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The Limit of *Karuṇā*: Fostering and the *Samsāric* Cycle in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

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***Abstract*—This study analyzes Úrsula Iguarán's crucial role as a fostering figure in Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) by applying a Buddhist ethical lens, primarily utilizing the concepts of *Karuṇā* (compassion) and *Samsāra* (cyclical suffering). Drawing specifically on ethical definitions from Buddhist thought and supported by humanistic principles of sympathy, this research fills a scholarly gap by interpreting Úrsula's persistent caregiving as a moral identity within a decaying family. Employing qualitative textual analysis of twenty-two selected excerpts, the study examines how Úrsula's compassionate fostering of non-biological children, including Rebeca and Arcadio's offspring, constitutes the novel's primary resistance against abandonment. The analysis establishes *Karuṇā* as the operative ethical framework—defined as an unwavering commitment to alleviate suffering—that resists *Samsāra*, the structure of cyclical fate. The study argues that *Karuṇā* is a vital principle for sustaining human existence. It suggests that Úrsula's *Karuṇā*-guided fostering is a vital human act that affirms dignity; her efforts are ultimately undermined by the family's pervasive delusion and repeating taboo of incest. The study significantly contributes to Márquez scholarship by providing a novel, virtue-based ethical lens that moves beyond fantastic, ordinary, post-colonial, and identity allegories to interpret the limits of moral action within the Buendía family's generational suffering.**

***Index Terms*—fostering, *Karuṇā*, *One Hundred Years of Solitude, Samsāra*, Úrsula Iguarán**

I. Introduction

Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) presents a profound chronicle of the Buendía family and demonstrates how their deeply ingrained flaws—isolation, pride, and the failure to learn—establish a communal, inescapable generational destiny. The novel's significance lies in its depiction of time as a recurring pattern of consequences, rather than a progression. However, within this cyclical doom, Úrsula Iguarán emerges as the story's moral anchor. Her defining act is one of persistent caregiving (fostering), a continuous effort to provide stability and affection to the children of Macondo who are not her own, including Rebeca and Arcadio's offspring. While extensive scholarship has focused on the novel's macro elements—fantastic realities, political allegory, and repeated identity traits—it stops short of explaining the ethical force that resists this decay.

Scholarship on *One Hundred Years of Solitude* consistently identifies the Buendía family's cyclical suffering (*Samsāra*). However, a strong ethical framework for analyzing interventional moral resistance is rarely seen. While existing ethical readings focus on individual pride or fate, they have not adequately characterized Úrsula's lifelong caregiving as an active, sustained, and theoretically grounded moral intervention. Specifically, no comparative study provides a structure for interpreting her acts of fostering as a consistent practice of generational responsibility designed to alleviate the family's perpetual suffering. This study suggests that the crisis is essentially an ethical one, based on the family's cumulative failure of compassion. Therefore, the central thesis is that Úrsula's fostering is fundamentally guided by the Buddhist principle of *Karuṇā*, defined here as an active, mindful commitment to alleviate suffering. This principle serves as the operative ethical framework against the family's *Samsāra* (cyclical suffering), offering the novel's primary moral resistance to abandonment.

To model this ethical dynamic and address the critical deficit in analyzing Úrsula's generational responsibility, this study employs the Buddhist principles of *Karuṇā* (compassion) and *Samsāra* (cyclical suffering). Without claiming that García Márquez was directly influenced by Buddhist teachings, this framework is utilized not only as a universal ethical lens but as a structural model capable of distinguishing between the Buendía family's inherited moral debt and Úrsula's active and selfless redemption. Therefore, this interpretation does not displace the novel's established themes (such as fantastic realism and political critique). Specifically, *Karuṇā* is the relentless counterforce to the karmic cycle—the principle that accrues debt from every selfish act. The tragic, repetitive nature of the Buendía lineage which culminates in the final erasure of Macondo, illustrates *Samsāra* as the prevailing existential cycle. Only Úrsula's persistent and compassionate care provides a temporary, vital affirmation of dignity within that tragic loop.

II. Literature Review

Márquez's work is profoundly rooted in the circumstances resulting from the colonial ventures of Spain and North/English America in South/Latin America and can only be comprehended by considering the (post-)colonial experience (Ahmad & Afsar, 2014, p. 1). The whole saga follows seven generations of the Buendía family as they face

the rise and fall within the mythical town of Macondo. The novel's critical acclaim rests on its virtuosic use of extraordinary realism, which fuses the historical with the fantastic to explore Latin American identity. Scholars emphasize this blending: Geetha (2010) asserts that Márquez masterfully blends seemingly elements—the miraculous with the mundane, the historical with the fantastical, and the psychological with the surreal (p. 345). Similarly, Jaafar (2023) describes the novel as a remarkable example of magical realism that captures the political climate of Latin America at the time of its publication (p. 348). This blending is achieved through language that dissolves traditional boundaries, as Tyagi (2020) explains, it involves crafting an ideal fantasy in which factors such as time and language lose their significance (p. 342).

More fundamentally, the novel's narrative is built around a cyclic view of history and inherited consequences. This thematic focus on recurring patterns of fate and trauma is key to understanding the Buendía family's tragedy. Critics note that the narrative challenges traditional notions of linear time and progression. Estorino (1995) reflects that Márquez often leaves readers wondering whether the fate of his characters might have changed if they had truly understood their past. The portrayal of this recurring pattern of familial trauma and historical inevitability is central to its meaning, establishing the core problem this study addresses.

