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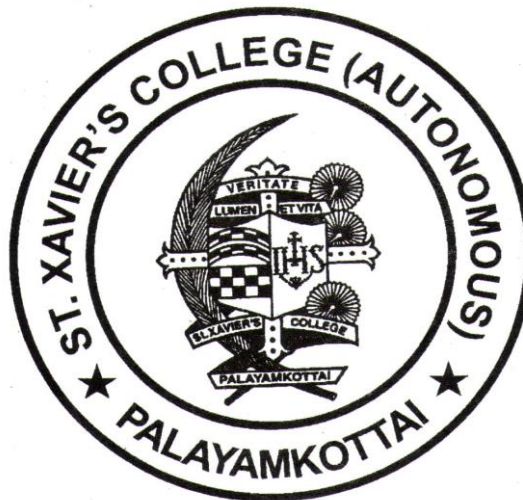
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**BEYOND EXPECTATIONS: RETHINKING MOTHERHOOD AND
WIDOWHOOD IN ASWATHY SREEKANTH'S *KAALI* AND ELENA
FERRANTE'S *THE LOST DAUGHTER***

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Abstract

Widowhood is often regarded as a time of mourning for women in Indian culture, while Motherhood is a glorified status. Sacrifices made for the children have traditionally been celebrated. Aswathy Sreekanth's *Kaali* portrays the life of nine different women. The character named Aniyamma from the first narrative titled "From Cocoon to Sky" clearly breaks the stereotypical widow in the cultural and social context of Kerala. Elena Ferrante's *The Lost Daughter* portrays the life of Leda, a 47-year-old English Professor who finds joy and liberation in the absence of her children. This paper analyses these two women characters who deviated from societal expectations, redefining the notions of womanhood.

Keywords: New Woman, Widowhood, Motherhood, Redefining Meanings and Breaking Stereotypes.

Widowhood and Motherhood are two phases in the life of women where society expects them to behave and act in a certain way. Though one is a status associated with death of the partner and the other is the birth of a child, both phases demand the women to go through a psychological as well as emotional curve which are often overlooked by the people around them. The cultural practices associated with them often take a toll on the women. In Indian cultural practices widowhood is regarded a mourning period. Society expects the women to lead an unhappy life; grieve should be explicitly performed. Accepting the fact that the loss of a partner is a difficult phase or expecting the women to shed all the happiness and pleasures in life is a trap set by patriarchy.

Since both phases are closely intertwined with the loved ones, breaking the stereotypes is often difficult. Apart from being judged by others, a constant introspection of whether the decision is right or wrong can be a haunting thing for many of the women. Popular narratives depicting these kinds of breaking the stereotypes are categorised under the label 'Bad Woman'. Society never takes the pain to understand the psychological changes that happen to these women who have to go through a difficult time.

This paper analyses two female figures who tried to break the stereotypical portrayal of widowhood and motherhood. Aswathy Sreekanth's *Kaali* is a published collection of short stories. Sreekanth portrays nine different women who don't satisfy societal expectations. The character named Aniyamma from the first narrative titled 'From Cocoon to Sky' clearly breaks the stereotypical widow in the cultural and social context of Kerala. Elena Ferrante's *The Lost Daughter* published in 2008 portrays the life of Leda, a 47-year-old English Professor who finds joy and liberation in the absence of her children. Both women find happiness and freedom, most importantly rediscover themselves when they shed the baggage of being a mother and wife.

Motherhood is often regarded as a multifaceted journey filled with love, selflessness, and responsibilities. The theme of maternal sacrifices is prevalent in many narratives, where mothers are willing to endure immense hardships and make tough choices for the sake of their children. The over-hyped glorification of motherhood often creates doubts and confusion among new mothers. Any deviation from the traditionally conditioned concepts makes the new mothers fall into self-doubt and eventually leads to post-partum issues like depression and mental health problems. Very few narratives have shown the grey side of motherhood where the mothers are not always in a status to enjoy motherhood and their sacrifices can take a

toll upon them. *The Lost Daughter* by Elena Ferrante explores the relationship between motherhood and female identity.

Leda, the protagonist is a 47-year-old Professor of English Literature. During one of her working holidays, she becomes captivated by a young mother and her beautiful daughter on the beachside. Watching the woman and her Neapolitan family triggers recollections from Leda's childhood and her difficult journey through motherhood. Confronted by these memories, she comes to terms with her feelings of maternal ambivalence. Leda is a divorced woman and several instances from the novel clearly depict the liberation she had after her daughters moved to their father's place.

When my daughters moved to Toronto, where their father had lived and worked for years, I was embarrassed and amazed to discover that I wasn't upset; rather I felt light, as if only then I had definitively brought them into the world. For the first time in almost twenty-five years, I was not aware of the anxiety of having to take care of them. (Ferrante 10)

Leda's emotional state when her daughters left her home was liberation rather than maternal missing. She felt very liberated and her sense of responsibility faded away. She was able to feel herself and started to enjoy her solitude.

After almost twenty-five years of being trapped in motherhood, Leda finally realizes her real self and happiness in her solitude. The statement that she used to irritate her students clearly depicts the fact that her dissatisfaction in personal life has reflected in her professional space as well. When she got an opportunity to live alone, it gave her the strength to regain her physical as well as emotional well-being. "No one depended anymore on my care and finally even I was no longer a burden to myself" (Ferrante 15). Even after twenty-five years of being a mother, Leda realises that she was not enjoying the status. Her maternal journey was filled with

responsibilities rather than growth. She never found time to relax or take care of herself.

Guilt associated with taking time of oneself is another taboo that exists in our society. Mothers going for a solo vacation or finding time for themselves are often judged and many women find it very guilty when they take the courage to do so. Leda finally goes on a vacation after her daughter's departure and she feels free and guiltless at freedom. "It was in this state of unusual well – being that, when June came, I felt like taking a vacation, and I decided that I would go to the sea as soon as I had finished with exams and the annoying bureaucratic formalities (Ferrante 16).

Adrienne Rich in her 1976 published work, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* challenges the idea of a natural, instinctual bond between mothers and children. She argues that this concept is socially constructed and used to justify women's confinement to the domestic sphere, limiting their opportunities for personal and professional fulfilment. She writes,

Unexamined assumptions: First, that a natural mother is a person without further identity, one who can find her chief gratification in being all day with small children, living at a pace turned to theirs; that the isolation of mothers and children together in the home must be taken for granted; that maternal love is, and should be, quite literally selfless. (Rich 22).

Motherhood according to Rich is often an artificial construct invented by the patriarchy. It is often a site of oppression and the experience of motherhood is not the same for everyone since it is highly wired with the political and social status of a woman. Experience of motherhood is different for a working woman and a non-working woman, a woman who has agency and control, and for someone from a poor social and economic

background. The usual adjectives such as nurturing, excitement, and affection can not be generally given to all mothers going through this phase.

The portrayal of motherhood in literature and popular culture often veers away from the conventional glorification, delving into the complexities and challenges that many women face. Ferrante provides a poignant exploration of maternal ambivalence through Leda. This narrative sheds light on the less discussed aspects of motherhood, prompting reflection on societal expectations and the importance of self-care amidst maternal responsibilities.

Widowhood is often regarded as a time of mourning for women in Indian culture. Various cultural practices associated with widowhood range from wearing a white saree, shaving the head, and most importantly renouncing pleasure and enjoyment, leading an unhappy life in memory of the spouse. Society by and large expects a widow to maintain a sombre demeanour and live somewhat like an outcast for the rest of her life after her husband's passing.

Aswathy Sreekanth's *Kaali* starts with the story of a woman called Aniyamma who in her late fifties becomes a widow and her life changes after the death of her husband. Society expects her to behave in a way in which she spends the rest of her life grieving and mourning. But she challenges all those expectations and starts her dream life after the death of her husband. Starting with the daily choices in cuisines to dressing, watching television, and adopting a pet, Aniyamma feels more liberated and widowhood gave her a new life.

The title is "From Cocoon to Sky", and the narrative starts with the death of Jacob, the husband of Aniyamma. The wife addressing her husband 'Jacob Sir' conveys the hierarchical relationship between husband and wife. She has been married to him for 35 years. Upon the demise of her husband, Jacob, Aniyamma defies societal norms dictating perpetual grief and instead

embarks on a journey of self-discovery, self-love, and new found freedom. Initially bound by the hierarchical structure of her marriage, where she addresses her husband as 'Jacob sir', Aniyamma's widowhood marks the beginning of her liberation.

