influence, social control, and strategic conflict management. This victory is not measured by the total elimination of the opposing side, but by Ganesh's ability to stabilize his standing within a fragile and highly competitive social structure. By eliminating key threats, Ganesh succeeded in strengthening internal loyalty within his group and reducing the risk of future betrayal. He also reaffirmed that his authority was unchallengeable, further solidifying his social status within the ruthless and intrigue-filled criminal world of Mumbai.

The next victory comes after Ganesh discovers that Bada Badriya has betrayed him and become involved in actions that threaten the stability of his group. Feeling the urgency to act decisively, Ganesh takes immediate steps. When Bada Badriya finally stands before him and refuses to admit his wrongdoing, Ganesh is overwhelmed with anger and disgust. A figure once trusted and respected is now considered as a genuine threat to the strength and loyalty within Ganesh's gang.

*"I couldn't stand him any more, his broad chest, his beefy life, his small boy's face. 'Kill him, Bunty. Kill him.' And Bunty did." (p. 400)*

Based on the data above, Ganesh did not hesitate to order his gang member, Bunty, to eliminate Bada Badriya. This command was not merely driven by personal anger but was also a tactical decision to prevent a potentially larger conflict arising from the betrayal. Although the decision to kill Bada Badriya could provoke emotional complications, given that Bada was the brother of Chotta Badriya, Ganesh's close friend and loyal ally. Ganesh understood that preserving the integrity and power of his

organization was more important than personal ties. He knew that if Bada's betrayal was left unpunished, it would not only destroy trust within his group but could also open the door to a full-scale war between his gang and Suleiman's. Therefore, the execution became a method of neutralizing the threat early and reaffirming his authority as a leader who does not tolerate disloyalty.

In addition to achieving victories over antagonistic conflicts with Anil Kurup, Suleiman Isa's gang, and Bada Badriya, Ganesh also prevailed in a conflict with his close friend, Jojo. At the end of the story, the conflict between Ganesh Gaitonde and Jojo reached its most tragic and complex point. Their relationship, originally built on mutual trust and shared benefits, evolved into intense emotional tension that spiraled out of control. When Ganesh discovered Guru-Ji's plan for a massive bombing, he felt responsible for protecting Jojo, one of the people closest to him. With the intention of saving her life, Ganesh forced her to stay inside a secret bunker, away from the chaos and external threats. However, instead of expressing gratitude or compliance, Jojo reacted with anger and rejection, viewing Ganesh's actions as oppressive and controlling. A heated argument followed, with Jojo hurling cutting remarks that insulted Ganesh's pride, including his masculinity and the truth behind the women she had sent him.

*"I shot her. The Glock was in my hand. There was the smell of some flower in the air, some leaf with bitterness underneath. I didn't remember the sound, but my ears were stunned. She had fallen in the doorway leading to the beds. I looked down at the comforting black metal in my grip, then came up to her. Yes, she was dead." (p. 856)*

Ganesh, on the verge of mental and emotional collapse due to pressure from various sides, ultimately could no longer contain his anger. In an outburst of emotion and deep inner pain, he took a gun and shot Jojo dead on the spot. This act literally ended the conflict between them. Victory in this context can be interpreted as one party's success in ending the confrontation and maintaining control or position, even if the means are destructive or tragic. In this case, Ganesh technically “won” the conflict with Jojo by ending it completely through violence. However, that victory left behind a sense of emptiness and loss, as what was destroyed was not only his adversary, but also the emotional bond that once existed between them.

Another conflict that ended in a form of victory though equally tragic was the confrontation between Paritosh and his daughter, Dipika. This victory was portrayed through Paritosh's act of killing Dipika's lover, Prashant, a Dalit, and forcing her to marry a man of his choosing.