A. Thematic Context: Úrsula's Moral Role and the Fostering Motif

Within the expanding world of the Buendía family in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, several characters are vividly portrayed: José Arcadio Buendía with his grand visions, Colonel Aureliano Buendía with his relentless wars, and Amaranta with her cycles of longing and denial. Among them, it is Úrsula who emerges as the heart of the novel and the sole character whose moral consistency attempts to break these damaging cycles. Not only does she live through more than a century of her family's rise and decline, but she anchors the Buendía lineage with moral identity and emotional strength. As the matriarch of the Buendía family, Úrsula preserves continuity in a house often shaken by isolation and despair. Her persistent fostering—whether of Rebeca, who was not of her blood, or of other children left vulnerable within the family—reveals her underlying compassion and serves as the primary example of her moral action.

The concept of fostering is central to understanding Úrsula's moral role. As fostering is a human act of care, emotional support, and moral responsibility, in the novel it refers to taking in and nurturing a child who is not one's own by birth, providing them protection and guidance. Academically, foster parenting involves "nurturing, promoting child development, and providing guidance and discipline" (Barbell & Freundlich, 2001, p. 20). Beyond formal structures, fostering also captures family life: sibling companionship and parental love, affirming that "Foster care is family care" (Sinclair, 2005, p. 16). However, this caregiving context is fragile, often marked by hardship, including the "confusion, fear, loss, sadness, and anxiety" experienced by children (Bruskas, 2008) and the potential for emotional abuse (Masha & Botha, 2021, p. 504). Drawing on these insights, this study defines fostering as an ongoing act of care and emotional support extended to a child not one's own by birth within the family sphere—an act that provides guidance and affection. This understanding frames the analysis of Úrsula's role in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, in which her consistent nurturing reflects a profound care amid moral decadence.

B. Philosophical Framework: Karuṇā and Samsāra as the Ethical Lens

While fostering often takes place within vulnerable circumstances, *Karuṇā*, or compassion, becomes not only helpful but essential. The word *Karuṇā* in *Pāli* (or *Karuna* in Sanskrit) refers to compassion, a deep, heartfelt desire to ease the suffering of others through kindness and care. It is one of the four sublime states (*Brahmavihāra*), alongside loving-kindness (*Mettā*), equanimity (*Upekkhā*), and sympathetic joy (*Muditā*), each representing important spiritual dispositions that cultivate emotional balance. In Buddhist philosophy, *Karuṇā* is not simply a feeling of sympathy, but an active moral force in awareness and responsibility. Vietnamese Buddhist teacher Hanh (2010) states that as our ignorance decreases, so do craving, hatred, pride, doubt, and rigid views, while love, compassion, joy, and equanimity grow (p. 30). Similarly, Thai Buddhist scholar Payutto (2011) emphasizes that by cultivating love and kindness toward others and striving for their welfare, we will also find happiness within ourselves (p. 8).

The application of *Karuṇā* as a universal ethical lens is formally supported by the tradition of virtue ethics across disparate philosophical traditions. For instance, Xenophon (2013) notes that humans are endowed with the principles of both friendship and discord. Friendship arises from their need for one another, their sympathy for each other's struggles, their willingness to help in times of need, and their gratitude for the support they receive from others (p. 69). This focus on mutual sympathy and active support aligns with the core impulse of *Karuṇā* to alleviate suffering. In addition, Harvey (2014) emphasizes that being alienated from nature also means being disconnected from our species' true potential. This disconnection sparks a sense of rebellion, turning words like dignity, respect, compassion, caring, and love into revolutionary calls, while values such as truth and beauty take the place of the harsh logic of social labor (p. 262). Harvey's argument justifies the use of compassion and dignity as essential acts of ethical resistance against social collapse. Therefore, this study adopts *Karuṇā* as a moral principle: an active, mindful commitment to alleviate suffering. In the context of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, this commitment manifests as Úrsula Iguarán's consistent practice of compassionate fostering, providing moral stability and affirming dignity to children who are not her own. This precise understanding informs the analysis of Úrsula's role, allowing us to examine how her compassion confronts the family's pervasive delusion and repeating cycles of suffering.

Recent scholarship confirms a strong and growing interest in applying the Buddhist ethical principle of *Karuṇā* (compassion) to diverse literary traditions, which lays the critical groundwork for the current study's framework. Comparative analyses have specifically tackled the complex relationship between Western concepts of compassion (like *agape*) and the Eastern concept of *Karuṇā*, arguing for the necessity of cross-cultural ethical models in understanding global narratives (Augustine & Wayne, 2019). This comparative approach is reinforced by studies that examine the evolution of compassion—its theological and secular boundaries—within European literature from the Medieval period onward, confirming that the concept of merciful care is a fluid, evolving structure within the Western canon (Barnes, 2022). Moreover, the effectiveness of *Karuṇā* as an analytical tool is demonstrated in non-Western fields, particularly in Indian drama, where the application of Karuna Rasa theory successfully reveals how narrative compassion shapes emotional depth and audience empathy (Chakravarty & Thenmozhi, 2024). Collectively, these works signal a critical movement toward transcending geographical and cultural boundaries in ethical literary analysis, thus justifying the present study's approach to apply the non-Western principle of *Karuṇā* to interpret Úrsula's role in García Márquez's Latin American masterpiece.