Aniyamma's liberation unfolds gradually, starting with seemingly mundane choices such as her culinary preferences. Despite Jacob's aversion to certain dishes like, Puttu, Aniyamma asserts her desires by indulging in them. She further breaks free from convention by adopting a pet, a Shitzu dog, and ordering magazines like "Vanitha" and "Grihalakshmi" which were once forbidden for her. Her newfound freedom extends to her entertainment choices, as she shifts from traditional music to contemporary tunes by A R Rahman and Sreya Ghosal. Aniyamma embraces modernity by swapping news programs for television serials, and she expresses herself through vibrant sarees and leisure activities like visits to amusement parks and driving. Aniyamma's liberation is not merely superficial; it encompasses a holistic lifestyle transformation. She explores new hobbies such as wine-making, adopts a healthier lifestyle with sports shoes and dietary changes, and embraces technology by creating a Facebook account. Significantly, Aniyamma's journey symbolizes the emancipation from a lifetime of conforming to societal expectations as a wife and mother. For 35 years, her dreams and desires were subjugated, but widowhood provides the catalyst for her to reclaim her autonomy and pursue her passions.

New woman is a concept introduced by a group of women writers who wanted to mark their presence and desired more rights and opportunities for woman. Each writer created her own version of New woman, different in terms of needs and wants. Sarah Grand, one of the pioneers of this group voiced for equal education and public health. Her 1893 published work *The Heavenly Twins* introduced a 'New wWoman' who was educated and had the ability to make independent decisions for herself. Olive Schreiner introduced yet another 'New Woman' through her

1883 published work *The Story of an African Farm*. Lyndell the protagonist wanted sexual freedom and she challenges the societal expectations. All these writers tried to break the stereotypes set by Victorian gender roles.

Through their respective works Aswathy Sreekanth and Elena Ferrante introduces their version of 'New Woman'. In *Kaali*, the 'New Woman' re-discovers herself after the death of her husband. Aniyamma being a 'New Woman' finds happiness and liberation in small things. *The Lost Daughter*, introduces Leda as a 'New Woman' who finds happiness and liberation in the absence of her daughters. At one point in the story, she realises the fact that motherhood was a baggage for her.

Motherhood and Widowhood are phases in the life of women where society expects the women to behave in certain ways and any deviations from this is being judged. Motherhood is challenging and not everyone is equipped enough to carry the baggage with a balance of emotions. Narratives focusing on realistic and raw portrayal of various dimensions of motherhood can bring in positive changes in society. All women are not equipped with nurturing and caring naturally and the emotional well-being of mothers should be discussed. Widowhood is another phase where the woman's life takes a drastic curve of changes and society often judges their newfound freedom and liberation. Though the loss of a partner is an uncontrollable phase of grieve, it is not the end of life. Death of the partner should not be the last point of happiness for the other half. Normalising and accepting the inevitability of death and narratives about this can again bring in changes.

The study reveals that *Kaali* and *The Lost Daughter* are two narratives where the female authors took the courage to depict the reality of motherhood and womanhood as a liberation point. They challenge the societal expectations and inaugurate a new dimension of life writings.

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“WHAT CANNOT BE CURED”: THE NARRATIVE OF TRAUMA, AND VIOLENCE IN SALMAN RUSHDIE’S MEMOIR *KNIFE*

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Abstract

This article delves into Salman Rushdie's memoir *Knife: Meditations After an Attempted Murder*, a poignant account of his traumatic experience after being stabbed in 2022. Through a critical lens, this study explores the multiple doctrines of Rushdie's narrative, emphasizing trauma theory, post-traumatic growth, the scope of violence, and the power of hope and optimism in the face of mortality. By examining Rushdie's unique narrative technique, which blends straightforward and piercing language with humour, this analysis reveals how the author's traumatic experience is transmitted through literary language. The study draws on trauma theorists such as Cathy Caruth, Suzanne LaLonde and Arnold de-Simine to contextualize Rushdie's experience within the framework of trauma and memory studies. Furthermore, this article highlights the significance of memory, post-traumatic growth, and coping mechanisms in Rushdie's narrative, underscoring the importance of hope and solidarity in the face of violence and trauma.

Keywords: Trauma, Memory, Violence and Knife.

In the act IV of his seminal work *Hamlet*, Shakespeare demonstrates the mentally deranged Ophelia as ‘a document in madness’. What she has gone through the Bard has restricted to audience knowledge, but the lamentation of his brother Laertes speaks directly to the audience. With Ophelia thus started the great tradition of literary characters undergoing trauma. As the rule of the universe, a traumatic experience is usually followed by the aftershock of a violent incident. With the growth of human mind and provocative culture, the degree of violence has been revised in the past couple of centuries. The target of violence, be it mob

violence or individual grudge, is not restricted to oppressive forces or women; authors, journalists, intellectual authorities all are under constant threat. A fatal blow came to the eminent British novelist Salman Rushdie when a masked vigilante attacked and stabbed him in public with a knife in 2022. The suffering and healing (which Rushdie identifies as a ‘miracle’) is incorporated into a new memoir *Knife: Meditations After an Attempted Murder*. The memoir is not author’s first contribution in the genre, but certainly the stronger one than its predecessor *Joseph Anton*. This article will attempt to trace the multiple doctrines of *Knife* with an emphasis upon trauma theory, post traumatic growth, scope of violence and abundant optimism on the face of mortality.

It is important to draw attention towards the narrative technique of Rushdie. While his dominant surreal, cryptic language which is often fused with humour in fictional writing is termed as “magical realism”, the language of this memoir is unabashedly straightforward, piercing and sentimental. The humour is still intact. Each chapter in the book follows unique approach in storytelling and ethnography. Trauma theorists are persistent with the close relationship between linguistic representation and traumatic event. Shoshana Felman has noted that literary imagination can help putting into words the horrific experiences. The transmission of traumatic experience is possible through a literary language. The first chapter of the book mentions a strategy which Rushdie’s favourite novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* starts with - foreshadowing. Foreshadowing tells in advance what in the story is about to happen. Chapter one reveals author’s semiotic relationship with his assassin; the latter is denoted as “A” for Ass throughout the book. Readers start familiarizing themselves with Rushdie’s bleak sarcasm. Gun is compared with knife in an objective way. Gun knows to keep itself distant while knife prefers intimacy and vileness. The metanarrative Rushdie embraces also gives a shoutout to Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis’ character Bras Kubas, the narrator who tells a

story from his grave. Even references from his own works come along: the central picture of *Shalimar the Clown* and the opening line of *Satanic Verses*. In the next chapter an intimate panorama of Mr and Mrs Rushdie is documented. Delightful humour, news of the world, and personal anecdotes frame the narrative flow of a scrapbook that encapsulates ‘small things of everyday life’. The very chapter which is named after his wife Eliza reads like a Greek tragedy because of the unavoidable sense of impending terror. The climax of the book pinnacles at chapter six, where the imaginary conversation of the uncouth assassin and his victim author is portrayed.

When trauma narrative is focussed, the academic theoretical framework of trauma studies; specifically works developed by Cathy Caruth who along with Shoshana Felman and Geoffrey Hartman constituted the first wave of trauma theory can be analysed. Caruth in her revolutionary *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narratives and History* writes, “In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other uncontrolled phenomenon”. Researchers practicing in applied fields of psychology and physiology have found ample evidence of how memory and perception of a particular individual changes after surviving a trauma. The event does not affect its survivor just after, but like slow poisoning takes hold of the mind and body. Dreams and hallucinations being integral part of the trauma system, Caruth’s notion of “belatedness” comes into play. By this term Caruth asserts that the victim’s consciousness has no clear idea or picture of that event; it becomes fragmented. The survivor reimagines the event multiple times thinking to master it and handle the unprecedented outcome. Thus, identity of self and other is compromised after a traumatic event.

