

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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THE ESSENCE / Susman (1987)

Shyam Benegal (1934-)

OVERVIEW

Auteur Shyam Benegal is a critically acclaimed filmmaker from the South Indian state of Karnataka. His father was a photographer and was the early inspiration for Benegal's entry into photography and filmmaking. By focusing on the everyday lives of simple folk, Benegal's films explore the harsh realities confronting diverse people in newly independent India. Other films on similar themes include *The Churning/Manthan*, *The Role/Bhumika*, and *Marketplace/Mandi*.

Film Like Shyam Benegal's earlier film *The Churning/Manthan* (1977), *The Essence* closely examines the cooperative societies established to unite artisans, farmers, and craftsmen based on their trade. The film's title, "essence," refers to traditional artisan workers' specialized skills passed down through the generations. Traditional artisans, like Pochampalli silk weavers, relied on their ancestral skills for self-worth, pride, and the means of sustenance. However, industrialization and mechanization devalued their skills and threatened the survival of handloom industries. As such, *The Essence* portrays the benefits of a cooperative society to the community of handloom weavers facing extinction in the new era of industrialization and mass production. In addition to addressing this social issue, the film also introduces viewers to different styles of saris made across India. The film features iconic actors such as Om Puri, Shabana Azmi, Neena Gupta, and Ila Arun. *The Essence* was screened at many international film festivals, such as London Film Festival, Chicago Film Festival, the Vancouver Film Festival, and Sydney & Melbourne Film Festival. Another director, Priyadarshan, remade *The Essence* in Tamil in 2009. The adaptation was called, *Kancheevaram* and featured the world-famous Kancheevaram silk sari weaving instead of Pochampalli silk in the original version. Like *The Essence*, the adapted version is also an award-winning film.

Background The film explores the tensions between industrialization and traditional artisanship in newly independent India. In particular, *The Essence* focuses on the lives of rural weavers whose livelihoods suffered devaluation by the arrival of the capital-intensive power loom. The power loom technique threatened traditional handloom craftsmanship passed down the generations as a family trade. On a side note, the film also acknowledges the communist uprisings in Telugu-speaking regions in the second half of the 20th century. The class disparity is a carryover from caste oppression and exploitation sanctioned under the Nizam kingdom during the colonial era.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Ramulu	A talented weaver
Gauramma	Ramulu's wife; Chinna and Parsuram's mother
Mandira	A designer who is passionate about traditional Indian handloom
Narasimha	A middleman trader who introduces Mandira to Ramulu
Bhima	An educated weaver who aspires to revive the handloom industry
Chinna	Ramulu and Gauramma's daughter; married to Nageswar
Nageswar	Chinna's husband; owner of a power loom factory in the city
Laxmayya	Ramulu's younger brother
Janaki	Laxmayya's wife

SYNOPSIS

Most of the film takes place in a rural village in present-day Telangana, which is renowned for the specialized handloom weaving technique that created Pochampalli silk saris. Mandira is a fashion designer who is committed to the cause of saving traditional Indian handloom weaving from the ravages of the newly introduced power loom industry. She is impressed with Ramulu's workmanship and orders two specially designed saris. Narasimha, a local financier and Ramulu's relative, facilitates the deal and secures a hefty cut from the payment for his efforts. Many handloom weavers, like Ramulu, face stiff competition from the power loom industry that uses less manual labor to yield more profits. Gauramma worries about her daughter's marriage and the resulting expenses. She siphons away some silk yarn from Mandira's order to make a silk sari for her daughter's wedding. Mandira expresses demands payment for the stolen silk yarn. Ramulu does not confess his wife's crime. However, the accusation questioning his integrity and honor pushes him into a state of despondency. Gauramma's gentle pleas coax him back to weaving, and he completes Mandira's order. Overjoyed by Ramulu's workmanship, Mandira arranges for Ramulu to travel with her to the international exhibition in Paris. In Paris, Ramulu and Mandira get the chance to speak to a broader audience about the importance of saving artisanal traditions, despite modern developments in the fabric and garment industry.

PLOT

The Pochampalli silk Mandira is a fashion designer who ardently believes in traditional Indian handicrafts, specifically handwoven cloth. She organizes fashion shows exhibiting the different fabrics, designs, and patterns she has collected from all over India. Mandira visits a village in the modern-day Indian state of Telangana to meet weavers who weave by hand, despite the pressures of industrialization. She is specifically interested in Pochampalli silk saris for their long-running tradition and cultural history in India. Narasimha, an affluent and influential middleman, becomes her guide and introduces her to Ramulu, a talented but impoverished weaver.