Although neither Úrsula Iguarán nor Gabriel García Márquez are situated within a Buddhist tradition, analyzing *One Hundred Years of Solitude* through Buddhist philosophy, specifically *Karuṇā* and fostering, allows for an exploration of moral caregiving that transcends cultural and religious boundaries. Characterized by cycles of suffering and abandonment, the novel reflects key concerns in Buddhist thought, particularly the notion of *Samsara* (the cycle of birth, suffering, and death), which this study later returns to as understanding familial trauma. Within this context, Úrsula's enduring acts of caregiving emerge as stabilizing forces that counteract chaos and decline. Buddhist concepts such as *Karuṇā* provide a key concept for interpreting her actions as a virtue-based response to suffering. By foregrounding moral awareness and selfless care, the Buddhist framework values how Úrsula's role extends beyond duty becoming a mental and spiritual stability. Therefore, the use of Buddhist philosophy does serve as interpretive aspects, a way to draw meaningful connections between universal human experiences and moral philosophies across traditions.

What emerges is more than an interpretation. In this study, *Karuṇā* is defined as an awareness of another's suffering paired with a sincere and consistent effort to ease that suffering through everyday love and patience. This definition shapes the analysis of Úrsula's behavior, revealing how her fostering acts are imbued with a compassionate spirit that supports those around her. The research objectives are: (1) to analyze how Úrsula Iguarán's fostering of children not her own by birth is portrayed in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*; (2) to examine how the fostering reflects *Karuṇā* as a moral force within the novel's larger social and familial context.

III. Methods

To rigorously verify the central thesis that *Karuṇā* operates as the novel's ethical counterforce, this study employs a qualitative, interpretive textual analysis design. This approach synthesizes literary analysis of the primary text with an interdisciplinary application of Buddhist moral philosophy. The reliance on close reading and coding is essential to isolating and analyzing the granular relationship between the novel's portrayal of familial suffering and the character's ethical responses.

This study's analysis is centered on Úrsula Iguarán's role in Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (2014, Kindle edition) and draws on a focused interdisciplinary framework to interpret her caregiving acts. The primary source analysis is specifically scoped to Úrsula, the matriarch and moral anchor of the Buendía lineage, focusing on her caregiving toward children who are not her direct offspring: Arcadio, Aureliano José, Rebeca, and Arcadio's children. The secondary sources are drawn from three interdisciplinary categories: Literary Criticism, which provides selected scholarly articles on Márquez's fiction; Social/Developmental Studies, which offers definitions and concepts related to foster care and child development from social work and developmental psychology (e.g., Barbell & Freundlich, Sinclair, Bruskas); and Philosophical/Ethical Texts, which supply definitions and theological discourse on *Karuṇā* (compassion) from Buddhist teachings (e.g., Hanh, Payutto).

This study uses the defined concepts of fostering and *Karuṇā* as a two-part analytical framework to interpret Úrsula's actions and establish her moral role. These core concepts are operationally defined: Fostering is interpreted through social work and developmental psychology as the practical, ongoing act of providing protection, guidance, and emotional support to a child not one's own by birth within the family sphere; *Karuṇā* is defined through Buddhist teachings as an active, mindful commitment to alleviate suffering, serving as the moral principle underpinning Úrsula's caregiving acts. To conduct this analysis, twenty-two key textual excerpts detailing Úrsula's interactions with the specified fostered children (Aureliano José, Arcadio, Rebeca, and Arcadio's children) were selected based on the explicit depiction of a caregiving or disciplinary act aimed at restoring stability or offering moral guidance. Each selected excerpt was subjected to a coding process to link textual actions directly to the operational definitions of compassionate caregiving (e.g., "Compassionate Discipline," "Nurturing for Stability").

IV. Results

A. Úrsula's Fostering: Karuṇā as Consistent Moral Response to Abandonment

The study substantiates that Úrsula Iguarán's fostering reflects a *Karuṇā*-driven consciousness, defined as a compassionate awareness of *Samsāric* suffering expressed through consistent and heartfelt effort. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, her fostering is presented as more than a grandmother's duty which demonstrates an enduring commitment shown through love and patience. The analysis examines Úrsula's persistent moral initiative toward children abandoned within the Buendía lineage and signifies how this active *Karuṇā* provides a generational anchor against the inherited trauma perpetuated by *Samsāra*.

(a). Aureliano José and Rebeca: The Affirmation of Dignity

Although born into the Buendía family, Aureliano José is abandoned: "PILAR TERNER'S son was brought to his grandparents' house two weeks after he was born" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 38). The phrase *was brought* obscures who takes responsibility. Moreover, the naming *PILAR TERNER'S son* frames him as an appendage to a mother who cannot care for him. This erases any sense of him as an individual. Pilar herself, already raising two other children alone, is described in terms that reflect emotional depletion and isolation: "Pilar Ternera, who lived alone at that time with her two younger children" (p. 69). The phrase *lived alone* signals her social detachment, and when combined with the phrase *two younger children*, it suggests continued motherhood without support emotionally or socially. The disappearance of a stable partner and Pilar's responsibility for two other young children likely left her unable to care for another infant, which helps explain why Aureliano José was brought to his grandparents' house instead.