It would be beneficial if a side-by-side study of this theoretical framework and the literary memoir is analysed. In the memoir, Rushdie

mentions about the direct knife attack multiple times. The detailed description of the entire accident happens once, but gradual references of the event force readers to assimilate the internal repetition of traumatic memory again and again. He mentions that a collage is formed out of collective memory of both him and the audience members who rushed forward to rescue him. Explicit details of the attacked body parts are presented. His neck, right side of the face, chest, thigh, hairline, and right eye have been stabbed. As the paramedics and members of audience carried him to the rescue vehicle; his consciousness had already begun reacting against the suddenness. Multiple associations of the word ‘murder’, and its derivatives occurred, which felt like a normal involuntary reaction. In the same respect one can think of Ophelia’s incoherent singing, because after her father’s death the blow has forced her to accept that as a natural reality. The physical pain is tormenting enough, but it is the mental exhaustion and horror of the past that has compelled him to write it. He has mentioned several times that the motive behind *Knife* was simply existential necessity; he could not produce anything fiction after the attack. If examined closely, one can find that the intensity of the past remembrances becomes stable and fluid at the end of the book. After Rushdie had returned to a comparatively safe abode he could not stop dreaming about the incident. In those dreams he did not visualize the exact representations of the attack, but similar helplessness was prominent. Some of them were artistic in nature (the surrealist version of “the Raft of the Medusa”, or scenes from *King Lear*), while others were personal (planes making false landing, being confronted by powerful opponent in cage). As the mental picture of the violent incident keeps repeating in the mind of the victim, a sense of guilt and shame begins to appear. The inability to deal with the intruder or more importantly the situation itself brings self- humiliation. Rushdie remains no exception in this aspect; in the first chapter he laments his own lack of character. In contrast, his words for his friend Henry Reese who was also present on stage are laudatory, because he acted “in character”.

Memory is determined as an inseparable part of trauma survivors. Memory studies is a diverse field which has developed after trauma studies. Michael Rothberg's *Multidirectional Memory* is an important document when it comes to the question of how past is responsible in the synthesis of present. Identity of an individual as well as a community is dependent on memory. Partition literature in general has pictured how the memory of gruesome distant past reshapes the cultural identity and customs. In *Knife*, Rushdie goes back to his adolescent days to orchestrate the generational burden of subcontinental dysfunctional family. Abusive father, talented son, and patient mother figure, all do really fit the archetype. The nocturnal drunkard abuses of his Muslim father and no protest from other family members have somehow triggered him. As grandiose a writer-philosopher Rushdie is, it is indeed difficult to place him in any stereotypical margin by claiming that his childhood trauma has invigorated the fresh knife attack he has survived. One can only respectfully assume that a connection between the two is not impossible. He narrates the episodes of his aunt's house in Pakistan where film industry's stalwarts gathered and practiced the freedom of speech. This freedom has haunted him since the publication of his *Satanic Verses* in 1988. He acknowledges the contempt shared by certain groups but does not apologize. The fatwa issued against him created a plethora of issues in personal and professional field that included his being undercover in Britain and emigrating to United States. At the opening chapter of *Knife*, he declared that through this heinous attack past might have returned. After finally moving on the stage where he stopped keeping counts of Fatwa anniversaries, the attack took it all away. Memory studies scholar Urania Milevski has tried to show that memory affects narration. Applying that approach, it becomes evident that the meandering narrative brings back and forth references to the Fatwa and Satanic Verses episode because of a pattern. Van der Kolk in his book *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society* documented that trauma shuts down the left hemisphere of the brain and as a result it disrupts

the formation of logical sequence, i.e. beginning, middle and end. Post-structuralist critics have always favoured texts that go beyond the routine checks of structural unity and order. This notion appeals aptly to current trend of life-writing and autobiography genre. Particularly so, because unlike conventional biographies written by an outsider, the author is a Barthian scriptor who is being born every moment with own writing. One's own life cannot fit into the well-structured, predetermined third person narratives. *Knife* starts with synopsis of the horrific violent event the author has faced and later it is elaborated, then it is followed by stories of healing, suffering, and growth but not particularly in that order.

What follows the traumatic experience is coping mechanism. Where the survivor is injured physically, their physical recovery is crucial for regaining mental stability. Suzanne Lalonde believes that at the initial stage of post traumatic growth (she uses the term 'PTG') the survivor needs to acknowledge the body. In Salman Rushdie's case the body had suffered multiple wounds, including his right eye which became distended. For the better understanding of the general readers, he employs a literary technique that is dynamic. Huge machinery and complicated pathological procedures that happened inside the Trauma Ward of UPMC, Hamot are recoded in layman's terminology. Admirers of his works would find delight in his characteristic sense of humour; for example, he tags one of the doctors as a world champion of Fluid Draining. On the other hand, the personal details like his own organs and their conditions have been inscribed with attention and detail. For instance, the chest bruises and removed intestine and non-functioning left hand. The loneliness became profound to him in the helpless state. As a part of the post traumatic growth which occurs after the PTSD, the reestablishment of a sense of safety is crucial. Rushdie felt safe in some extent for the constant presence of his wife Eliza. Eliza and her 'superhero mode' are praised in the book. Rushdie as a writer and a husband understood the complexity of terror his wife was going through because in

her smile he could spot the trace of hidden agony. It was Eliza who prompted the idea of recording the healing journey in audio visual mode. The vile ignominy of catheter, the surprising revelation of a prostate tumour- these act as agents of dreadful experience. Dialectical nature is not uncommon in any long-term recovery process, since both healthy and unhealthy growth are two parts. Narrator mentions the effect of opioids on his consciousness. He visualizes grand 'alphabet palace' and exotic 'golden letters'. The objective judgment of new reality which would be the reality of the survivor for the rest of the life can cause further depression. But Rushdie is prophetic, "One has to find life". He paraphrases the Italian virtuoso Primo Levi, that perfect unhappiness is difficult to find and the same goes for perfect happiness. His version of attained happiness in the trauma ward is doctors and nurses bringing best foods in town for him, and the nurses' eagerness to dress him.

One essential factor of trauma narratives is that the experience finds it hard to be put into the rhetoric of already existing works. The survivor through his imagination must act as the teller of the story. The story is beyond genre, and dictum. The past and present are both retold. In chapter six Rushdie does the same. As it is impossible to have a real face to face conversation with the attacker, he imagines a confrontation with 'A' in four sessions. 'A' does not possess the quality of being a character in Rushdie's novels, chiefly because he is uninteresting. Author recalls a maxim of Socrates which mentions that an 'unexamined life' is not worth living. 'A's' lack of intelligence is what makes his life banal. Rushdie is cynical about giving any importance to him in the whole affair; he writes 'A' is "a dumb clown who got lucky". For the face to face with 'A', it was difficult to organize the questions. Later he managed to have a one-sided interview with concerns addressed about violent video games, the past life of 'A', his American identity etc. Referring to a short story by Hans Christian Andersen he proves his distrust with multiple Selves of any human being.

Discussion on social media brainwashing and the nature of violence inside 'A' also come up (was it inherent or was the violence planted). This imaginary confrontation is a way of coping mechanism of the survivor where he can observe the incident in an objective way and stop blaming themselves for the situation. There can be a possibility that because no one loved 'A' and vice versa, violence made its way into him. This chapter can be noted as the transmission of traumatic experience happening via reimagination of the scenario.

Just before the knife attack on Rushdie, the entire world faced a meltdown due to corona virus. That phase alone caused distress to countless human beings all over the world. In the memoir the devastation of covid infested world is portrayed. Some of it are personal while majority of them universal. Rushdie mentions how his family members from London could not fly to attend his wedding. The anxiety of the time is summed up here, "Nobody was sure about anything". The narrative of death is penned with a personal touch; Martin Amis' fight with cancer and giving in reads in a melancholic way. As Rushdie was facing the question of survival, he kept in mind the long list of his friends who were already there. Slow growth after PTSD can come in unexpected way due to external factors. So, it did for the author of *Midnight's Children*. World leaders, fellow authors and intellectuals, and the success of the novel *Victory City* paved the way of Rushdie's back to normal life. A broad sense of acceptance of the past also happened as he felt that the escape from Satanic Verses and Fatwa would be impossible for him now after the attack.

In the research published by *The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)*, it is mentioned that the attack on journalists has increased over 12% in the year 2022: same year the violent attack ruptured Rushdie. The memoir *Knife* is a testament of survival, hope and faith of solidarity. It is almost impossible to research on trauma without referring to the scope of hope. As a humanist Salman Rushdie could not succumb to the

violent orthodoxy like his assassin did, therefore through this book he does what he is fit to do. Rushdie writes back.

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**RECONSTRUCTING HISTORICAL NARRATIVES AND
CRITICAL MEMORY IN TEMSULA AO'S *THESE HILLS
CALLED HOME: STORIES FROM A WAR ZONE*: ANALYSING
THE INTERPLAY OF HISTORY, IDENTITY, AND TRAUMA**

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Abstract

Throughout history, the eight states that make up North East India have seen significant disruption. It is a horrible feeling for those who have lost loved ones or given their lives in order to advance society. The history of the area includes the widely discussed politics of the hills and preservation of culture and customs of the area. Temsula Ao's tales revolve around this predicament. She defies the stereotype of North-eastern writing and its fixation on themes of violence, horror, slaughter, and uniformity in her collection of short tales, "These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone." This paper analyses how Temsula Ao achieves this by using the historical consciousness of the Naga people, which is throbbing with the spirit of narrative, mythology, and much more, to hold to oneness in the face of destruction.

