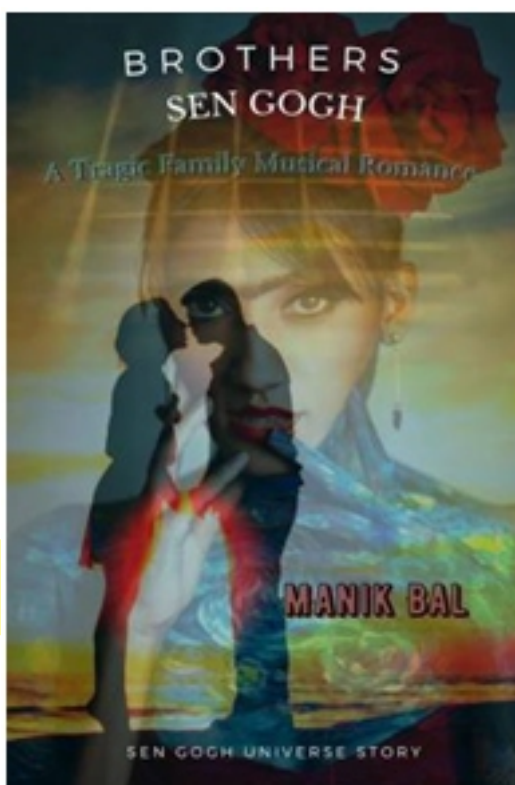


## REVIEW OF A BOOK

SAPNA DOGRA

Assistant Professor of English, Govt College Baroh, Kangra (Himachal Pradesh)

*Brothers Sen Gogh* | Novel | Manik Bal  
Nivant Publishing, 2021, pp. 296, Rupees 300  
ISBN: 9-781638-324683



### Pitch-perfect story of flawed brotherly love and music

Set in the early 2000s Manik Bal's *Brothers Sen Gogh* is an intensely beautiful, searingly powerful, tightly constructed novel that explores issues of filial love, flawed relationships, indifference to artistic talents, struggles of artists, identity in the city and place of art in society marred by monetary concerns.

The prologue sets the comparison between Soubhik as Vincent Van Gogh and Sourav as Theo Van Gogh. The knowledge of Van Gogh brothers is not a prerequisite but will greatly enhance the joy of reading this novel.

Set in Mumbai, the city is a character in itself in this novel. The novel explores the

“complexity of Mumbai” (p.10). Since the novel is based on music, there are ample references to musicians and bands like Mekons, The Beatles, The Ramones, Nirvana, Seater Kinney, Deep Purple, Bob Dylan, Eagles, etc. This novel can only be truly relished by those who have a significant knowledge of music, musicians and art.

All the characters, be it Nethra, Nipun, Prashant, Indrani, Mishraji, Guptaji, Suresh are well developed. With shimmering prose and mesmerizing precision, Manik Bal takes us inside the lives of Soubhik and Sourav. All his life Sourav struggles between “career that balances the financial aspect with the creative aspect” (50). According to him, “it was a choice between pragmatic compromise and uninhibited idealism” (53). With devastating emotional force Bal crafts a heart-breaking and timely story about the profound love that exists between brothers and the senseless loss of artists. In the part about Indrani and Soubhik's stint in the bar called 'Parivaar', it was like reading a chapter from *Maximum City* (2004) by Suketu Mehta. I wish Indrani's character could have been more developed to bring a more complex aspect of Soubhik's character.

Coming to the flaws in the book. There are random blank pages as on pages 92 and 280. The novel is strewn with wrong punctuation marks. The tacky and sleazy cover with a funny subtitle: A Tragic Family Musical Romance, doesn't add anything to the book. There are random indented paragraphs as on pages 190-196. A single line on pages 225 and 235 could have been adjusted. The book also has faded print and poor bookbinding due to which the pages began to come out in the very first read itself.

The editing mistakes are too many to point out. Take the following instances (mistakes set in bolds).

Ravindra . . .built an empire that **completed** stayed away from Bollywood. . .

**You**loving brother (39)

I **keeping** meeting new bands. . .(40)

I hope he **ican** deal with it. . .(65)

Do you think BhappiLahiri is a failure just because **they** are popular? (154)

Nethra held him close to her and showered **kissed** on his face and forehead. (208)

Soubhik laughed loudly and **the** wriggled in pain. (259)

Also, there are no annotations for Hindi words and phrases like the following:

Itnemeinitnaichmilega! (5)

chakna (149)

Kebab meinhatti (85)

There are conspicuous mistakes of punctuations while using double quotation marks throughout the book. Take the random superfluous period mark as on page no. 230 for instance:

“In the particular is the general.”

It's always a good idea to get the work edited by a professional copy editor. All in all, apart from the production part of the book, there are hardly any flaws in Bal's writing, storytelling, and imagination. I wish him all the very best for his future projects.