Meanwhile, Aureliano José's father, Colonel Aureliano Buendía, retreats physically and emotionally: "he went back to concentrate on his work as if nothing had happened" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 79). The clause *as if nothing had happened* reveals a denial that escalates into erasure—of the child, the act, and the relationship. His later statement, "The only effective thing," he would say, "is violence" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 101), signifies a full abandonment of fatherhood in favor of a personal mission that leaves no room for family. In the space left by these emotional and moral awareness, Úrsula's fostering emerges with unwavering determination. From then on, Aureliano José has adults around him (like Úrsula, Amaranta, or others) who look after him in some way. None of them take full responsibility for him as their child. Within the disregard and partial bonds, Úrsula becomes the one enduring support. Her fostering provides more than physical shelter; it conveys a sense of being truly watched over.

This fostering arises from the failure of biological parents. One is constrained by trauma; the other is limited by distance. Pilar, although nearby, is burdened by past suffering: she was "dragged along […] to separate her from the man who had raped her at fourteen" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 27). The phrase *dragged along* signals a lack of control and independence. It suggests that her life has been formed more by survival than by choice. Even worse, the rape implies lasting psychological harm and a disrupted path to adulthood that may limit her capacity to provide emotional security to others.

Pilar's limits as a mother arise from prolonged hardship. This leaves her emotionally depleted and socially isolated. Aureliano José is born and passed into another household: "When the son of Aureliano and Pilar Ternera was born and brought to the house […] with the name Aureliano José, […] he would be considered their oldest child" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 90). The clause *he would be considered* focuses on how his status is constructed instead of in true belonging. In other words, he becomes a child who exists within the family space and is looked after, but he lacks the secure recognition and unconditional acceptance that would give him true belonging. Providing stability that neither parent could provide, Úrsula's fostering stands out.

Úrsula's care extends to others in need, even when they are not her biological children. This shows that her fostering is guided by inner resolve. The distinction is important: her fostering responds to personal compassion. One example is Rebeca, an orphan who arrives unannounced: "They kept her, because there was nothing else they could do. […] call her Rebeca, […] the letter was her mother's name" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 42). The phrase *nothing else they could do* signifies the family's initial reluctance while it suggests that Rebeca's entry into the household was not planned. Even her name, appeared in a letter, underlines her unclear identity and outsider status. However, this uncertain beginning gradually transforms. The narration later reads: "So that she finally deserved, […], the name of Rebeca Buendía, the only one […] she bore with dignity until her death" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 44). The key word *finally* captures a long process of transformation. The words *deserved* and *the name* imply that identity within the Buendía family is not simply granted by birth. It is cultivated through actions and moral growth. At the same time, it demonstrates Rebeca's transformation into a morally upright figure who stands in binary opposition to Arcadio, whose cruelty reflects inherited power. Úrsula's fostering plays a significant role in this transformation. Her fostering unfolds over years. It provides Rebeca shelter and recognition. Therefore, her fostering restores what abandonment once erased: identity and belonging.

Úrsula's persistent fostering is the primary expression of *Karuṇā* within the Buendía household; it establishes the moral stability that allows even emotionally fragmented characters like Amaranta to extend care. Amaranta's care for Aureliano José, however, takes place within the structure and emotional stability maintained by Úrsula. Úrsula's natural strength supports the environment in which others, like Amaranta, are able to extend care. Most importantly, in a household often overshadowed by incestuous bonds and emotional fragmentation, Úrsula's decision to raise a child not her own becomes more than a maternal duty. In fact, it becomes protection. Her fostering reflects *Karuṇā*: a consistent moral force providing

human support without expectation of return. Úrsula's fostering resists abandonment. In a world of disconnection, Úrsula's love is unwavering, affirming dignity.

Úrsula's fostering continues into the next generation. After Arcadio's execution, Santa Sofía de la Piedad, the mother of his children, is left with three children. At this point, Úrsula again steps in: "The house was full of children. Úrsula had taken in Santa Sofía de la Piedad […] born five months after Arcadio had been shot" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 134). The description *the house was full of children* evokes not only physical space but emotional burden. This shows that her fostering expands even when all circumstances are already overburdened. The phrase *Úrsula had taken in* demonstrates an intentional choice to take responsibility amid loss. Moreover, this moment presents Arcadio's own past when he was left behind and raised by Úrsula. In Arcadio's children, abandonment could have repeated, just like in Arcadio's own childhood, but it doesn't, because Úrsula steps in to foster them. In choosing to raise Arcadio's children, Úrsula interrupts that form by refusing to let another generation experience the same abandonment that Arcadio once faced. In other words, her fostering breaks the cycle of abandonment. The descriptive qualities of stability, continuity, and protection suggests that her fostering provides more than survival; it provides grounding. Through such qualities, *Karuṇā* becomes generational. The repetition of care, as moral initiative, transforms compassion into legacy. Where trauma could reproduce itself, *Karuṇā* intervenes. Compassion becomes not only a feeling but a structure passed forward. As a result, *Karuṇā* manifests as a moral feature—a force that holds the falling apart family together across time.