Keywords: Identity, History, North East, Consciousness and Struggle.

“Truth about the self, the land and above all, the truth about history” (Ao 112). This region became completely isolated once the Indian subcontinent was divided and liberated in 1947, further exacerbating its isolation. Numerous ethnic groups which actively engaged in efforts for autonomy and self-preservation, may be found in northeastern India, which borders China, Myanmar, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Nepal on 98% of its territory. ULFA, NLFT, NDFB, NSCN (I-M), NSCN (K), and several other armed insurgent groups have emerged as a result of these disputes' occasional turn to violence. Since the Sino-Indian border battle in 1962 and

the growing insurgencies in the area, the discourse has shifted to one of security (Das).

Northeast India is entangled in an intricate web of national identity since it appears to be isolated from the remainder of India. With numerous separatist and sovereignty movements, this region has been thrown into chaos and alienation. Creating and depicting the Northeast as the "other" challenged their long-cherished traditions and customs in pre- and postcolonial ages. The literary output of North-East India, a combination of stunningly gorgeous terrain and a plethora of diverse ethnic groups and rich civilizations has an aura different from the rest of India's literature. It has recently been a point of interest. The territory is marred by unrest and secession, fuelled by unemployment and poverty due to shady politics and ineffective government. Writing under the shadow of the gun, the region's authors try to live with the memory of bloodshed and use writing to bring peace back. The North-East has produced a plethora of writing, with Indira Goswami, an Assamese author, being the most well-known. Among those lauded for their English-language literature are Mitra Phukan, Dhruba Hazarika, Temsula Ao, Mamang Dai, Anjum Hasan, Siddhartha Deb, Jahnavi Barua, Siddhartha Sarma, Nitoo Das, Aruni Kashyap, Manash Pratim Borah, Easterine KireIralu and Uddipana Goswami. Strong ethnic traditions that avoided the consequences of Sanskritization pervade the region. In short, they belong to a completely different group. The North Eastern Council (NEC) was established as the focal point for these republics' economic and social growth (Samaddar).

A discussion over the historical stability of the Naga race and community has arisen due to the realization that the Naga identity has been created and is malleable. The Nagas comprises a tangle of tribes and sub-tribes, making evaluating them as a single group challenging. The division among the Naga tribes and the controversy surrounding their coexistence with the Indian union only add to the chaos in this circumstance. The Naga

identity runs counter to India's cultural and historical paradigm. Angami Zapu Phizo (1930-1990), a Naga nationalist leader, stated that "The Nagas have nothing to do with India (Wouters 39)." Temsula Ao pursues cultural rehabilitation because she believes it is the only way to restore their lost splendour. She holds out hope that the rich Naga legacy of community innovation and humanistic principles would one day triumph: "It is only when the Nagas re-embrace and re-write this vision into the fabric of their lives in spite of the compulsions of a fast-changing world, can we say that the memories of the turbulent years have served us well (Ao p. xi)."

Historical consciousness refers to the way individuals perceive themselves in relation to time. It goes beyond mere curiosity about or investigation of the past, incorporating essential aspects of human life: the recognition that every person, society, and institution is situated within a historical context, possesses a past, and faces a future, all of which are subject to change (Jeismann). This understanding ties into the epistemological notion that knowledge is influenced by cultural and historical frameworks, which differ from those relating to the past and future. Historical consciousness is often considered a normative requirement for advanced historical understanding and reflects the essential historicist belief. According to Ahonen, historical consciousness involves a transgenerational cognitive approach to time, relying on our ability to think backwards and forwards. It also suggests a dialogue between understanding historical connections and aspiring for the future. Time is viewed as a scientific measure and a concept filled with human interpretations and moral considerations. (607). Temsula Ao laments the lost age of calm in the Naga historical consciousness in her famous collection of short tales, "These Hills Called Home - Stories from a War Zone." Her painting represents the quest for a clean, unblemished self that has been washed away by imperial elements and modern-day demands. In

supporting this precept, one might consider the lines from "These Hills Called Home": "For those who know, /what we have done, /to ourselves."

Temsula Ao reflects on how Naga identity shifts between rural and urban cultures. Her writings aim to awaken the Naga people's historical consciousness by revealing the culture and practices before British colonization. The settlement, often regarded as the heart of the land, represents the true essence of the Nagas: "Without land, it is difficult to assert that you belong to a village." And it is impossible to claim to be a Naga if you do not belong to a village (Wouters 60)." In a short story "The Pot Maker," Ao emphasizes the significance of pot making in Naga society. The elders in the village push Arenla to instruct her young daughter Santana to create pots. According to the elders of the community, "skills such as pot making, which not only catered to the needs of the people but also symbolized the people's tradition and history, did not 'belong' to any individual (Ao.61)." The Nagas lived in a culture of collectivism where community considerations trumped individual desires.

Ao recounts how unprotected peasants became detainees in their village in another story, "The Curfew Man." Satemba was an Assam police officer. He ultimately left his job due to a cracked knee, but he could not find peace despite being an armed force source. His mind and emotions were constantly at chances with one another. The prospect of meeting a stranger, most likely from the underworld, exacerbated his mental anguish. The protagonist attempts to discover what they are despite being trapped among the armed forces and secret groups. The story depicts how hard it is for youthful Nagas to survive in their communities and how they are forced into a situation where they cannot even establish their own sense of self and status. As a result, Ao admirably depicts the turmoil and disarray of the adolescent Nagas in the narrative. Satemba was relieved when he left that thankless job. This demonstrates that almost all Nagas did not join

and assist the armed forces voluntarily but were forced to do so due to unforeseen circumstances.

Furthermore, the acquisition of statehood shattered the idea of recovery, forcing the Naga people to lose their ethnic identity indefinitely. The problem derives from the forced linkage of modernity with the Naga racial image. Temsula Ao believes that Naga ethnicity should transcend any visible differences caused by colonialism and globalisation. Because the Nagas were never a single tribe or unified, their devotion to a single, indivisible identity appears to be a deception. "Whoever first called the Nagas by that name and whatever the word may mean, the Nagas themselves knew each other by the name of the tribe to which they belonged. the present awareness of being one people was understandably absent among them until very recently," writes Horam, a Naga Historian (1935-2019) (Wouters 44).

The impact of colonialism and globalization on Naga cultural identity is depicted in the story "Soaba," which illustrates the harm caused by the grouping system. This system forced people out of their natural environments and grouped them like herds, making it easier for the police to monitor them. The Nagas were criticised and "de-identified," in Temsula Ao's phrases, stripping them of their own ethnic and linguistic area. She goes on to say, "The word 'grouping' had a much more sinister implication; it meant that whole villages would be dislodged from their ancestral sites and herded into new ones, (Ao 11)." Temsula Ao sees cultural recollection as an instrument for helping individuals reshape their minds and preserve their culture. She believes that reconnecting to one's roots may elevate voices, eliminating misconceptions about Nagas being aggressive and barbaric. Collective memory provides a temporal map for individuals and society, uniting a country or group across time and space. Collective memory contains information on the chronological aspects of the present, past, and future, as well as our beginnings, regions, and

present circumstances. Individual identities emerge from the tale supplied by this community memory as experiential frameworks made out of, and embedded inside, perspectives of past, present, and future (Giesen).

In addition to ongoing sociopolitical changes, the Naga consciousness experienced an identity crisis due to colonization, which led to shifts in values. In his book *The Naga Imbroglia*, Charles Chasie traces the origins of Naga corruption and identity conflict to the colonial era, highlighting the impact of colonial oppression on the Nagas. Nagas had "only recently made their entry into the money economy from the barter system" and had grown "enamoured of the easy convenience and power of money" (Chasie 127). However, the state has claimed that Nagaland forms a component of its borders, and it must use bio-political techniques to rehabilitate, normalise, and institutionalise the Naga people's identity. As to the narrative, the management of humans' is more vital than the 'administration of property' for the state. As revealed in *The Curfew Man*, Temsula Ao's tales propagate the state's circulation of controlling measures in people's lives: "The night curfew was the worst for people living in small towns because soon after dark all social activities ceased (34)." As a result, it is apparent that the state's controlling approach includes not just violence but also the dissemination of certain normalisation measures.