Family conflict At Ramulu's house, his younger brother, Laxmayya, gets rough with his wife, Janaki, for wanting to move out and set up their own home. He pushes Janaki down and beats her in front of the whole family. Janaki cries out loudly and threatens Laxmayya because of his cruelty and abuse. Fearing for Janaki's safety, Gauramma pleads with Ramulu to stop his brother from hurting Janaki. Mandira walks in on this scene and is immediately disgusted by Laxmayya's behavior.



A son's visit Ramulu's daughter, Chinna, is betrothed to Nageswar. Although Nageswar's family were also weavers like Ramulu, he chose to invest and work in the power loom industry instead of continuing the family legacy. During his visit, his mother, Parvatamma, attempts to convince him to relocate back to the village. When Chinna's mother, Gauramma, drops by, Nageswar hints that a dowry amounting to Rs. 2500 would convince him to marry Chinna sooner. Parvatamma tries to dissuade the talk of dowry because she believes dowries are an unfair practice.



Two brothers Satisfied by Ramulu's work ethic and talents, Mandira signs a contract with him. However, the town's weavers' cooperative society is chagrined by their failure to win Mandira's lucrative contract. After Mandira's departure, Laxmayya chastises Ramulu for being meek and subservient. Laxmayya believes they should have demanded more money for Mandira's contract. However, Ramulu believes in fair deals and refuses to ask for more or for payment before the contract is fulfilled.



Profession or death trap Despite being a highly talented and skilled worker, Ramulu feels trapped in his profession because of the low pay and the diminishing prospects. He shares his fears and frustrations with his wife, Gauramma. He frequently reminds his son, Parsuram, to study hard and escape the weaving profession.

Tensions within the cooperative society Narasimha makes an under-the-table deal with the cooperative society's corrupt secretary, Venkatesh. It allows him to procure silk yarns at a discount rate from the stockpile of silk given exclusively to the cooperative society's members. However, Bhima, a member of the cooperative society, catches him red-handed and demands justification. Narasimha's underhanded actions anger him.



New workers To finish Mandira's order on time, Laxmayya helps Ramulu hire extra workers, Gundayya and Yelamma. Aware of Laxmayya's lust towards Yelamma, Janaki strongly objects to the pair. However, Laxmayya ignores her objections, hires the workers, and has an affair with Yelamma. However, Gundayya is a hard worker and develops a good connection with Ramulu's son, Parsuram.



Stolen silk yarn Gauramma dearly wishes for her daughter to wear a silk sari at her wedding with Nageswar. Since they are poor and cannot afford a silk sari, she secretly siphons off some yarn from Mandira's order to weave Chinna's sari. When Mandira visits to check Ramulu's progress, she notices three saris on the loom instead of the two she had ordered and gets suspicious. She complains to Narasimha that Ramulu is unethical and greedy in copying her designs onto a third sari to sell on the black market.



The repercussions When Mandira and Narasimha arrive at Ramulu's house to investigate the third sari, it is nowhere to be seen. However, Mandira demands compensation for the silk used to weave it. Gauramma is tongue-tied and does not speak up to explain that the third sari is for Chinna's wedding. Narasimha hangs back after everyone leaves and uses harsh words to reprimand Ramulu for the supposed cheating. Ramulu remains quiet throughout the episode choosing to neither admit nor deny the accusation.



Workers are thrown out The unpleasantness between Yelamma and Laxmayya's wife, Janaki, erupts into conflict when the household discovers her affair with Laxmayya and her thievery of household articles. As a result, both workers are thrown out. Gundayya wails about the injustice saying, "We poor people have no say, do we? We're men. We're not beasts. And yet, we're treated like dogs."



The third sari Since Mandira demands payment for the pilfered third sari and the family has no way of raising the required money, Gauramma decides to sell the sari and raise funds covertly. However, the matter gets back to Narasimha, and he returns with righteous anger. Tired of Narasimha's authoritarian ways, Ramulu threatens to quit his partnership. The threat causes Narasimha to relent and placate Ramulu to continue the exploitative yet lucrative partnership. Gauramma confesses to Ramulu about her role in the sari's appearance in the black market and begs forgiveness. However, the fiasco leaves him so angry and frustrated that he refuses to return to weaving. His actions delay the completion of Mandira's order.