*‘Marry her today to someone else,’ I said. ‘Marry her this hour. Find a boy and get a pandit and marry her off now. Then send them away. Somewhere. Maybe she won’t kill herself. Maybe she will, but maybe she won’t.’ (p. 267)*

From the data above, it is clear that Paritosh Shah, after successfully separating his daughter from her lover, a Dalit man named Prashant, immediately took swift action to eliminate any possibility of the relationship being rekindled. He ordered Ganesh Gaitonde to quickly find another man for Dipika and demanded that the marriage take place as soon as possible, even on the same day and at the same hour. This command marked Paritosh's complete control over the situation and his daughter's fate, effectively serving as a resolution to the conflict between him and Dipika. By forcibly

marrying Dipika to a man of his choosing, Paritosh ensured that her relationship with Prashant, which he considered shameful and degrading to the family's honor due to Prashant's Dalit background, was permanently severed.

In this case, Paritosh not only separated Dipika from her lover, but also shaped her future according to the values and social norms he upheld. Even when Ganesh realized that this action might push Dipika toward despair or even suicide, Paritosh remained unmoved. To him, preserving the family's honor was far more important than his daughter's feelings or freedom. Thus, the conflict between Paritosh and Dipika ended with a one-sided victory achieved through the dominance of patriarchal values and caste-based hierarchy. This act reflects how conflicts within domestic or familial relationships can be resolved in ways that favor one party, yet leave deep wounds and injustice for the other.

## **2. Compromise**

Compromise is a form of social conflict resolution in which the two conflicting parties give in and make concessions to reach a mutual agreement (Simmel, 1955). Compromise does not mean absolute victory for either party, but rather a negotiation process that prioritizes achieving balance and stabilizing social relations.

The process of compromise occurs between several characters, such as Paritosh with Ganesh and Ganesh with Majid Khan. The first example is the form of compromise that arises when Ganesh confronts Paritosh Shah, a businessman also involved in the trade of stolen goods, where both parties reach an agreement in order



to maintain their respective business interests and influence. In the negotiations between Ganesh Gaitonde and Paritosh Shah, a clear form of compromise takes place, where both sides must adjust their demands to reach a mutual agreement.

Paritosh Shah, as a fence accustomed to negotiating the value of illegal goods, sets a price limit he believes aligns with the market. On the other hand, Ganesh, who brings smuggled gold, hopes to gain a higher return from the sale. Initially, this price difference creates tension between them, as both have conflicting economic interests. However, instead of stubbornly holding their positions, the two characters gradually make concessions to one another.

*“Ten. That’s as much as I can do.”*

*“Twelve.”*

*“Eleven.”*

*I nodded. “Done.”. (p. 62)*

From the passage above, the negotiation ends when Paritosh says, *“Eleven,”* and Ganesh nods and replies, *“Done,”* signaling that they have reached common ground. This compromise allows both parties to continue a mutually beneficial economic relationship without creating long-term tension. In the social structure of the underworld where they operate, stability and cooperation are more valuable than absolute dominance, as the survival of their operations and social influence largely depends on their ability to build consensus, even under conditions of mutual suspicion.

Additionally, compromise is also evident when Ganesh demonstrates a cooperative attitude upon being arrested by the police, which allows the detention process to proceed without further violent escalation. When law enforcement officers

arrive at Ganesh Gaitonde's residence to arrest him on multiple serious criminal charges, the situation has the potential to escalate into an armed confrontation that could endanger both sides. Ganesh, who initially rejects the charges and believes his arrest to be the result of a conspiracy orchestrated by Parulkar, the chief of police in Zone 13 who has close ties with his longtime enemy, Suleiman Isa, which comes to realize that physical resistance would only worsen the situation.

In this context, Ganesh is in a pressured position. He understands that the police's armed force far exceeds his own, and that open conflict would not benefit him, either legally or socially. Instead of ordering his men to fight back, Ganesh chooses a compromising approach.