Cultural memory, as described by Jan Assmann, is "the outer dimension of human memory" (Assmann). A civilization can preserve its understanding from one generation to the next through cultural memory, enabling future generations to reconstruct their cultural identity (Assmann). It would be unjust to keep the youth disconnected from their history, though it may be unavoidable. What truly matters is how their past has been interpreted—or misinterpreted—for them. The challenge lies in the inability to embrace youth fully, highlighting the unravelling of human aspirations, especially the erosion of compassion. Today's children are unaware that they are the successors of a past that has been deceived, mistreated, and

scarred. "The inheritors of such a history have a tremendous responsibility to sift through the collective experience and make sense of the impact left by the struggle on their lives" (Ao, p. x). Kailash C. Baral's book, *"Identity and Cultural Aporia: Globalisation and the Tribes of India's Northeast,"* focuses on the difficult ethnological study of the global/local dichotomy of identity politics in Northeast India. He argues that "dialogue" between the broader community and regional influences transforms culture into an active transitional space, continuously evolving through its dynamics. Her book's anecdotes reveal the true source of the violence in the hills. She feels it is her responsibility to uncover the truth about the plight of the exploited people. Foreign authorities and militant officials have devastated their lives throughout the period of oppression, driven by complex politics orchestrated by external powers.

Anyone who reads Ao's work can connect with her humanistic worldview and its profound admiration. Understanding the Naga psyche, she addresses, is crucial for every race and tribe, as it represents a disconnection from their cherished past. In "The Last Song" from *These Hills Called Home*, Apenyo and her mother are assaulted by the captain and his soldiers while she sings her final song until her last breath. Her song symbolizes many things: it reflects their deep longing for a purer time and the sorrow of not achieving it. Yet, what begins as a tragic tale transforms into a heroic narrative as she defies those who stole her innocence. By transcending the shame of her suffering, she uses her music to condemn the oppressors. Apenyo, embodying the Naga consciousness, demonstrates how one can rise above the trials of a rapidly changing world, turning the memories of tumultuous times into a source of strength rather than weakness. Finally, she highlights a critical issue that citizens of the world's largest democracy, India, must confront. She poses a challenging question: Is there a framework that we in the Northeast need to unify, integrate, and transform?

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PAST PERFECT: LETTERS TO ADITI AS AUTOPATHOGRAPHY**Annie George**

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Abstract

The paper “*Past Perfect: Letters to Aditi as Autopathography*” examines how the autobiography by Anna Varughese is at once a memoir and an autopathographical account, reclaiming the subjectivity of the ailing person/patient. The paper also looks into how the narrative falls under three narrative voices common to illness narratives: the restitution narrative, the chaos narrative, and the quest narrative, as suggested by Arthur Frank in *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics*.

Keywords: Autobiography, Autopathography, Restitution Narrative, Chaos Narrative and Quest Narrative.

G. Thomas Couser in his work *Recovering Bodies: Illness, Disability and Life Writing Illness* has used the term autopathography to refer to writings that showcase illness “squarely in the foreground of the narrative” (65). Such works that recount the bodily, emotional and psychological effects of illness, are not merely autobiographical or self-referential writings, but are rather narratives of illness that function politically as a counter voice to the discourses on disability and illness prevalent in the present era. More specifically, when using the term autopathography, Couser has in mind illness narratives that are political in nature, those that “...contest cultural discourses stigmatizing the writer as abnormal, aberrant, or in some way pathological” (29). People with illness attempt to find meaning in their experiences through narration, which help to reveal the extensive breakdown in embodiment that occurs, the renewal of a rehabilitated being and a desire to seek meaning amidst experiences of ailment. Arthur Frank in *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics* probably best describes the purpose of autopathography when he says that it, “reclaims the author’s right to tell what is her own experience, it reclaims a voice over and against the medical voice, and it reclaims a life beyond illness, even if illness is the

occasion of writing” (5). Thomas Couser also upholds the view that “... illness narratives may be in some significant sense healing. Although they may be unable to relieve the symptoms of the body, they may help to relieve the suffering of the self” (289). Couser has furthered his statement when he speaks about the ability of narratives to heal, “At base, narratives of illness are efforts to give meaning to, or find meaning in, bodily dysfunction and thereby to relieve suffering. People who narrate their illness or disability may be said to share their bodies with others in a kind of secular healing ritual” (293). Thus, when Anna writes about the peculiarities and flaws of her diseased body, she is in a sense sharing her body, her story and her emotions with others who may be going through similar experiences.

Published in 2013, the work, *Past Perfect: Letters to Aditi*, traces the life of the author Anna Varughese through a series of letters she addresses to her then five-year-old daughter Aditi. She writes these letters in the face of impending death; in case her death takes place before her daughter is able to understand the harsh realities of the situation and with the intention of leaving something behind for her daughter through which she could know and remember her. Using both formal and informal patterns of narration, the author writes candidly and vividly about experiences from early childhood afflicted with ulcerative colitis. The author attempts to redefine and re-establish the body that is wounded and fragmented, not only as a result of her illness, but also because of the perceptions that others have about her as a possessor of a diseased body. Paul John Eakin writes. “I view the rhythms of the autobiographical act recapitulating the fundamental rhythms of identity formation; in this sense the writing of autobiography emerges as a second acquisition of language, a second coming into being of self, a self-conscious self-consciousness” (9).

At this point, Andrew Frank’s work *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics* holds significance. In this book, Frank propagates the idea that illness narratives can be categorised into three, namely the restitution narrative, the chaos narrative and the quest narrative. The narrator in retelling

her experience of illness shares with readers details of the effects the diseased body brought upon her; the disruptions in her health resulting in chaos, the tedious and tiresome wait for healing leading to restitution and simultaneously the narrator's profound pursuit into the significance of her experience, to be understood as the narrator's quest. Anna Varughese's work *Past Perfect*, knowingly or unknowingly falls under all three of these categories, encompassing scenarios and elements of each of these perspectives.

A chaos narrative describes the loss of control and sense of defeat one feels on being diagnosed with an ailment that initially seems to have no explanation or cure. It calls into focus the disruptions and disorder brought into one's life as a result of illness and the disillusionment and hopelessness that accompany this situation. Elements of chaos unforgivingly punctuated Anna Varghese's life from the moment her illness becomes a reality at the very young age of four. In the prologue to her book *Past Perfect, Letters to Aditi*, she writes, "The night brought dreams and joy, the dawn brought the reality of my degenerating bones and decimating body. The enlarged liver swelling my stomach is killing me slowly but surely. Every day I can feel myself dying a little bit more" (1). She openly admits the devastating impact the disease has had on her body as well as on her identity and self-image. "Each day I pant a little more; I walk a little less. My skin looks grey. The whites of my eyes have gone from yellow to orange. I have forgotten the time when the whites were white. The itching is unbearable" (2). She at a point writes, "I look in the mirror and death stares back at me" (7). She has throughout the course of her illness lost control over many aspects of her body. She feels that the illness has taken sway over her, "My belly is so huge that I pant when I walk. I am too itchy to change out of my loose cotton kaftans and wear clothes" (8). She describes, how as the disease progressed, her body gradually began to lose control of itself. She writes of the diarrhea that constantly plagued her life from childhood to adulthood, the severe abdominal pains that visited her often, the ulcers that formed within her

body, the pain that often rendered her helpless and the complete sense of helplessness she felt amid her physical crisis. She makes no attempt to distance herself from her ailments nor does she romanticize or valorize it. She notes that at times her illness along with its very obvious symptoms often caused others to consider her as diseased or disabled thereby leading to the obliteration of her individuality. Thus, the narrator in detail recounts the chaotic effect the illness had on her life, placing the work within the confines of a chaos narrative of illness.

However, Anna's memoir does not end with chaos alone. One finds in the work elements of a restitution narrative as well. In a narrative of restitution, the narrator desires to make amends for their plight, seeking a diagnosis and cure for their particular condition. It includes instances when the narrator has finally reached a victory over the illness, resulting in the conclusion of illness, followed by the individual's reintegration into society and return to life. This restitution finally comes to Anna Varughese which she refers to in the very last line of her memoir, "I am healed. It is enough" (248). In *Past Perfect*, one find the narrator in a desperate search for a diagnosis and cure for her ailments. She admits in the Prologue to her book, "I am waiting for someone to die and give me their liver, so that I can live. I have a fierce desire to live, even if it is mixed with the guilt of knowing someone has to die for that to happen"(2). Arthus Frank refers to these as stories of reclamation told by the diseased body in which the narrator "reflects a 'natural' desire to get well and stay well" (78). Similarly, restitution stories "bear witness not to the struggles of the self alone, but also to the expertise of others: their competence and their caring that effect the cure. In this witness restitution stories reveal themselves to be told by a self but not about that self" (Frank 92). Holding true to this, throughout the narrative Anna Varughese recalls the endless hospitals, doctors, treatments and medications that she had to encounter as a person with an ailment and the efforts put in by her family to give her the best care possible. She remembers the countless visits made to hospitals in Kottayam, Vellore, Chennai, Delhi and finally London, meeting with doctors with varied names,

Dr. Elsie, Dr. V.I. Mathen, Dr. Mathew Varghese, Dr. Arora, Dr. O'Grady and so the list goes on. All these places and people played a great role in her journey towards recovery. She is also mindful of her parents' desperation and her mother's devotion to caring for her as a chronically ill child as well as adult. She speaks of her mother's tenacity in all matters involving her treatment and describes it as her "... never-ending quest to get me cured..." (169).