An argument Despite the delay, Mandira insists on working with Ramulu. She makes a deal with Gauramma. If Gauramma manages to get Ramulu working soon, Mandira will not give the order to someone else. On the way back, Mandira's boyfriend argues with her and critiques her decisions. He complains that she is too lenient with the workers. However, Mandira believes it is worth compromising to support the workers and ensure that the handloom industry does not disappear entirely. Her boyfriend believes Mandira's leniency to be wasteful because the collapse of the handloom industry is inevitable.



Chinna's marriage Despite hiccups over the dowry money, the two families reconcile, and Chinna gets married to Nageswar. The couple leave for the city where Nageswar runs a power loom enterprise. Chinna grows unhappy because she has no friends in the city and does not have work to do. When she offers to work at the power mill, Nageswar orders her to stay home. Growing increasingly frustrated, she returns to her natal home in the village. Although her mother comforts her, Ramulu is angered and orders her to return to her husband.



Communist strikes and unrest Soon after Chinna's return, the growing tensions between workers and the industrialists results in an open conflict where workers turn on their employers, accusing them of exploitation and ill-treatment. News of the unrest reaches the village through Gundayya and Yelamma, who manage to escape the violence. However, Nageswar's family and Chinna worry about Nageswar's safety amidst violent strikes and demonstrations. Although Chinna wants to return to the city and seek her husband, her father forbids her from leaving because it is unsafe. As the two families wait anxiously, a letter arrives from Nageswar to reassure them.



A hostile takeover At the cooperative society, Bhima openly accuses Venkatesh of accepting bribes and looting the cooperative society's resources. The society investigates to verify Bhima's accusation. By popular vote, Bhima replaces Venkatesh as the cooperative society's secretary. Bhima delivers a moving speech when he takes up the position articulating his mission and commitment to the cooperative society.



A trip to Paris Satisfied with Ramulu's superb workmanship, Mandira invites Ramulu to attend the exhibition in Paris and share his craft with the world. Many attendees at the exhibition admire and appreciate Ramulu's craftsmanship. When a French journalist asks about the future of the craft as India becomes more industrialized, Ramulu explains that working with machines would not bring the same satisfaction as working with hands. Therefore, he prefers to continue working in handloom and perfecting his weaving technique. Adding to that, Mandira says, "And that's why we must make room for talented craftsmen like him, even amidst industrialization." She also makes reference to human alienation in an increasingly mechanized and industrialized world.



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Ramulu Ramulu is a master weaver who is skilled in making Pochampalli silk saris. It is a skill passed down through generations and is a family trade. Although his family is upper-caste Brahmin, they are impoverished because of the rapid industrialization in the traditional handloom industry. Ramulu is proud of his trade. However, he also worries about his ability to earn enough money to provide for the family's future. His family expresses their affection by helping him in his work and participating in the different steps of weaving a silk sari.

Responsible Ramulu is the eldest member of his family, and he takes his responsibility toward the family members very seriously. Although Ramulu complains about his family members' actions, he never abandons them and always takes care of them. When his daughter, Chinna, abruptly returns home from the city without her husband, Ramulu condemns Chinna's actions out of fear for her future standing as a divorced or single woman. Nonetheless, he grows soft and extends acceptance toward her over time. When Ramulu witnesses his younger brother, Laxmayya, mistreating his wife, Janaki, he intervenes to stop him. He disapproves of his younger brother's loose morals and attempts to correct him on multiple occasions.

Aware Ramulu is deeply aware of the political and economic changes and their potential impact on his family. He fears that the rapid industrialization and mechanization seen all over India spell the end of handloom weaving. Therefore, Ramulu frequently reminds his son, Parsuram, to study, get an education, and escape the holds of a dying profession. Although Ramulu appears harsh when reprimanding his son, he does it out of deep concern for Parsuram's future, out of his awareness that Parsuram will not have a bright future as a Pochampalli silk weaver.

Cautious Unlike Laxmayya, Ramulu exercises caution in words and actions. He is a man of his word and never promises anything in jest. When Mandira first proposes the sari order, Ramulu hesitates because he worries that he does not have the means to complete the order on time. However, he accepts the order after hearing out Gauramma's encouraging words. Ramulu also displays caution in arranging his daughter's wedding. When Chinna's fiancé hints at needing a large dowry, Ramulu advises Gauramma to abandon the marriage proposal because he knows that raising a dowry would be impossible for the family in their current state of financial straits.