*"Come quietly," Majid Khan said very deferentially. "I have ten more men in plain clothes outside, all armed. And two more vans around the corner, two minutes from here. Any trouble and we'll have a war neither of us wants."*

*"He was saying this because Bunty and two of the boys were standing at the door, facing off with the policemen. From my expression they could see something was wrong. So I calmed Bunty down, and told him to take charge, and be careful. I said a quick goodbye to my wife and son, and went." (p. 451)*

In this case, Ganesh restrains himself and de-escalates the conflict in order to avoid bloodshed and minimize the risk to the people he cares about. Ganesh's act of compromise does not signify surrender, but rather reflects emotional control and social strategy aimed at preserving his dignity and opening the door to better resolutions in the future. In the harsh world of crime, the ability to retreat with honor is also a form of strength.

Thus, Ganesh's decision not to resist and to surrender willingly represents a mature form of compromise. He chooses stability over chaos and uses the moment to

demonstrate that even when cornered, he still maintains control over himself and the situation he is facing.

### **3. Reconciliation**

(Simmel, 1955) views reconciliation as a form of social conflict resolution that involves the process of restoring relations between previously conflicting parties. Reconciliation focuses on efforts to eliminate hostility, rebuild trust, and recreate social harmony after a conflict.

The process of reconciliation takes place when Ganesh attempts to mend his relationship with Chotta Badriya. Ganesh tries to ease the tension and rebuild the fractured bond with Chotta Badriya, a trusted member of his inner circle who has long shown unwavering loyalty. The conflict had arisen when one of Ganesh's men, without Chotta's permission, occupied the area where Chotta's family had lived in Gopalmath. This neighborhood had been vacated following violent inter-community clashes. The incident resulted in the destruction of a mosque and the displacement of Muslim residents, including Chotta Badriya's family.

This event deeply hurt Chotta, who felt that his own comrades failed to respect his sacrifices as part of Ganesh's group, especially given the fact that he had long suppressed his Muslim identity to maintain harmony within the gang. In response, Ganesh chose the path of reconciliation. He approached Chotta, spoke to him in a calming tone, and placed a hand on his shoulder.

*"Badriya," I said, "this is a bad time. Don't get angry. Keep your wits, keep cold. Listen to me. Just listen to me, only me." I had my hands on his shoulder, and finally he let me hug him. I*

*sent him to his home and family with four of my best boys, all armed, and told them if anything happened to Chotta Badriya or any of his family, I would shoot them myself.*

*“Chotta Badriya noticed this. He had been quiet, he had been upset by what had happened, by the masjid and the days that followed, I could see that. So I kept him close, I took him everywhere. And I could see that he was trying, that for my sake he was fighting himself. He tried to take care of me.”. (p. 386-387)*

From the data above, Ganesh even assigned four of his best men, fully armed, to guard Chotta's family as a guarantee of their safety. He stated clearly that if anything were to happen to Chotta or his family, he would personally execute the guards responsible. In the days that followed, Ganesh continued to demonstrate goodwill by inviting Chotta Badriya to accompany him, treating him with special regard, and making him part of his inner circle. This treatment succeeded in easing the tension between them.

This process clearly illustrates the mechanism of reconciliation, which is an effort to restore relationships after conflict through emotional closeness, empathy, and symbolic actions that show accountability for the harm that has occurred.

### **C. The Portrayal of Social Conflict in Modern Indian Society**

Modern Indian society is the result of a long transitional process that began during the colonial period and continued into the post-independence era. This transformation did not occur smoothly, but rather through a constant tension between traditional values and modern structures that often stand in opposition. The modernity that developed in India is not the product of a full adoption of Western values, but instead emerges from a complex negotiation between longstanding systems such as

caste, patriarchy, and religious identity, and newer values like democracy, urbanization, and the free market.

Vikram Chandra's novel *Sacred Games* serves as a representation that reflects this dynamic. Through the various social conflicts experienced by its characters, the novel presents more than just a tale of crime and politics, it also mirrors the realities of contemporary Indian society.

