

# Beyond the Seven Ages: Reimagining Life, Death, and Renewal in *Death to Womb*

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## Abstract

*This study discusses the book *Death to Womb*, written by Anirudh Sreenath. The book mainly talks about identity, change, and new beginnings in human life. The stories in the book are connected to visual portraits. Each image becomes the starting point of a story. Because of this style, the book does not follow a normal story order. Many stories usually show life moving from birth to death. But in this book, death is not shown as the end of life. Instead, it becomes a moment that leads to reflection and change. This study uses three ideas to understand the text. These ideas are liminality, identity, and ekphrasis. Through these ideas, the characters in the book can be seen living in situations that are neither complete nor stable. They move between silence and expression, loss and recovery, and confusion and understanding. The title *Death to Womb* itself shows this movement. Death here does not mean an end. It suggests a stage that leads to a new beginning. The book also connects visual images with storytelling. Because of this connection, the stories create a space where characters slowly understand themselves and change over time. For this reason, *Death to Womb* can be seen as an important work in contemporary Indian English literature.*

**Keywords:** Liminality, Identity, Ekphrasis, Transformation, Renewal.

Modern literature often focuses on human emotions and identity rather than simple plots. Many writers today try to show how people struggle to understand themselves. Because of this, stories often explore change in a person's life. In this context, *Death to Womb* by Anirudh Sreenath becomes an interesting text to study. The book mixes visual portraits with written stories. This makes it different from a traditional short story collection. The author uses this style to explore ideas about life, death, and identity. Instead of showing death as a final stage, the book presents it as a moment of pause. In these moments, the characters start thinking about their lives and their experiences. Many characters in the book feel uncertain about themselves. They seem to stand between their past and their future. Because of this, their identities are not stable.

As the stories continue, the characters slowly begin to understand themselves. Their memories and experiences help them build a new sense of identity. This shows that identity does not remain fixed. It

develops over time. One important idea used in this study is liminality. This concept was first introduced by Arnold van Gennep and later explained further by Victor Turner. Van Gennep explains that human life often includes stages of transition. These stages include separation, a middle stage, and reintegration. Turner describes the middle stage as a time when a person stands between two identities. During this period, people may feel confused or uncertain. But this stage can also help them grow and understand themselves better. In *Death to Womb*, this idea is clearly visible.

Even the title shows movement between two states. Death does not mean disappearance here. Instead, it becomes a step that leads to renewal. Another idea used in this study comes from Paul Ricoeur. According to him, identity is shaped through storytelling. People understand themselves by remembering and narrating their experiences. Through these stories, individuals slowly form their sense of self.

Another idea used in this study is ekphrasis. According to M. H. Abrams, ekphrasis refers to writing that is based on visual art. In *Death to Womb*, each story begins with a portrait. The image becomes the starting point for the narrative. Because of this method, art and storytelling work together. The images help the reader imagine the emotions of the characters. At the same time, the words explain the deeper meaning behind the images. This connection between image and story also supports the idea of transformation in the book.

Many scenes in *Death to Womb* take place in quiet and still environments. These spaces reflect the inner feelings of the characters. For example, empty rooms and silent moments appear frequently in the stories. These scenes show that the characters are thinking about their past and their future. Such moments allow them to reflect on their lives. In the book, death is not shown as a tragic ending. Instead, it appears as a pause that allows characters to reconsider their lives. The symbol of the womb is also important in the text. A womb usually represents protection and the beginning of life. When the ideas of death and womb are placed together, the meaning becomes deeper. Death becomes a stage that leads to a new beginning. Through this idea, the book suggests that life and death are not opposites. They are connected parts of the same cycle.

Another strong theme in the book is the idea of fragmented identity. Many characters feel distant from society and their relationships. Sometimes they even feel disconnected from themselves. Because of this, their identities seem broken. However, these struggles also help them grow. Their memories and experiences shape who they become. This idea becomes clear in the story "The Speech." In this story, the main character moves from silence to public speaking. At first, silence represents fear and insecurity. The character feels unnoticed and unsure. Later, when the character begins to speak, it becomes an important moment. Speaking allows the character to express identity and confidence. Through this act, the character begins to recognise their own voice. This shows that expression can play a strong role in shaping identity.

The structure of the book also reflects the theme of transformation. Each story begins with an image and slowly becomes a narrative. At first, the image is silent. But through storytelling, it gains meaning. This process is similar to the journey of the characters. Just as the image becomes a story, the characters move from confusion toward understanding. The stories focus more on thoughts and emotions rather than fast action. Because of this, readers are encouraged to think about the deeper meaning of the text. The book, therefore, stands between visual art and literature.

*Death to Womb* is not simply a book about death or sadness. It mainly explores change and renewal. Through quiet moments, emotional struggles, and visual storytelling, Anirudh Sreenath shows that difficult experiences can lead to growth. The movement from death to womb suggests that every ending can lead to a new beginning. The book also shows that identity is not fixed. It changes through memory, experience, and expression. In this way, the text contributes to contemporary Indian English literature and presents the idea that life is always in a process of change.

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