Mandira Mandira is a world-famous fashion designer, who is passionate about the traditional Indian handloom industry, especially handwoven saris. She appears in the film's opening scene and presents a superb introduction to the diverse handloom weaving techniques from different parts of India. Mandira also stands out among other women in the film for being bold, resourceful, and cosmopolitan.

Optimist Mandira displays optimism in many challenging situations in the film. For example, when Ramulu falls into depression and becomes incapable of working, she does not give up on him. Instead, Mandira makes a deal with Gauramma to motivate him back to weaving. There is another example when she stands up to her boyfriend. He frequently dismisses Mandira's efforts to revive the handloom industry as worthless and pointless in the face of industrialization and popularity of synthetic fabric. Nonetheless, she persists in her efforts to support struggling regional artisans like Ramulu. Ultimately, her efforts pay off because she gets the opportunity to curate and exhibit Indian handloom fabrics and weaving techniques in the fashion capital - Paris.

Curious As a fashion designer, Mandira expresses curiosity and interest in traditional weaving techniques. She greatly appreciates the weavers who inherit their craft from their forefathers and devote their entire lives to honing their specialized craft. Mandira genuinely appreciates Ramulu's talent and devotion after meeting him, getting to know his weaving technique, and seeing his finished products. Consequently, she also asks many questions about the process of dyeing yarn, the weaving techniques, timelines, and so on to understand the significance of Ramulu's specialized talent.

Sensitive As a woman, Mandira expresses empathy and understanding toward other women. During her first visit to Ramulu's house, she witnesses Laxmayya's abusive behavior towards his wife,

Janaki. She expresses disgust and almost abandons the plan to place the order with Ramulu and Laxmayya. Later in the story, Mandira applies a similar sensitivity towards Gauramma, who struggles to keep the household running during Ramulu's crippling depression. Although Mandira was well within her rights to move the order to a different weaver because of the delay, she compromises and stays with Ramulu because of Gauramma's plight.

Narasimha Narasimha is the middleman who represents weavers in securing deals for their products. He is also related to Ramulu and uses the connection to exploit Ramulu's labor and cheat him of his fair wages. However, Narasimha escapes the consequences of his corrupt and exploitative practices through his powerful connections with politicians and local authorities.

Selfish Although Ramulu is the hardworking weaver and the creator of world-class Pochampalli saris, Narasimha angles to gain a disproportionate amount of the profits for his work in securing sari orders from merchants. Narasimha is one of the reasons behind Ramulu's financial struggles despite being a talented and hardworking individual.

Insecure Narasimha is deeply aware of and envious of Ramulu's talent and fears being abandoned by Ramulu. Therefore, he often sabotages Ramulu's standing within the cooperative society and with Mandira. For example, Narasimha deliberately leaves out inviting Ramulu to the event celebrating Mandira's success with the handloom sari exhibition and Narasimha's new shop. When Mandira asks after Ramulu, Narasimha offers a disparaging comment, "He is a talented weaver, but he is eccentric."

Gauramma Gauramma is Ramulu's wife and Chinna's and Parsuram's mother. As the family's backbone, she takes her responsibility to her family members very seriously. Although she is not as talented as Ramulu, she always supports him in his work. She oversees a smooth-running household by doing her best to allocate their limited resources and resolve problems.

Planner Gauramma cares deeply about her two children and plans carefully to give them the best shot at a successful future. Accordingly, she works hard for Chinna's marriage. She takes the initiative to correspond with her in-laws, Nageswar and his mother, Parvatamma. Since Ramulu leaves off planning Chinna's wedding, Gauramma arranges the wedding ceremony. When Ramulu refuses to secure the extra funds to expedite Chinna's marriage, Gauramma does her best to compensate and gather the necessary funds. Similarly, she supports Parsuram's education and encourages him to progress toward a promising future.

Responsible Gauramma's sense of responsibility is evident when she attempts to make up for her mistakes. We see an example in Gauramma's actions in the incident involving the stolen silk sari. Her sincere desire for Chinna to be dressed in silk for her wedding causes her to steal some silk yarn from Mandira's order. When Mandira and Narasimha learn about the stolen silk and accuse Ramulu, Gauramma regrets her ambitious actions. She begs forgiveness from Ramulu for bringing him shame and dishonor. Another example is Gauramma's initiative to harbor Janaki, her sister-in-law. When Ramulu throws out his younger brother, Laxmayya, for his immoral behavior, his wife, Janaki, opts to remain with her in-laws. Gauramma takes responsibility for Janaki and protects her from her violent husband.