### **1. Antagonistic Conflict**

The antagonistic conflict that occurs in modern Indian society is in the form of criminality and power. One of the characters, Ganesh, represents an individual from a marginalized background who builds power through criminal means. In a social setting where access to formal power is limited by one's social and economic status, Ganesh leverages violence, patronage, and underground networks to secure his position. He also demonstrates how criminality and power can infiltrate formal institutions such as the police. This is shown when he bribes government officials to illegally acquire land and eliminates those who control the Gopalmath area.

*"You pay off three chutiyas in the municipality, oil them up properly and then you kill the local dada who thinks he deserves a percentage on your action, like it's his behenchod birthright. That's it. Then the land is yours. I took it, and it was mine."* (p. 107)

One of the most striking aspects of *Sacred Games* is its depiction of the criminal underworld in modern India, reflected through the character of Ganesh Gaitonde. It is told that Ganesh comes from a lower-class background and begins his journey through petty crime before rising to become one of Mumbai's most powerful crime bosses. By using violence, intimidation, and power networks with other criminal figures, he

succeeds in building an untouchable criminal empire. Ganesh does not only operate illegal businesses such as gambling and narcotics; he also forges close ties with police officers and politicians.

Ganesh's story reflects a phenomenon that truly occurs in modern Indian society. In the book *Organized Crime in India* by (Deuskar, 1999), a well-known criminal figure, Vardharajan Muniswamy Mudaliar, is mentioned to have experienced a similar journey. Vardharajan began his life as a porter at Victoria Terminus station in Mumbai, but later became involved in smuggling imported goods, illegal alcohol, and building an organized crime network. After eliminating his business partners, he gained full control of the network and became one of the city's most feared dons. Like Ganesh, Vardharajan was also known for having strong connections with law enforcement and wielding significant influence in local politics. His success was not only built through violence, but also through his ability to manipulate the legal and security systems.

Moreover, this pattern is not unique to one or two criminal figures, but is a structural phenomenon in India. Almost all major gang leaders in India, including Haji Mastan, Dawood Ibrahim, Arun Gowli, and Chota Rajan came from poor backgrounds, committed petty crimes at a young age, and later built vast criminal networks. They are known for being ruthless, strategic, and fiercely loyal to their own groups. They also possess the ability to bribe and neutralize law enforcement officials, including police, customs, and even government agencies. This phenomenon highlights that power structures in India are not always formed through legal and formal channels, but also

through informal forces that grow from the urban margins and evolve into powers capable of rivaling or even controlling the state.

The relationship between traditional patronage and modern institutions is highly relevant. State institutions in modern India are not entirely neutral but tend to reinforce elite dominance through covert informal power networks. This reality is vividly portrayed in *Sacred Games*, where Ganesh's power does not stand alone but is part of a broader social system that enables criminality and informal power to thrive. Thus, the character Ganesh in *Sacred Games* is not merely a fictional symbol, but a concrete representation of India's complex and unequal modern social structure, one that is often governed by forces outside formal law.

## **2. Legal Conflict**

In the novel *Sacred Games*, legal conflict becomes a form of power struggle played through legal institutions. Ganesh Gaitonde is the victim of a legal system manipulated by Parulkar, a high-ranking police officer who is in cahoots with his main enemy, Suleiman Isa. Ganesh faces numerous serious charges, such as illegal weapon possession, involvement in arms trafficking, and even anti-national activities. These charges were not entirely baseless, but rather the result of a systematic strategy to eliminate Ganesh as a threat to Suleiman's criminal and political dominance. Parulkar does not fulfill his role as a law enforcer fairly, but instead uses his legal powers to protect certain interests and destroy those who upset the existing balance of power. It is shown in the narrative below:

*"I didn't hand any pistols to that bastard Dhale, did I? Parulkar can't make any of it stick." There were many who would be happy if he shot me dead: Suleiman Isa, Parulkar and his friends in the police, a dozen industrialists who were paying us month by month. (p. 450-451)*

