



# **Navigating the painful journey from the depths of slum shadows to the haunting fears that linger in our minds: A heartfelt Marxist psychoanalytic interpretation of Deepa Anappara's "Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line."**

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## **Abstract**

Deepa Anappara's "Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line" (2020) delves into the disturbing issue of child disappearances in an unnamed Indian city, narrated through the eyes of nine-year-old Jai. While the novel appears to be a child-led detective story on the surface, a closer examination reveals deeper themes of class oppression and psychological trauma that shape the characters' lives. By applying a Marxist Psychoanalytic lens, this analysis uncovers how economic deprivation, systemic neglect, and urban inequality intertwine with the characters' unconscious fears and defence mechanisms, often leading to a sense of fatalism. The motif of the djinn serves as both a cultural coping mechanism and a projection of repressed trauma, reflecting the characters' anxieties about loss and vulnerability. Through this intricate interplay of social and psychological elements, Anappara's work challenges readers to confront the complexities of survival and identity, ultimately illustrating the profound impact of societal structures on individual experiences.

## **Key words:**

Deepa Anappara, Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line, Marxist Psychoanalysis, Class Oppression, Alienation, Lacan, Sliding of Signifiers, Child Narrator, Trauma, Defense Mechanisms, Escapist Fantasy, Structural Violence, Superstition, Urban Poverty, Coping Strategies.

## Introduction

In modern Indian urban storytelling, slums often symbolize the deep divides between different social classes. In "Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line," the narrative unfolds in a basti, a space that exists on the edge of existence, where survival feels precarious and the risk of being forgotten is ever-present. From a Marxist viewpoint, this basti illustrates the harsh realities of structural violence, where the working class is systematically deprived of essential needs like reliable housing, education, and safety. This deprivation creates an environment where residents are not just physically marginalized but are also stripped of opportunities, leaving them to navigate a world where their basic rights are overlooked.

Psychoanalytic theory adds another layer to this exploration by delving into how such harsh living conditions seep into the subconscious, fostering feelings of fear and superstition, as well as a sense of internalized oppression. Through the eyes of Jai, the young protagonist, Anappara brings a unique perspective to the story. His innocent view of the world juxtaposes the heavy psychological toll that poverty takes on those around him. While Jai's narration captures the curiosity and wonder of childhood, it also reveals the emotional scars that linger beneath the surface. His experiences reflect the resilience of individuals facing adversity, highlighting their struggles without diminishing the seriousness of their circumstances. Ultimately, Anappara's work serves as a powerful reminder of the complex interplay between societal inequality and the human experience, shedding light on the profound effects that such conditions have on personal identities and relationships.

## Class Oppression and Alienation

In "Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line," class oppression and alienation manifest vividly through various dimensions, as interpreted from a Marxist perspective. One significant aspect is the alienation from security, illustrated by the police's blatant indifference to the plight of missing children. This apathy underscores a broader societal issue where state institutions prioritize the interests of the wealthy, leaving marginalized communities vulnerable and unsupported in times of crisis. The lack of protection for these children reflects a systemic failure that highlights the disparities in how safety and justice are administered based on social status.

Moreover, the theme of alienation from community agency is prevalent throughout the narrative. The residents of the basti often find themselves relying on rumors and spiritual explanations—such as the intervention of djinns—rather than seeking justice through institutional means. This reliance can be seen as a manifestation of Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, where the dominant systems of power suppress collective resistance and undermine the community's ability to mobilize for change. As the characters navigate their reality, they are caught in a web of fear and superstition, illustrating the psychological impact of their socio-economic conditions.

Finally, the concept of economic determinism is poignantly reflected in Jai's father's unstable employment and the family's constant financial insecurity. Their precarious economic situation serves as a stark reminder of how capitalist structures dictate the boundaries of working-class life. The limitations imposed by their socio-economic status not only affect their physical safety but also shape their aspirations and sense of agency. Through these layers of alienation, Anappara's novel powerfully critiques the systemic forces that perpetuate

class oppression, revealing how intertwined economic and social realities profoundly impact individual lives and community dynamics.