Úrsula is not alone in extending care; her strength is supported by Amaranta, whose turn toward responsibility is initially complicated by her own emotional burdens. Amaranta's early life is defined by a refusal to connect, yet her most notable fostering act involves Aureliano José: "Amaranta took charge of Aureliano José. She adopted him […] who would share her solitude and relieve her […]" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 91). The phrase *took charge* suggests not only initiative but a necessity, a compelled response to circumstance rather than a free choice. Furthermore, the clause *share her solitude* implies a life structured by isolation, while *relieve her from the involuntary* conveys emotional burdens Amaranta cannot escape. These expressions reflect a woman struggling with unresolved grief. Amaranta's fostering appears to arise more from a desire to ease her own loneliness than from maternal awareness. Thus, her initial act of fostering functions as a coping mechanism, a way to transform personal solitude into a manageable form of attachment.

Despite her initial self-motivated approach, Amaranta gradually reflects her mother Úrsula in her consistency and commitment, ensuring that Úrsula's moral project is sustained. This consistency is established after Arcadio's execution when Amaranta steps in to help raise his daughters: "The twins were named José Arcadio Segundo and Aureliano Segundo. Amaranta took care of them all" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 134). Her continued fostering, first for Aureliano José and later for Arcadio's twin daughters, demonstrates a growing reliability in a role that was initially foreign to her. While her motivations may begin in personal guilt or emotional deficit, her action serves as an essential buttress to Úrsula's enduring support. Amaranta's role does not replace Úrsula's primary act of *Karuṇā*; rather, by becoming the second stable figure of care, she helps to preserve familial stability and continuity in the face of abandonment. This proves that the compassionate impulse can be learned and sustained across the generations.

Just as Úrsula attempts to shape Arcadio in the face of emotional disorder, she also restores dignity to those already touched by abandonment. This restoration of dignity begins first with Rebeca. When she enters the Buendía household under uncertain circumstances, Rebeca has not been left rootless because of Úrsula's long-term fostering. Later, this restoration of belonging extends beyond Rebeca. After Arcadio's execution, Úrsula also takes in Santa Sofía de la Piedad and her children: "The twins were named José Arcadio Segundo and Aureliano Segundo. Amaranta took care of them all" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 134). Although Amaranta is mentioned directly, Úrsula's moral authority and fostering remain central to the household's functioning. The emphasis on naming the twins situates them within the Buendía inheritance; Amaranta's role in raising them demonstrates how fostering continues to be redistributed after loss.

This redistribution of care reflects *Karuṇā*, compassion that takes responsibility where abandonment has left gaps. At the same time, the fact that fostering must begin again with another generation reflects the persistence of *Samsāra*: cycles of suffering that repeat until deeper transformation occurs. This act provides stability to a broken family. If caring for Aureliano José and Arcadio interrupts abandonment at its start, then caring for Rebeca and Arcadio's children affirms that dignity can be recovered after it has been lost. Úrsula's actions insist that no child should be cast aside.

(b). Arcadio: Karuṇā Tested by Tyranny and Accountability

Whereas the two boys are shaped by Úrsula's consistent fostering, Arcadio exposes another side of her challenge through disobedience and defiance. Although he is her biological grandson, raising him becomes a sharper test of her compassion. His story reflects a different kind of struggle structured by his biological parents' abandonment. First, this detachment can be traced back to his father José Arcadio when he returns to Macondo "so poor that Úrsula had to give him two pesos to pay for the rental of his horse" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 92). This moment signals not only financial ruin but a moral failure because his inability to provide for even basic needs reflects a withdrawal from paternal responsibility. That failure leaves Arcadio without a father figure, forcing Úrsula once again to shoulder the burden. Later, the narration states, "He [the son Arcadio] did not succeed in becoming incorporated into the family. He slept all day […], making bets on his strength" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 94). Just as his father abandoned responsibility, Arcadio himself exhibits withdrawal and disengagement, repeating the same form of disregard across generations. Additionally, the abandonment reveals itself in his mother, Pilar Ternera, who fades from the narrative and takes no consistent role in his life.

In contrast, Úrsula attempts to interrupt this cycle: when Arcadio is brought into the Buendía household, she agrees to foster him "with no privileges or discrimination" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 113). The balanced phrasing demonstrates her intent to promote fairness, treating Arcadio equally within the household, neither excusing his illegitimacy nor punishing him for it. Although García Márquez presents this account retrospectively—after narrating Arcadio's cruelty on page 108—the placement underscores Úrsula's role as the moral anchor of the family, whose fairness seeks to resist the abandonment and disregard that structured Arcadio's early growth.

As Arcadio grows tyrannical, Úrsula's fostering is tested. The story narrates: "'I dare you to, murderer!' […] '[…], son of an evil mother. That way I won't have the eyes to weep […] having raised a monster'" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 108). This passage contains multiple sharp clauses. The expression *I dare you to, murderer!* assert moral resistance, while *I won't have the eyes to weep* conveys the pain of seeing her fostering twisted by power. They also capture the paradox of compassion turned into sorrow, where fostering becomes both moral strength and profound grief. Crucially, the phrase *son of an evil mother* intensifies the moment. It not only condemns Pilar Ternera's withdrawal from parental responsibility but places Úrsula in stark contrast as a moral character who steps in where the biological mother has failed. The word *evil* primarily refers to the moral vacuum created by Pilar's absence, and its consequences are reflected in Arcadio's cruelty.