Yet, Anna Varughese in spite of the chaos brought on by illness does not easily succumb to the circumstances, neither does she settle for restitution. Her narrative also involves elements that can be considered characteristic of Frank's third model of narration, referred to as quest narratives which "... meet suffering head on; they accept illness and seek to use it. What is quested for may never be wholly clear, but the quest is defined by the ill person's belief that something is to be gained through the experience" (115). This is in a sense a hope narrative, that does not pose the narrator as being thrown into chaos, nor does the narrator seek compensation, but rather the narrator accepts the call of illness, acknowledges it and finally finds ways to deal with the experience. Anna, as she faces the disease head on, writes, "In my current circumstances, I don't see that I have any choice but to accept and to fight. It's not courage. It's a lack of choice. I can give up and wait to die. Or, I can carry on doing the ordinary, everyday things that indicate that I have no expectation of dying in the immediate future" (199). For Anna, the disease gave her the strength to fight her illness and gave her a sense of determination, "I have always believed in my own strength to fight this disease...I am almost certain that my faith in God and his kindness will pull me through. I must believe" (3). The illness has given her great faith, both in God and herself.

Arthur Frank has written in relation to quest narratives, "What is quested for may never be wholly clear, but the quest is defined by the ill person's belief that something is to be gained through the experience" (115). In the case of Anna Varughese, she wholeheartedly believed that in spite of the debilitating disease that plagued her body for years, her life was

beautiful. Of this she writes, “So, my Aditi, let me tell you about the wonderful life that I have lived and how it all led up to this moment. The wonderful past that makes me reluctant to give up on life” (11). Arthur Frank also considers a quest narrative as the afflicted person’s way of “searching for alternative ways of being ill. As the ill person gradually realizes a sense of purpose, the idea that illness has been a journey emerges”

(117). She refused to sympathise with herself and consider herself less fortunate or unlucky. Though she was very conscious of the fact of her illness, she did not allow it to noose her life-choices. She went on to pursue her studies, attain an MBA from a prestigious institution, get married and give birth to a daughter, which she considered her greatest achievement. However, as her physical condition worsened, with the news that she may have a malignant growth on her liver along with the ulcerative colitis she had been dealing with her whole life, the narrator describes how she spiraled into depression at moments, not seeing any hope ahead. She recalls in her narrative, “As I lay in bed, I tackled the life-sapping depression. I knew it was up to me to use my logic, my faith, my family’s love andNobody could talk me out of it. I had to do it myself” (150). The disease has left her resilient and determined. Thus, here the narrator quests a resolution, not of her disease, but the resolve to deal with her plight. Anna Varughese considers it her prerogative to tell her own story and to be remembered as she desires. In the dedication section of the book, she writes specifically to her daughter, yet her words are a testament to others as well, “Yes. I wanted you to know me, your mother, out of whose intense longing you were born. This is our story. If I am not able to stay in your life long enough for you to have memories of me, then here are my memories. A testament to how much I love you and to my vanity”.

Her body was her reality and it was the malfunctioning of this body that inspired her to write such a book. Her extraordinary bodily experiences allowed her to fix her body within the realms of its illness and tell her story from this position. She very explicitly details what her bodily experiences implied for her and rather than shying away from the deformities brought on

by her illness she embraces them in an attempt to accept them. By writing this life narrative she is regaining her fragmented identity serving as a testimony as to how she wants to be remembered and not how others want to remember her. "The strange thing was that when I looked in the mirror, I never saw the dying face or the greying skin. I only saw what I wanted to in the mirror" (155).

Though, by the end of the narrative one is informed of the narrator's recovery; the threat of colon cancer remains constant in her life. However, the narrator at this point is no longer discouraged by such fears that loom over her existence, "The worry of colon cancer remains and I know life will throw many more challenges my way. But now I know I will deal with it" (248). Her quest amidst her illness has brought her to this understanding, that she can deal with any curve ball life may hurl at her.

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THE PRECARITY OF BLACK BODIES AND RACE-BASED TRAUMA IN COLSON WHITEHEAD'S *THE NICKEL BOYS* AND *SAG HARBOR*

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Abstract

Race is the leading factor contributing to the discrimination and oppression of minority communities grouped by racial and ethnic labels. The long list of police killings of African Americans hint at the precarity of black bodies in America. Living in a rigged social system and constant exposure to racism in everyday life leads to what Carter terms race-based traumatic stress. It is the emotional response to racial encounters. This article analyses two characters from the novels *The Nickel Boys* and *Sag Harbor* by Colson Whitehead and identifies the symptoms of race-based trauma displayed by them and its causes. Through this examination, how the characters' lives *mirror* the aftermath of living with such trauma in real life is delineated and the article further underscores the author's call to end racism.

Keywords: Race, African Americans, Race-based Trauma, Police Killings and Oppression.

Trauma can be defined as a response to a life threatening or distressing event that results in emotional or physical pain. The trigger for such pain is known as the stressor. An event is viewed traumatic only if it "resulted in death or threatened death, actual or threatened physical injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence" (Ruglass and Kendall-Tackett 5). The word 'trauma' is a Greek medical term, which literally means wound. Initially, its meaning was limited to

physical pain. In today's world, it has been expanded to include psychological wounds as well. In 1990s, theorists like Cathy Caruth, Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman developed trauma theory as a response to dreadful historical events like world wars, genocides, massacres and holocaust. Cathy Caruth, a prominent figure in this domain, describes trauma as, "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearances of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (as qtd in Nath 43). Throughout history, various groups have undergone unimaginable sufferings resulting in collective trauma. For instance, Native Americans share a devastating past of forced displacement, boarding schools and massacres. The descendants of Jewish communities share collective trauma of holocaust. However, this article focuses specifically on the trauma of black Americans caused by the fatal invention of race. Black Americans experience what Carter theorizes as race-based traumatic stress (RBTS). For them, the main stimuli or stressor is racism. Biased attitudes, systematic inequalities and unequal treatment based on race serve as the primary factors for this phenomenon. Race-based traumatic stress is the "emotional or physical pain or the threat of emotional or physical pain that results from racism in the form of harassment, discrimination or discriminatory harassment", defines Robert D. Carter (as qtd in Perot and Edis 75). Some of the common triggers for race-based trauma are direct or indirect experience of racial violence or discrimination, being perceptive of violence in media such as police killings of unarmed black Americans, exposure to racial stereotypes. People affected by race-based trauma show several symptoms including "depression, intrusion, anger, hypervigilance, physical symptoms, (low) self-esteem, and avoidance" (Dieujuste et al. 397). These symptoms might resemble those of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). However, PTSD is a mental disorder with more severe symptoms and chronic effects. RBTS, on the other hand, is a mental injury, which may or may not intensify into PTSD. In the light of this framework, this article examines two characters in Colson Whitehead's novels who display symptoms of RBTS.