Laxmayya Laxmayya is Ramulu's younger brother. In contrast to Ramulu, Laxmayya is greedy, lacking in morals, and openly abusive towards his wife and hired workers. While Ramulu prizes hard work as the path to success, Laxmayya constantly seeks shortcuts to cheat his way to success.

Disloyal Many of Laxmayya's actions in the film demonstrate his lack of loyalty. He betrays his brother easily and takes advantage of his reputation to swindle resources from the cooperative society. His worst actions are directed at his wife. He cheats on her and disrespects her privately and publicly. Despite Janaki's explicit opposition to hiring Gundayya and Yelamma as helpers, Laxmayya hires them in order to have an affair with Yelamma.

Complainer Despite being a crook himself, Laxmayya frequently complains about Narasimha and his corrupt actions in swindling Ramulu. He berates Ramulu for not standing up to Narasimha and

demanding rightful payment. During Mandira's visit, he complains about the contract's unfair terms. He demands more money than the agreed-upon money.

Abusive Laxmayya is abusive towards all whom he considers weaker than him. Throughout his marriage with Janaki, he abuses her verbally and hits her in front of other household members. He treats her like an object instead of a person, his wife. He directs the same abusive attitude toward Gundayya, the hired worker. Laxmayya has an affair with Gundayya's wife, Yelamma. Then, he deliberately provokes Gundayya, knowing that Gundayya is powerless and incapable of fighting Laxmayya for having an affair with Yelamma.

Bhima Bhima is an educated young man who has been dealt many unfair turns in life. His father had been a weaver who did his best to secure his son's education and escape from the dying profession of handloom weaving. Despite being qualified as a teacher, Bhima is unable to secure a teaching position because he does not have the bribe money demanded by government officials for a position. Therefore, despite his father's best efforts, Bhima is pushed back into weaving.

Determined Bhima's determination emerges in his actions to investigate and eliminate corrupt middlemen who exploit the weavers. He is frustrated with the blatant corruption and exploitation in handloom weaving enterprises. For example, when he notices the cooperative society's secretary, Venkatesh, making under-the-table deals with Narasimha and Laxmayya to re-sell silk yarn allocated for cooperative society members' use, he challenges them openly. Furthermore, he calls for a vote to oust them from the cooperative society and volunteers to serve as secretary. In his speech, he expresses his determination to use his education to empower the cooperative society and ensure weavers' prosperity.

Confident Like Mandira, Bhima believes traditional handloom weaving deserves a place alongside industrialized power looms and synthetic fabric. Furthermore, he is especially confident in the cooperative society's power to lift and protect traditional handloom weavers. Therefore, he desires a more active role in the cooperative society in order that he is able to apply himself better.

THEMES

SOCIETY

Patriarchy The film takes a close look at patriarchy and its impact on society through the perspective of diverse women from different backgrounds. Moreover, the film critiques and condemns the harms perpetuated by patriarchal norms seen in marriages and civil partnerships. Despite Mandira's power and influence, she cannot escape her boyfriend's patriarchal authority. He follows Mandira and acts loving and obsequious in public. However, in private, he constantly undermines Mandira's decisions and actions, doubting her ability to succeed. Their heated conversation after visiting a depressed and despondent Ramulu is a definitive example. Firstly, he calls her "emotional" for being forgiving towards Ramulu and his family situation. Secondly, he expresses his opinion that Mandira's efforts will never be enough to save the handloom industry's inevitable demise.

Village women also suffer under patriarchal norms. Despite Laxmayya's abusive behavior, Janaki is forced to stay with him because of the importance placed on marriages and the power given to husbands. Beyond their marriage, Laxmayya uses his powers and privilege as a man to oppress and abuse other women, such as Yelamma, a hired worker. As a lower caste woman with no prospects, she takes advantage of Laxmayya's sexual advances to gain the small comforts she cannot procure on her own. Like many village women, Chinna also struggles to assert herself in her marriage to Nageswar. As the groom, he unabashedly demands dowry from Chinna's parents as a precursor to consent to the wedding. After marriage, he does not allow Chinna to work at his factory and orders her to stay at their rented home all day. Although he is not abusive like Laxmayya, he is aware of his power as a man and uses it to control Chinna's daily activities and movement.