### **Superstition as a Psychological Defence Mechanism**

From a psychoanalytic perspective, the djinn in "Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line" transcends its role as a mere folkloric figure, emerging instead as a powerful symbolic projection of the unprocessed trauma experienced by the characters, particularly the children. The way in which the children attribute the mysterious disappearances to supernatural forces serves as a psychological defence mechanism, allowing them to navigate the unbearable realities of their daily lives. In Freudian terms, this phenomenon can be understood as a form of displacement, where the anxiety stemming from systemic failures and societal neglect is redirected onto a mythical threat. This redirection provides a semblance of control in an otherwise chaotic and frightening environment, enabling the children to articulate their fears in a way that feels more manageable.

For Faiz's Muslim family, the djinn represents not only a personal coping mechanism but also embodies inherited cultural archetypes that resonate deeply within their collective psyche. From a Jungian perspective, these archetypes carry the weight of collective fears, shaped by historical experiences and shared narratives within their community. The djinn thus becomes a vessel for expressing the anxieties surrounding loss, vulnerability, and the unknown, reflecting a broader cultural heritage that informs their understanding of the world. This interplay between individual trauma and collective mythology underscores the complexity of coping strategies employed by the characters, revealing how deeply ingrained cultural narratives can shape their responses to adversity. Through this lens, Anappara illustrates the profound impact of superstition as a psychological defence mechanism, shedding light on the intricate ways in which individuals confront and make sense of their experiences in the face of systemic oppression and existential fears.

### **Childhood Voice and the Unconscious**

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### **Repression and Normalization of Violence**

In "Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line," the repeated exposure to child disappearances, police brutality, and domestic tensions becomes ingrained in the children's perception of reality, leading to a normalization of violence that shapes their worldview. Freud's theory of repression offers insight into how these traumatic events are often buried within the unconscious mind, only to resurface in indirect ways, such as through dreams, fears, or, as seen with Jai, through engaging in detective role-play. This form of imaginative play serves as a coping mechanism, allowing Jai to process and confront the chaos surrounding him while simultaneously distracting him from the harsh truths of his environment.

From a Marxist perspective, this normalization of violence serves a dual purpose: it not only desensitizes the children to the brutality of their circumstances but also benefits the ruling class by keeping the oppressed in a state of docility. When individuals become accustomed to violence and injustice, they are less likely to challenge the systemic structures that perpetuate their suffering. This dynamic effectively distracts them from seeking meaningful change, reinforcing the status quo and hindering efforts toward social progress. Anappara's narrative, therefore, not only highlights the psychological impacts of repression but also critiques the societal systems that exploit such normalization, shedding light on the interconnectedness of personal trauma and broader socio-political realities. Through this lens, the story calls attention to the urgent need for awareness and action in the face of ongoing violence and oppression.

### **Conclusion**

Through the integrated perspectives of Marxist theory and psychoanalysis, "Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line" transcends the confines of a simple child's mystery narrative, evolving into a complex psychological map that illustrates the interplay between class trauma and unconscious fear. The novel poignantly demonstrates how economic structures and psychic processes are intricately linked: poverty generates insecurity, which in turn nurtures superstition, leading to a deflection of attention from the underlying systemic injustices at play. Anappara's work not only elicits empathy for the characters and their struggles but also serves as a catalyst for political awakening. It compels readers to engage with both the material realities of inequality and the psychological impacts of living within such oppressive conditions. By doing so, the novel encourages a deeper understanding of how these dimensions intersect, urging a collective consciousness that recognizes the need for systemic change alongside a recognition of individual trauma. Ultimately, "Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line" stands as a powerful commentary on the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity and the urgent necessity for societal transformation.

## Work cited

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