Colson Whitehead is a contemporary African American novelist and writer residing in New York City. He has to his name two Pulitzer prizes for fiction, one of which was awarded for *The Nickel Boys* (2019), the first novel analyzed in this study. It is set in 1950s and 1960s Florida, that is, during civil rights movement. The plot spins the tale of Elwood, an aspiring and dedicated young boy, who gets tangled in the web of racism. He is taken care of by Harriet, his grandmother. Harriet is the first character examined for this study. She is depicted as an old woman who has truly endured a ton of terrible things in life. First, her father falls prey to the biased law and police system in America. The narrator states, “Her father died in jail after a white lady downtown accused him of not getting out of her way on the sidewalk. Bumptious contact, as Jim Crow defined it” (Whitehead, *The Nickel Boys* 64). He died for what truly sounds like a nebulous offence. Ta-Nehisi Coates in his book *Between the World and Me*, which takes the form of a letter to his son, recounts a similar real-life incident he encountered. A white woman violently pushes Coates’ 4-year-old son, telling him to walk faster. When Coates confronts her, a white man threatens by saying “I could have you arrested!” which Coates interprets as, “I could take your body” (Coates 95). His statement exhibits the white racial hegemony and the powerlessness of black individuals in America. Harriet’s husband, Monty, is killed when tried to break up a brawl in a bar. Later, her grandson, Elwood is arrested merely for being in proximity of a perpetrator, transforming his life’s course completely. Without any proper trial, Elwood is sentenced to the notorious Nickel academy, a reform school, where Elwood is shot dead by the administrators for attempting to escape. The death of Harriet’s father and Elwood point out the precarity or uncertainty of black bodies in America. Through these fictional incidents, Colson Whitehead reminds his readers the long list of real life killings where the white police were acquitted. Recent examples include the shooting of 12-year-old Tamir Rice by the police in 2014, the killing of 22-year-old John Crawford for holding a toy rifle in a Walmart in 2014, the murder of 19-year-old Renisha McBride, who was seeking help after a car accident in 2013, the killing of Trayvon Martin in 2012, which ignited the Black Lives Matter movement and more recently, the

murder of George Floyd in 2020 that dominated news cycle. All these incidents underscore the precarity of black bodies regardless of their gender, age, class. This substantiates the statement, “If you’re black you were born in jail”, which Malcolm X made in his speech “The Ballot or the Bullet” (American Public Media). Even though he stated it in 1964, that is, during the civil rights era, it is still relevant today. Echoing a similar idea, Coates writes, “And you know now, if you did not before, that the police departments of your country have been endowed with the authority to destroy your body” (Coates 9). Coates argues that the officers who murdered black people were not innately evil but rather “men merely enforcing the whims of our country, correctly interpreting its heritage and legacy” (Coates 10). Because the nation itself is built by pillaging the land, body and liberty of Native Americans and Africans who were bought during the middle passage. Harriet, having underwent multiple heartbreaks, develops race- based traumatic stress. Her symptoms become explicit through her behavior. Whenever Harriet slept, “She kept a sugarcane machete under her pillow for intruders, and it was difficult for Elwood to think that the old woman was afraid of anything. But fear was her fuel” (Whitehead, *The Nickel Boys* 32). Here, Harriet’s actions clearly point toward hypervigilance caused by fear, which is one of the symptoms of race-based trauma. Since the novel is set during the civil rights era, there are several portrayals of sit-ins and protests to desegregate public facilities like bus transport and theatres. Harriet knows well that she cannot be the only black woman in her neighbourhood who doesn’t participate in the bus boycott. She musters up courage to do so. However, fear envelopes her as the event approaches. Her anxiety is revealed in the following lines: “But she trembled each time Slim Harrison pulled up in his ‘57 Cadillac and she squeezed into the back with the other downtown-bound ladies” (Whitehead, *The Nickel Boys* 32). When the sit-ins started, she was relieved that no one expected her to take part, as she believed that acting above her station would lead to undesirable consequences. Harriet had previously presented Elwood a record player so he could listen to the powerful speeches of Martin Luther King Jr. Elwood, contrary to Harriet’s expectation, starts to act upon his newly found purpose by participating in sit-ins, thinking she would be proud. However, when

Harriet discovers his involvement, she “confronted him—one of her circle had seen him and that’s how long it took for the news to get back to her. She instituted a ban on the record player”, thereby, discouraging Elwood from participating in further protests” (Whitehead, *The Nickel Boys* 35). Harriet had learnt from the past that it is prudent to be subservient or act in compliance with the expectation of white hegemonic powers. Because she fully understands that in America, whites occupy the power positions and that blacks own nothing “even their blackness is not theirs” (Sistani 39). Therefore, in the case of Harriet, the stressor of her race-based trauma is the racist police system that perpetuates the precarity of black bodies, creating an eerie and fearful atmosphere for black Americans.

Sag Harbor (2009) revolves around the life of Benji Cooper, a 15-year-old black teenager, who spends his summer vacation at his family's beach house. Benji’s family does not fit into the popularized media narrative that shows African Americans as poor because he belongs to the upper-middle class. Benji’s father is a podiatrist and his mother is a lawyer. This article focuses on the father figure whose temperament dictates the emotional state of family members. About his upbringing, Colson writes, “He'd grown up poor, fighting his way home every day off Lenox Avenue” (Whitehead, *Sag Harbor* 93). The absence of parental support in childhood is a significant factor contributing trauma. Added to that, he had to navigate a racist system alone. Even in Ivy League schools he attended, racial discrimination had permeated. He was doubly conscious of how the whites viewed him. The author comments from the whites’ perspective, “What were they doing getting Ivy League educations? They weren't supposed to be there” (Whitehead, *Sag Harbor* 185). Despite him being financially successful now, the trauma caused by living in a racist social system has affected his psyche. He displays symptoms of race-based trauma as he resorts to alcoholism and rage to cope with the stress. A study analyzing race-specific trauma reported that “trauma cognitions are more strongly associated with adverse consequences of drinking and alcohol craving severity among African Americans than European Americans” (Williams et al. 47). Since he is unable to confront the whites directly, he channels his anger towards the family members. In the name of

hardening his son to make him equipped for the racist society, he physically and verbally abuses him. When he learns that Benji did not confront the racist remark made by his classmate, he punches him repeatedly asking, “Can he hit you harder than this?” (Whitehead, *Sag Harbor* 143). This moment is crucial for Benji, though not in the way his father intended: “The lesson was, Don’t be afraid of being hit, but over the years I took it as, No one can hurt you more than I can” (Whitehead, *Sag Harbor* 143). The characterization of Benji’s father demonstrates how he suffers “from the race-related trauma wound of rage” and how a racist society can traumatize an individual’s life (K. V. Hardy 26). As mentioned earlier, his consumption of alcohol plays a vital role in family dynamics. It exacerbates the anxiety of Benji as the narrator observes, “Benji has a fine-tuned perception of every time the alcohol cabinet is opened” (Whitehead, *Sag Harbor* 175). He keeps count of the number of shots his father takes because he knows that the situation could escalate anytime. Soon, his father starts verbally abusing Benji’s mother for negligible reasons. His behaviour serves as an illustration for Lawrence Hogue’s assertion in his work *Discourse and the Other*. He writes,

The American social structure turns a black man into a beast, suppressing his human qualities and accenting his animal tendencies. The black man, in turn, reflects his violent relationship with his white landowner in his relations with his wife and son. He takes his anger and frustration, not on the social system . . . but on the black woman . . . and on his children. (91)

Benji’s psychological well-being is also affected by witnessing his father’s damaging effect on his mother. He noticed that his mother got older and older by every abusive word his father pronounced. While the outside world emasculates him, he exploits his powerful position within the family and abuses his power to lash out on his wife and son. In doing so, he perpetuates the same cycle of abuse that he experiences within the racist system, thereby, committing the same mistakes as the oppressors. Benji and his mother’s position is similar to the powerless and silent position that which Benji’s father occupies in the racist society.

Colson Whitehead through the portrayal of these two characters has underscored the plight of black Americans who face racial discrimination in their everyday life. Such racial encounters wound the individuals psychologically, causing them to experience race-based traumatic stress. Not all individuals who face racial discrimination succumb to RBTS, some even experience post traumatic growth. However, the very fact of existing in a racist society has its emotional toll. This study has revealed that Harriet and Benji's father both manifest the symptoms of RBTS. The underlying causes of their behavior have been brought to light. An exploration of these characters elucidates the aftermath of living with trauma and it reflects root cause, that is, the social categorization and the resulting marginalization of African Americans. Through this discussion, the necessity of addressing the issues instigated by such categorizations is highlighted.

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FOOD POLITICS IN INDIA: INTERSECTIONALITY OF CASTE, FOOD AND TRIBAL SOCIETY

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Abstract

India serves as a cultural powerhouse accommodating a multitude of indigenous tribal communities, each with its unique traditions, cultures, religious beliefs, languages and art forms. Santhals, the third largest tribal community in India is one of those tribes who are deeply rooted in their traditional and cultural values. The tribal identity of Santhals is fascinating and their close association with nature and worshipping of ancestral spirits reveal their uniqueness and individuality. In spite of their rich heritage, the Santhals like other tribes faced serious threats of discrimination and exploitation from the mainstream society. The present paper is a critical study of "They Eat Meat" a story by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, a Santhali writer from Jharkhand, focuses on how the Santhals are marginalized by the upper caste Hindu society and deprived of their basic human right, the right to choice of food.

Keywords: Food Politics, Sarna Religion, Tribal Identity, Freedom of Food, Identity Politics, Marginalisation, Caste Discrimination, and Hegemony.