Similar condition is found in the social reality of modern Indian society, where legal conflicts do not always arise due to pure criminality, but because the law is used to silence individuals or groups who are considered to be in opposition to power. A clear example is the case of Arundhati Roy, a writer and activist, who in 2024 was prosecuted under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) for her statements on Kashmir made at an academic forum in 2010. Despite the intellectual discourse nature of her statements, the government nonetheless approved the prosecution, triggering widespread criticism from civil society and academia. This shows that the law in India, as depicted in the novel, can be used as a tool of repression against freedom of expression and a tool to maintain dominant power structures. The novel therefore functions not only as a work of crime fiction, but also as a reflection on the manipulative and non-neutral realities of law in contemporary Indian society.

### **3. Conflict of Interest**

In *Sacred Games*, Ganesh's relationship with Guru-ji creates a significant conflict of interest. At first, Ganesh sees Guru-ji as a spiritual figure who advises and soothes his disturbed mind. However, this trust is eventually manipulated. Guru-ji hides an extreme purpose beneath peaceful teachings, including a scheme for global destruction by a secret mission that uses Ganesh's resources without his permission. When Ganesh discovers that he and his men have been tricked into a risky mission that



has already claimed lives, their connection gets worse into a tense confrontation, showing a clash between personal loyalty and fanatical ideology masked as religious rhetoric.

*"It's an annoyance. I am in the middle of a large project. I need money to make certain payments. I don't care about money, but the rest of the world prefers hard currency. "What is this project?" "I will tell you that it is a big project, Ganesh." (p. 835)*

This situation is strikingly similar to the case of Sathya Sai Baba, a renowned spiritual leader in India revered by millions of followers. Despite his status as a sacred figure, various claims of financial and administrative mismanagement arose following his death. The spiritual foundation under his leadership not only received large donations, but it was also allegedly exploited for personal interests and projects unconnected to its advertised social missions. Furthermore, Sai Baba was accused of abusing his religious authority to construct a power structure that was beyond legal and public scrutiny. This conflict of interest demonstrates how spiritual leaders may confuse the distinction between moral dedication and worldly desire, using religion to rationalize hidden ambitions. Hence, the novel reflects the reality of conflict of interest in modern Indian society.

#### **4. Conflict in an Intimate Relationship**

Conflict in an intimate relationship is manifested in the form of caste system and religious based communal tensions. One of the major conflicts in the novel *Sacred Games* that powerfully represents the social reality of modern Indian society is the conflict between Paritosh Shah and his daughter, Dipika. This conflict arises when

Dipika reveals that she is in love with a young man from the Dalit community, the lowest caste in the Hindu social hierarchy. Paritosh, a successful businessman from an upper caste, immediately rejects the relationship and even orders the young man to be killed, while arranging for his daughter to marry someone from a caste of equal or higher social status.

*'Dalit,' she said. 'And he's poor.' 'Have you met that bastard maderchod?' Paritosh Shah asked. He was angry now. 'You won't marry her to this fellow?' 'No. I can't. You know that. Kill him,' he said. 'Just kill him.' (p. 260)*  
*'Marry her today to someone else,' I said. 'Marry her this hour. Find a boy and get a pandit and marry her off now. Then send them away. Somewhere. Maybe she won't kill herself. Maybe she will, but maybe she won't.' (p. 267)*

Paritosh's harsh reaction illustrates that the caste system remains a central pillar in shaping social relationships, particularly concerning marriage and family honor. This story explicitly reflects the social reality in contemporary India, where the caste system continues to be a dominant social structure, despite having been constitutionally abolished. Shah (2019) explained that caste persists not only in rural life but also remains strong in modern urban settings. He emphasizes that each caste strives to preserve its distinct identity and boundaries, primarily through the practice of caste endogamy; the obligation to marry within the same caste group. Furthermore, Shah (2019) argued that while urban society is often perceived as more modern, caste endogamy is, in fact, more visibly practiced in urban areas as a form of social exclusivity upheld by elite families.