Pilar's disappearance becomes more than disregard; it suggests complicity in shaping Arcadio's descent into tyranny. Úrsula's role, then, is doubly burdened: she must care and confront what others neglected to correct. Likewise, the word *monster* affirms the depth of Úrsula's disappointment and shows that no matter how loving or devoted her fostering is, it still has limits. Úrsula's fostering, however, also carries protection and accountability. Therefore, her compassion aligns with Karuṇā, clear-eyed and morally firm. She does not abandon Arcadio; instead, she meets his cruelty with confrontation. As a result, Úrsula reveals that true compassion includes the strength to hold even those we love responsible for the harm they cause.

Despite their different roles, the fostering of Aureliano José and Arcadio reflects Úrsula's consistent response to abandonment, not a preference for bloodline. Arcadio experiences care characterized by discipline:

> … she had raised him [Arcadio] as a son, […], with no privileges or discrimination. Nevertheless, Arcadio was a solitary and frightened child during the insomnia plague, […], during the delirium of José Arcadio Buendía, the hermetism of Aureliano, and the mortal rivalry between Amaranta and Rebeca. (García Márquez, 2014, p. 113)

The phrase *no privileges or discrimination* emphasizes fairness. It shows that Úrsula's fostering is never distorted by hierarchy. At the same time, the description of Arcadio, *a solitary and frightened child*, suggests that even her firm guidance could be destabilized by the emotional chaos surrounding him, seen clearly in the following conditions: the initial insomnia epidemic, the driven practicality of Úrsula, the descent into madness of José Arcadio Buendía, Aureliano's self-imposed isolation, and the fatal feud shared by Amaranta and Rebeca. Therefore, Úrsula's fostering becomes the deliberate shaping of character amid abandonment, moral resistance shaped through disorder.

In spite of his cruelty and the failure of her guidance, the underlying strength of Úrsula's *Karuṇā* is still evident in Arcadio's rejection of his Buendía identity. His dignity rests on the fostering Úrsula provides. It gives both Arcadio and Aureliano José the confidence to stand apart. Here, compassion is moral guidance, an enduring force that enables one to face rejection without losing self-respect. The effect of Úrsula's fostering appears again during Arcadio's brief dictatorship. When Aureliano José is arrested for betrayal, he is publicly mocked: "'You [Aureliano José] don't deserve the last name you carry.' […], Arcadio did not have him shot. 'To my great honor,' he said, 'I am not a Buendía'" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 114). The expression *You don't deserve the last name you carry* questions identity itself. It casts the family name as something earned rather than inherited. Arcadio's unexpected responses—*To my great honor* and *I am not a Buendía*—transform that exclusion into self-definition. The responses show pride in detachment and suggest that Arcadio distances himself from a family legacy.

Meanwhile, his defiance remains paradoxical: in rejecting the Buendía name, he still affirms its power. He takes pride in distancing himself from the family inheritance, but that very act shows he remains bound to it. His pride rests on resisting the Buendía identity, which remains part of him no matter how much he rejects it. This moment may even characterize recognition between two fostered children, formed by abandonment but tied in complex ways to the Buendía name. Beneath this rejection lies a strength reflected by *Karuṇā*: neither Arcadio nor Aureliano José pleads for belonging, because Úrsula's compassion has already affirmed their worth.

While all these children benefit from Úrsula's fostering, each experience is formed by distinct moral needs. Aureliano José is raised under Amaranta's guardianship, which arises more from solitude than tenderness, as previously shown in the study; Arcadio is brought up with structure and discipline. In particular, Rebeca, arriving from outside the family, gains identity and belonging. Arcadio's children are accepted as lives worth protecting. These acts reveal a consistent moral intention: to step in where emotional responsibility and parental care have collapsed. Úrsula's fostering is an enduring expression of resolve.

Úrsula's fostering emerges as an enduring response to emotional breaks. It transforms each child's experience of abandonment into care, and that care gradually fosters subtle growth in those she raises. Her interventions reflect protection. Moreover, they provide a consistent moral presence that sustains the possibility of order and care in a household often shaken by deprivation and disorder. The analysis consistently demonstrates that *Karuṇā* functions as the key moral force in the narrative, explicitly expressed through Úrsula's persistent fostering and providing stability for the

children not biologically her own. This compassionate intervention is vital for affirming dignity and sustaining human existence within Macondo; however, despite the unwavering application of *Karuṇā*, the family remains ultimately trapped in the pervasive, catastrophic cycle of *Samsāric* decline.

B. Karuṇā as Resistance: Fostering Within the Samsāric Cycle

Demonstrating the compassionate feature of Úrsula's fostering as an expression of *Karuṇā*, these findings also raise a question: why must this fostering be repeated across generations? And why does emotional abandonment persist despite the presence of such moral figures? Although Úrsula fosters the abandoned with compassion, the Buendía family remains trapped in cycles of abandonment and incest. Her moral resistance holds back the collapse but cannot resolve its underlying causes. In Buddhist philosophy, the path to *Nirvāṇa* (liberation) requires not just *Karuṇā* (compassion), but also wisdom. Úrsula embodies the former; her struggle reveals the tragedy of acting without the latter. To understand the recurring structure of the family's suffering, it is helpful to turn to the Buddhist concept of *Samsāra*. Keown (2004) defines *Samsāra* as the recurrent succession of lives and deaths through which individuals pass, persisting until they reach the ultimate spiritual goal of Nirvana (p. 248).

