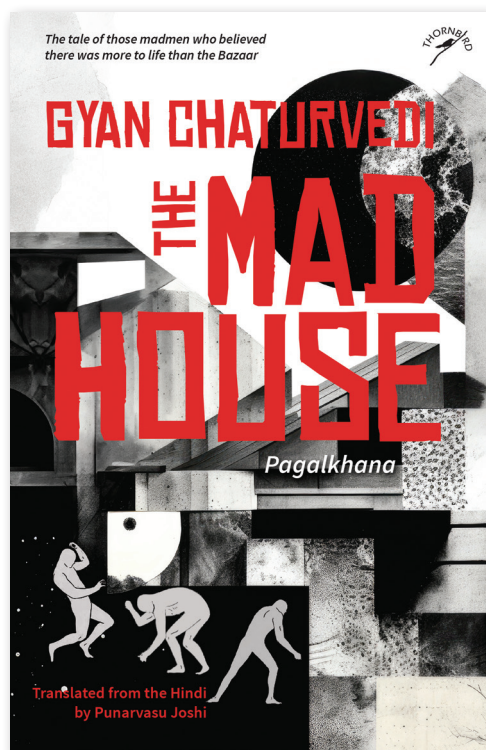




The novel explores shifts in the psyche, belief systems, self-respect, politics, and societal dynamics post-liberalization.

Chronicles the psychological impact of liberalization on Indian society during the 1990s.

Unravels a cat-and-mouse chase between the citizen and the market forces in a changing society.



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The Madhouse *Pagalkhana*

Gyan Chaturvedi

Translated from the Hindi by Punarvasu Joshi

When the Bazaar reigns, the Citizen's identity unravels in a post-liberalisation maze

The novel *The Madhouse* is an allegorical novel that chronicles the jarring transformations occurring in the psyche of the Indian society by the onslaught of liberalisation in the 1990s. It is in this reign of the free-market economy and excessive consumption that the nameless characters of *The Madhouse* find themselves.

In fact, in a way, there are only two characters in this novel. There is 'The Bazaar', representing the free - market forces, and then there is 'The Citizen', whose reincarnations within the various vignettes of the novel are trapped in the vicious cycle of distress and fears which manifest themselves in myriad situations. But, fundamentally, it is only one character. Somewhere, his dreams have been stolen, somewhere else, his memories have been abducted. In another situation, he has forgotten who he is and in yet another one, he is looking for a lock to safeguard himself from the prying eyes of the Bazaar— but the Bazaar is looking for him.

In this game of cat and mouse between the Citizen and the Bazaar, Dr Chaturvedi manages to capture the subtle as well as profound changes related to people's psyche, belief systems, notions of honour and self-respect, politics and the dynamics within society that have occurred post-liberalisation.



Gyan Chaturvedi has elevated Hindi satire to new heights after Harishankar Parsai and Sharad Joshi. With six novels, twelve satire collections, and over a thousand articles, he blends humor and social critique. A Padma Shri recipient, his writing explores politics, family life, relationships, and the contradictions of society.



Punarvasu Joshi, with a PhD in nanotechnology from Arizona State University, has translated 40 Hindi short stories into English for the anthology *A Journey In Time*. He edited a special issue of *Rachna Samay* on Michel Foucault, translating Foucault's works into Hindi.

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Extract from the book

Nobody knew, and then one day it ensnared the whole world. Not a single human being came to know about this, and the free-market forces took over the whole world. Their ever-widening reach extended across the whole planet in waves and turned the local communities, societies—and in fact—the whole world into a Bazaar. This tyrannical Bazaar, in its rampant and unchecked expansion, was colonising an increasing number of the planet's living places, gnawing away at people's livelihoods, ruthlessly displacing people from their traditional and ancestral homes—and most importantly—slowly turning the sacred institutions of a democratic society impotent. The free-market forces were sacrificing our physical, social, environmental and mental health at the altar of corporate profits.

In its unchecked march, the Bazaar never failed in reminding and assuring us, again and again, that incessant consumerism is the real path to happiness, that the governmental systems of checks and balances on market excess are the real cause of people's distress, and that the tsunami of economic globalisation is inevitable and an ultimate boon to the human species.

All of this happened with such efficiency that not even life could feel that it was being lassoed. A time came when thought and thinking, attire, clothes, emotions, love, smile, culture, art, music, literature, folk—everything in life moved according to the free market's will. Eventually, one after another, everybody fell under the market's spell and nobody had an inkling about what was going on. Neither were there any enemy paratroopers nor were there any battle cries. Nobody sounded any bugle calls. There wasn't any ammunition involved, and there were no marching bands. But the siege happened, just like that.