Science-Technology After India's independence in 1947, the first prime minister promoted large-scale industrialization to secure India's future place among developed nations. However, the transformation took its toll on poor and working-class people whose traditional skills and craftsmanship

were suddenly declared too labor-intensive and time-consuming. Furthermore, the arrival of machines to mechanize manual work and speed up production economically damaged the artisans and manual workers. The film looks closely at the Pochampalli silk weavers as they struggle to survive and remain relevant in the era of power looms. Many weavers, like Ramulu and Bhima's father, are reconciled to the inevitable demise of handlooms and insist on their children choosing a different profession. As a result, celebrated traditional weaving techniques like Pochampalli silk weaving are slowly disappearing.

Class Rapid industrialization ushered in changes in status and opportunities for class mobility. Those with wealth invested in industries and machines to reap the most benefits from the new order. Simultaneously, those who relied on specialized skills and traditional craftsmanship grew more impoverished in the system because they did not have the means to adapt to the new order. The film captures this contrast through rural weavers, like Ramulu and other cooperative society weavers, and budding industrialists, like Nageswar. Despite belonging to an upper caste, Ramulu falls into a lower class status because specialized skills, such as Pochampalli silk weaving, are devalued in the modern industrial era. In contrast, Nageswar abandons handloom weaving and invests all his money in setting up a power loom enterprise in the city. Although his mother and wife prefer living in the village, Nageswar is unhappy about their small village's lack of opportunities and prospects. He points out Ramulu's trapped situation and asserts his argument that one must keep up with the changes and adapt to the new order to thrive and prosper. In addressing this difference of opinion, *The Essence* sheds light on the changes in the class system and the resulting divide between owners and workers in post-independence India. The workers band together and form unions to protect themselves from owners' exploitation of their labor. Sometimes, the union activities burst into violence and looting to vent the workers' anger at the owners' exploitation of workers' labor. *The Essence* captures this through the communist strike and its impact on Nageswar and his power loom enterprise. The eyewitnesses, Gundayya and Yelamma, report Nageswar being beaten up by angry workers.

Additionally, *The Essence* addresses the class struggle through the workers' alienation from the goods and services produced by their labor. While weavers like Ramulu work hard to make the luxury goods, they cannot afford to buy the products of their labor. These products are expensive in the market but the workers who make these workers are only paid a fraction of it. The rest of the profit is stolen by middlemen and factory owners, like Narasimha. *The Essence* captures this alienation of the worker whereby the silk saris made by Ramulu are so expensive that his family cannot afford one for Chinna's wedding. Therefore, Gauramma attempts to steal some silk yarn from Mandira's order to afford a silk sari for Chinna.

Work Work is an essential aspect of *The Essence*. Ramulu takes pride in his work but experiences some conflict in his attitude toward his profession. Although it is a profession he inherited from his forefathers, it is not lucrative in providing for his family. *The Essence* captures Ramulu's exemplary work ethic and commitment to perfecting his craft. Nonetheless, Ramulu's resentment also runs strong. Ramulu feels trapped in his profession because weaving is his only skill, and weaving is a dying craft in the modern industrial era. Although Ramulu is unhappy about not making enough money, he never demands more than a fair price from his customers. While Ramulu is the master weaver in the family, he is not alone in his work. Other members of the family assist Ramulu in completing his work orders. *The Essence* has several scenes showing Gauramma, Janaki, Chinna, and Parsuram doing the smaller jobs within the larger project of weaving a Pochampalli silk sari. Similarly, Ramulu's daughter Chinna inherits her father's strong work ethic. She gets frustrated in the city because Nageswar orders her to stay home and do nothing all day. She desires to work and be productive, just like she used to at her father's house.

RELATIONSHIP

Friendship *The Essence* sheds careful light on the value of friendships and their benefits for friends. As a result of Mandira's admiration of Ramulu's talent, a mutually beneficial friendship grows between them. Through that friendship, Mandira gets access to handloom products of superior quality, and Ramulu receives the opportunity to travel the world and raise awareness towards artisanal traditions like his own. Similarly, a friendship develops between Bhima and Ramulu. When Bhima's ambitions and

Ramulu's talent merge in the cooperative society, there are endless possibilities to advance the society's influence and extend protection to all handloom weavers in the region.