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the repetition of names, traits, and failures—often described as a curse or non-linear history—aligns with the Buddhist concept of *Samsāra*, serving as a powerful metaphor for inherited familial trauma. In Buddhist philosophy, *Samsāra* refers to the cyclical nature of existence: birth, suffering, death, and rebirth—all driven by ignorance, attachment, and delusion. It is not simply a metaphysical cycle, but a moral and emotional structure that governs human experience, especially when suffering remains unresolved across time. As Hanh (2015) explains, the cycle continues because "there is being in this life, in the next life we shall have to be born, grow old, and die, and we shall have to continue in samsara" (p. 228). According to the meaning of *Samsāra*, fate does not sustain the cycle; it endures because individuals remain trapped in blindness and suffering. Promta (2024) similarly emphasizes repetition, observing that "People are born and born again in the samsara, and this has been considered as suffering" (p. 88).

Fostering and incest in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* are not merely personal or familial; they are manifestations of *Samsāra*. The novel presents a vision that aligns with the Buddhist concept of *Samsāra*: a world where suffering is inherited, and where even compassion delays collapse without proposing liberation. Viewed through *Samsāra*, Úrsula's fostering, discussed earlier as expressions of *Karuṇā*, takes on new significance. It becomes a recurring form that spans generations. Despite Úrsula's strength and belief, the Buendía household remains defined by abandonment which requires the cycle of fostering to begin.

Within this cycle, Amaranta clearly steps into a similar role without resolving the conditions that make such fostering necessary. Emotionally restrained and often consumed by inner sorrow, Amaranta becomes a fosterer to the next generation of abandoned children. The novel recounts that Aureliano José was taken in by Amaranta and formally adopted to serve as a companion, thereby mitigating her deep sense of loneliness (García Márquez, 2014, p. 91). This indicates that her decision stems more from personal loneliness than from deliberate moral responsibility. Later, her fostering expands to include Arcadio's children: "The twins were named José Arcadio Segundo and Aureliano Segundo. Amaranta took care of them all" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 134). These acts demonstrate Úrsula's earlier efforts. Within the *Samsāric* framework, Amaranta's fostering becomes a karmic repetition: compassion formed by unresolved sorrow, but not guided by liberating insight. While the impulse to protect and nurture remains noble, it does not free the family from generational suffering. Instead, it re-enacts it, binding even the fosterers (Úrsula and Amaranta) to the same structures they hope to resist.

The family's descent into *Samsāra* is defined by two recurring patterns—fostering and incest—which, though appearing morally opposed, are two sides of the same cyclical trap of inherited suffering. Úrsula's initial desperate resistance to incest and her consistent recourse to fostering are both non-liberatory attempts to escape the same generational curse. The repetition of fostering finds its darker counterpart in the recurring model of incest, this time in confusion and blindness.

In Buddhist thought, *Samsāra* is sustained not only by suffering but by delusion, the failure to attain wisdom, especially when individuals fail to see the consequences of their desires. This blindness is evident in the incestuous acts of Úrsula and Amaranta, which, though separated by time and intention, reflect the same inability to break from destructive repetition.

In the novel's early pages, Úrsula resists consummating her marriage to José Arcadio Buendía because they are cousins. It is because she fears that their children will be born with deformities. However, her resistance is broken: "José Arcadio Buendía went into the bedroom […]: 'Take them off.' Úrsula had no doubt about her husband's decision" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 22). This moment becomes the origin of the Buendía family's recurring cycle of incest and suffering.

Generations later, the same taboo resurfaces in Amaranta's relationship with her nephew, Aureliano José. What begins as maternal fostering evolves into a blurred intimacy as García Márquez narrates: "He kept on examining her, discovering the miracle of her intimacy […] he contemplated the way her skin tingled […] waking up in Amaranta's bed" (2014, p. 146). The repetition of incest suggests that even those raised within Úrsula's moral household are not liberated from the same emotional errors. In *Samsāric* terms, this is not only inheritance; it is entrapment. The Buendía family does not learn from the past; it relives it. Compassion and desire become cyclical forces that trap each new generation in the same moral disorientation that *Samsāra* describes.

The repeated acts of fostering and incest in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* reveal a family caught in the cycles described by the Buddhist concept of *Samsāra*. Without progressing toward healing or transformation, the Buendía household re-enacts abandonment and misguided love across generations. Úrsula's compassionate fostering, Amaranta's emotionally driven fostering, and their entanglement in forbidden desires form a closed loop, a cycle of care and harm that mimics the spiritual wheel of rebirth. Even the most morally sound actions, such as fostering, are not liberatory unless accompanied by awareness and wisdom. Compassion must be joined with insight into suffering and abandonment within karmic repetition; it risks becoming part of the cycle it hopes to break. The repetition of good intentions alongside moral confusion encourages the idea that emotional endurance alone cannot free one from suffering.

Within *Samsāra*, *Karuṇā* can slow the family's decline but cannot break the cycle of suffering, and Márquez's portrayal of fostering and incest shows that without the moral clarity of *Karuṇā* and the insight needed to escape *Samsāra*, human beings remain trapped in the very suffering they seek to overcome.