In the novel, Paritosh's decision not only to reject the relationship but also to resort to violence as an extreme solution demonstrates that the caste system in India is not merely symbolic, it leads to real, repressive actions. The connection between caste

and patriarchy is also strongly evident, as decisions about Dipika's personal life are entirely controlled by her father. In this context, patriarchal structures reinforce caste-based social control, and women become the sacrificial subjects in the name of maintaining caste "purity."

Moreover, Shah (2019) noted that the caste system is further reinforced through modern state instruments such as census data and the quota system. The state, which should ideally work to dismantle social stratification, instead indirectly sustains it. This reflects the paradox of modern India, a society that appears democratic on the surface but remains deeply hierarchical in practice. Thus, the conflict between Paritosh and Dipika is not merely an intergenerational or familial dispute; it symbolizes the enduring rigidity of the caste system in modern Indian society. Through this narrative, *Sacred Games* highlights how caste-based social tensions remain deeply rooted, even in urban environments and among educated, affluent families.

Religious conflict is represented through the experiences of the character Chotta Badriya. He is one of Ganesh Gaitonde's most trusted men and comes from the Muslim community. The conflict begins when a clash breaks out between Gaitonde's gang and a group of youths from the Janpura area, which eventually escalates into communal violence. This incident leads to the expulsion of Muslim residents from the Gopalmath area, including Chotta Badriya's family. The conflict not only leaves emotional scars on the character, but also highlights how inter-religious tensions can result in systematic exclusion, through forced evictions, property seizure, and the marginalization of minority groups.

*“And I asked, what about the Muslims in Gopalmath, what happened to them, are they alright? On the eastern side of the basti we had maybe sixty Muslim families, mostly tailors and factory workers, some of their sons worked for me. But when I asked about them my boys shrugged.”. (p.386)*

This data reveals the indifference shown by Ganesh's men toward the Muslim residents who once lived in Gopalmath. Following the violent clashes between Janpura youths and Ganesh's gang, the gang took control of areas previously occupied by Muslim families. Chotta Badriya's anger, expressed in his confrontation with Ganesh, reflects his sense of betrayal by his own group. As a Muslim, he feels that he is no longer considered part of the gang simply because of his religious identity. This illustrates that individual loyalty is not enough to overcome communal boundaries when identity-based conflict emerges. Chotta's emotional response is a manifestation of deep disappointment with a social system that collectively labels and marginalizes certain groups, even when individuals from those groups have shown loyalty and made sacrifices. This representation underscores that religious identity remains a dominant factor in shaping social boundaries in modern Indian society.

Ganesh, as the gang leader, feels guilty about what happened and eventually seeks to repair his relationship with Chotta. However, this effort creates internal conflict, as Hindu members of Ganesh's gang begin to question where his loyalties lie, whether with them or with the Muslims. This is made clear when one of his men directly asks him:

*“The boys are saying... some of them are asking whether Bhai is with us, or with the Muslims?”. (p. 391)*

This kind of social reality is not only depicted in fiction but also reflects actual conditions in Indian society. (Shah, 2019) argued that urbanization in India does not automatically dissolve social divisions based on religion and caste. On the contrary, large cities tend to show increasing spatial and social segregation among communities. The caste-based communal identities are often more visibly maintained in urban areas than in rural ones. The same applies to religious segregation. Thus, cities do not serve as inclusive spaces for social integration, but rather reinforce identity boundaries that are exploited for political and power-related purposes.

This is clearly illustrated in the expulsion of the Muslim community from Gopalmath. When sectarian violence breaks out, Muslims not only become victims of physical attacks but also lose their homes and their social standing within the broader community. This aligns with Shah's argument that communal conflict in modern Indian society often results in the permanent exclusion of minority groups. *Sacred Games* powerfully and realistically portrays this reality, showing that despite India's economic growth and rapid urban development, its social foundation remains deeply shaped by identity-based conflict and religious inequality.