This study begins with the premise that if abandonment is a persistent condition in human relationships, as human experience suggests, the question that follows is how *Karuṇā*, or compassion, can meaningfully respond. In Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, this study finds that Úrsula does not respond to abandonment with despair, but with consistent moral fostering amid it. Her nurturing of children who are not her own, particularly Aureliano José and Arcadio, represents more than a grandmother's duty. She also fosters Rebeca, a girl of unknown origin, and later cares for Arcadio's children, giving each not only shelter but the moral grounding and dignity missing from their family. This leads to the main focus of the study: Úrsula's fostering reflects *Karuṇā*, compassion expressed through patience and responsibility.

C. Karuṇā and Samsāra: The Limits of Compassionate Resistance

While previous studies on *One Hundred Years of Solitude* often focused on political allegory (Jaafar, 2023), fantastic realism (Geetha, 2010; Tyagi, 2020), or narrative structure (Estorino, 1995), this study redirects attention to the moral dimension of care within the Buendía family. These existing perspectives successfully emphasize the richness of Márquez's symbolic design; they rarely address the ethical decisions characters make amid political and social collapse. In contrast, this research stresses the lived experience of compassionate action. Úrsula's consistent fostering emerges as the novel's primary form of moral resistance, a sustained expression of *Karuṇā*, practiced across generations. Furthermore, her unwavering ethical choice, juxtaposed against the family's repeating trauma, illustrates *Samsāra*'s cycle, where unresolved suffering recurs through time.

Although magical, ordinary, and political readings have long defined the novel, this study centers on the internal collapse catalyzed by abandonment within the Buendía home. Existing scholarship often portrays Úrsula as the embodiment of simple moral strength (Kapoor, 2021); this view overlooks the tragic limits of her ethical agency. This research is justified by a strong and growing interest in applying the Buddhist principle of *Karuṇā* to diverse literary traditions, providing the critical foundation for this cross-cultural analysis. Recent comparative studies have affirmed the necessity of such ethical models by examining the complex relationship between Western concepts of compassion and the Eastern concept of *Karuṇā* (Augustine & Wayne, 2019), and by tracing the evolution of compassion across the Western canon (Barnes, 2022). Furthermore, the effectiveness of *Karuṇā* as an analytical tool is demonstrated in non-Western fields, where it successfully reveals how narrative compassion shapes emotional depth (Chakravarty & Thenmozhi, 2024). While Úrsula's persistent *Karuṇā* is indeed a powerful moral act, a refusal to let others be discarded, this analysis demonstrates that it is ultimately caught in a cyclical trap. This study's core finding is that her ethical efforts to interrupt abandonment through compassionate fostering (*Karuṇā*) are consistently undermined by the family's pervasive delusion and repeating taboo of incest. This reading offers a new theoretical model that defines her failure not as a personal or narrative flaw, but as a *Samsāric* consequence of virtue.

This study establishes that the Buendía saga functions as a case study in non-liberatory virtue. Fostering guided by *Karuṇā* is presented not just as a family duty but as a human necessity, capable of restoring emotional bonds and affirming dignity within broken households. The repetition of both the fostering cycle and the incest cycle within the Buendía family is best read as a *Samsāric* struggle, where the cycle of suffering cannot be broken. This study argues that Úrsula's immense compassion (*Karuṇā*) is never fully joined with the wisdom required to achieve moral freedom. This theoretical framework provides an avenue for future literary analysis, where the interplay between *Karuṇā* and wisdom can be applied to post-colonial literature that grapple with cycles of generational trauma.

V. Conclusion

Tracing her fostering across generations, this research uses a qualitative literary method and insights from Buddhist philosophy to analyze how Úrsula's consistent care for Aureliano José, Arcadio, Rebeca, and Arcadio's children reflects *Karuṇā*, the concept of compassion expressed through moral clarity and emotional presence. Úrsula's *Karuṇā* is never abstract; it arises from conviction, manifesting as an enduring, adaptive force that restores dignity and identity. Her methods vary, from gentle support to confrontational accountability, but always constitute a moral resistance to abandonment, embodying *Karuṇā* through consistent love and fostering that affirms dignity.

This study contributes to Márquez scholarship by offering a new reading that redirects attention to fostering as the novel's central moral dynamic. The analysis contends that the family's suffering is not only generational but *Samsāric*, a cycle sustained by inherited pain and delusion. This *Samsāra* is defined by two interlocking, recurring patterns: the cycle

of fostering (representing the desperate efforts to mend the family) and the cycle of incest (representing the failure to see the root cause of the curse).

Karuṇā emerges as a necessity, the power to protect and to love in a world that is continuously unraveling. However, Úrsula's tragedy lies in the limits of compassion, because her moral resistance, though profound, is executed without the wisdom into the root causes of the Buendía curse. Her actions can only delay the collapse, not stop the cycle. The repetition of good intentions alongside moral confusion encourages the idea that emotional endurance alone cannot free one from suffering.

Fostering guided by *Karuṇā* is not merely a woman's duty. It is a vital human act that affirms dignity and rebuilds broken bonds. Márquez's portrayal signifies that without the moral clarity *and* the insight needed to escape *Samsāra*, human beings remain trapped in the very suffering they seek to overcome. Further studies could expand the *Karuṇā* framework to analyze other enduring characters in Latin American literature. Research could explore how Amaranta's flawed *Karuṇā* reflects a gendered response to abandonment.

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