Thus, the conflict between Chotta Badriya and his group is not merely a personal issue, but a reflection of a broader social system in India that fails to accommodate diversity in an equitable way. This tension reveals that the reality of modern Indian society is still haunted by a legacy of social separation, one that is not only symbolic but also material and political. In this context, *Sacred Games* serves as

a critical reflection on the fragile dynamics of contemporary Indian society in confronting religious pluralism in the public sphere.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

This chapter is the closing part of the research which contains conclusions and suggestions. In this chapter, the researcher presents the main summary of the analysis results related to the social conflict experienced by the main character in the novel *Sacred Games* and how to resolve it. The conclusion is compiled based on two main focuses in accordance with the formulation of the research problem, namely regarding the types of social conflicts that arise and the mechanisms for resolving them. In addition, the researcher also provides several recommendations that are expected to be valuable input for further research.

#### **A. Conclusion**

This study aims to examine how various forms of social conflict are represented through the experiences of the characters in the novel *Sacred Games* by Vikram Chandra, using Georg Simmel's theory of social conflict and A.M. Shah's concept of modern Indian society. Based on the findings, the characters encounter four main types of social conflict, which are antagonistic conflict, legal conflict, conflict of interest, and conflict in an intimate relationship. Antagonistic conflict is represented through Ganesh's confrontations with Anil Kurup, Suleiman Isa, and Bada Badriya. These encounters involve direct aggression and struggles for control and dominance. Legal conflict is evident in Ganesh's interaction with law enforcement, especially with

Inspector Majid Khan, which highlights the ongoing tension between criminals and formal legal institutions. Conflict of interest is present in Paritosh and Ganesh, as well as Guru-ji and Ganesh, where conflicting goals and ambitions lead to manipulation and betrayal. Meanwhile, conflict in an intimate relationship is shown through the interactions between Jojo and Ganesh, Chotta Badriya with Ganesh, Guru-ji with Ganesh, and in the family conflict between Dipika and her father Paritosh, which reveals generational, emotional, and ideological clashes. These social conflicts are resolved in the novel through three primary methods, namely victory, compromise, and reconciliation. Moreover, the conflicts portrayed in the novel resemble those found in modern Indian society. The antagonistic conflicts mirror the violent power struggles often seen in urban criminal settings. Legal conflicts such as Ganesh's arrest reveal how legal systems can be influenced by money and political power. The conflict of interest involving religious and spiritual leaders reflects how spiritual authority may be used to serve hidden personal or political goals. Finally, conflict in an intimate relationship reflect the ongoing impact of caste-based restrictions and religious tensions, especially in matters related to marriage and family decisions. Hence, the novel *Sacred Games* not only serves as literature but also as the portrayal of social conflict in modern Indian society.

## **B. Suggestion**

This study focuses on the social conflict experienced by Ganesh Gaitonde using Georg Simmel's conflict theory. However, there are other topics that can be explored



in this novel. The researcher recommends that further studies can explore the novel from different perspectives by using other theories and approaches to enrich the analysis. For example, a literary psychology approach that refers to Erik Erikson's theory of identity development or Freud's internal conflict theory can help deepen the inner conflicts and psychological motivations of the characters in the novel. In addition, feminist theories from Simone de Beauvoir or Judith Butler can be used to examine the role of gender and power in the narrative. Postcolonial approaches from Homi Bhabha or Edward Said are also very relevant to understanding the influence of colonialism on the social dynamics depicted in the story. Furthermore, Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis method can be used to reveal the symbolism and implied meanings in the text. By using these various theories, future researchers can provide deeper and more multi-dimensional insights into this novel. Therefore, the researcher hopes that the results of this study are useful and can encourage broader and more diverse further research.

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## **CURRICULUM VITAE**



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