Indian cuisine is so diverse and has a rich gastronomic heritage. Indian culinary tradition attracts the world with its aromatic foods filled with various spices and magical masala flavors. On one hand, Indian kitchens are welcoming, but on the other hand, they are often rife with hidden politics. In simple terms, food can be defined as a tangible substance that satisfies our appetite. In India, food has a cultural significance, a highly political role. In

one part of the nation, the cooked food is shared with neighbours, relatives, friends to promote cultural harmony and a sense of brotherhood, on the other part there is turbulence, bloodshed, discrimination over food cooked by the lower castes, adivasis and untouchables. It is considered filthy, impure and unclean. Food is a highly political topic in India. The upper caste culture dominates and controls food practices of the

marginalised and oppressed groups. Food is not only an element of energy source but also a symbol of cultural identity. The dominant upper class perpetuates its dominance through the theory of purity, using food as an ideal tool to exercise their hegemonic power. Arjun Appadurai, a prolific anthropologist states that food is not only a substance for consumption, but it also acts a vital medium for the transmission of caste hierarchies. He states, “Food transactions are key in the maintenance of the hierarchial order. The preparation, exchange, and consumption of food are arenas in which caste distinctions are constantly produced and reproduced” (1981).

The story “They Eat Meat!” by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar exposes the ongoing politics surrounding food practices and the iron hands of caste discrimination imposed by the upper caste Hindus on the oppressed groups. The Santhals practice their own traditional animistic religion centered on the worship of nature and their ancestral spirits called Sarnaism. They love to eat meat especially beef and pork, this sidelines them from both Hindus and Muslims who have strong aversion for beef and pork. “They Eat Meat” is about a tribal family (Santhal) mobilizing to Vadodara from Bhubaneswar on the account of job transfer. Vadodara is a city in Gujarat where Hindu culture is predominant and the tight fist of cultural hegemony is at its reign, whereas Bhubaneswar is a city in Orissa which serves as a supportive environment where Santhals are large in number. The very first question that rose in the mind of aunt Panmuni-jhi on hearing the news of Biram-Kumang was, “What are we going to eat there?” (2).

Jhapan di, a cousin of aunty Panmuni-jhi who lives in Vadodara, advises her “People don’t eat meat here. The food habits here are very different. You may have to stop eating quite a few things. No fish, no chicken,

no mutton. Not even eggs. People here don't like to mix with those who eat meat and eggs" (3,4). This shocks aunty Panmuni-jhi and her family, creating an estranged feeling mixed with fear. During their stay in Vadodara, Panmuni-jhi and her family find it very difficult to cook an egg to eat, similar is the struggle of Mrs. Rao who goes to aunt Panmuni-jhi's house to fry an egg in secrecy. Moreover, when Mr. Rao the landlord of Biram-kumang asks him to hide his tribal identity, advising him:

"Tribals, even lower-caste Hindus, they are seen as impure. Muslims and Christians, they don't stand a chance here. They have separate areas where they live. Separate bastis for Muslims, for Christians" (6).

Ambedkar thus points out the correlation between caste system and food hierarchy:

"Even a superficial view of the food taboos of the Hindus will show that there are two taboos regarding food which serve as dividing lines. There is one taboo against meat-eating. It divides Hindus into vegetarians and flesh-eaters. There is another taboo which is against beef-eating. It divides Hindus into those who eat cow's flesh and those who do not. From the point of view of untouchability the first dividing line is of no importance. But the second is, for it completely marks off the touchables from the untouchables." (1948)

After living in Vadodara for years, the Biram family had almost forgotten their traditional consumption of meat. They had given up their tribal identity to mix one with the dominant culture of Vadodara. "In Odisha, Panmuni-jhi could be a Santhal, an Odia, a Bengali. In Gujarat, she had to be only a Gujarati." Aunt Panmuni-jhi's loss of inner-self, her tribal consciousness puts her into a state of deeper insight evoking a sense of alienation that in Bhubaneshwar, all the Santhals of the city gathered together to celebrate their traditional religious festivals and also invited Santhals from other places. She wonders if such an impressive gathering of Santhals would be possible in Gujarat. After years of stay in Vadodara, when Biram was again announced a job transfer to Ranchi, their native homeland, the place

where they are free to practice their tribal culture and free to consume meat, the entire family was overjoyed. Panmuni-jhi felt being at home in Ranchi, she said, “Our area”(27), this phrase exhibits a clear realization of tribal consciousness. The story concludes with Panmuni-

jhi’s remarks, “No one minds what we eat here, and we don’t mind what others eat” clearly stating a sense of relief and belonging” (27).

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**RE-FRAMING THE GENDERED BODY – A STUDY OF KHALED
HOSSEINI’S *A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS* WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO THE CONTEMPORARY INDIAN SCENARIO**

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Abstract

The human body has an important role to play in defining one’s identity. The feminine body which has myriad meanings to various people is explored in the context of Khaled Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns* in this paper. The gendered identities which are depicted in the novel can be correlated to the happenings in contemporary India. Diverse cultures and times do not eliminate the trauma associated with the feminine body both in fiction and in real life.

Keywords: Body, Object, Feminine, Surveillance, Subjugation, Trauma and Resistance.

Most human experiences are focused on the perishable body. But what happens to the body leaves imprints on human minds. Khaled Hosseini in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, portrays different facets of the gendered body in all its complexity. The battered feminine body is seen as a symbol of the disease which engulfs the Afghan society. A generalization of the perverted masculine mind is not possible in the novel as there are many good men surrounding the protagonist Laila. But the same cannot be said about the men associated with Mariam, another lead character in the story. Mariam is born out of wedlock and has to suffer the trauma of neglect right from her childhood. Her mother taunts her for being a *harami* (illegitimate child). Mariam leads a secluded life with her mother on the outskirts of their home town. Her father comes visiting weekly and provides them with food and provisions. Mariam’s desire for inclusiveness into her father’s family is met with rejection. She waits for her father outside his home only to be sent back. Her mother commits suicide due to Mariam’s desertion. The injured mind batters the body by refusing to live. Mariam is married off to an elderly man Rasheed from Kabul which is far away from their hometown Herat.

Mariam travels to Kabul with her husband to her new home. She takes some time to get adjusted to her new life style. Rasheed is patient for a while. He insists his wife to wear the burqa (a long loose garment for women with slits in the place of eyes) so that no man can see her body. Mariam has never worn a *burqa* before coming to Kabul. She has not thought of her body being not presentable to the outside world till then. In the beginning, she finds it highly uncomfortable to wear the dress which takes away her identity. But later she begins to like its anonymity and finds solace in it. No one will identify her as an illegitimate child any longer. The idea that the female body is considered an object to be desired of and therefore should be kept away from public gaze is prevalent in many conservative societies.

It is Rasheed's second marriage with Mariam. When she cleans the house, she comes across some pornographic magazines in Rasheed's table drawer. She is willing to forgive him as she concludes that a man has his needs. He may have found it difficult without his first wife, who has lost her life. She reluctantly starts leading her married life. Rasheed shows his brutal self by being unforgiving of her small mistakes like her maintenance of their house. He shows some consideration to her when she gets pregnant. His son by first marriage died of drowning due to his negligence. So he is highly expectant to have a son. But her miscarriage makes him bitter. Mariam is quite unfortunate in being unable to complete her pregnancies to full term. She is mentally shattered but Rasheed offers no solace to her. He wants to beget a son to compensate for the loss of his first son.

Laila comes into Rasheed's life after a deadly explosion which erased her family and house. Rasheed, her neighbour, seizes the opportunity and makes Laila his third wife. There is a lot of age difference but Rasheed's eyes are set on Laila. She has no choice but takes advantage of her position. She is already pregnant with Tariq's (her friend's) baby when she agrees to marry Rasheed. Mariam is distraught at the new arrangement and remains hostile to Laila in the beginning. But the birth of Laila's baby and the brutality that they face, at the hands of Rasheed, make them bind well. Mariam becomes a mother to Laila and fondly looks after the baby just as she is her own blood. For the first time in her life, she feels wanted. Rasheed has ignored her because she

cannot bear him children. But now Mariam begins to experience life from a new perspective.

Rasheed is not too happy with Laila as she gives birth to a baby girl. He bangs the gate of their house on her, on their way back while bringing the baby home. She nearly escapes getting hurt. Rasheed's torture of the two female bodies continues. Mariam is once made to chew stones from the yard because the rice which she cooked for Rasheed had stones in it. She bleeds from the broken teeth. The violent behavior of Rasheed makes the two women escape from Kabul. But a stranger who they befriend on their way to Pakistan betrays them. The law of the land requires women to be accompanied by an adult male relative. The stranger agrees to be their escort but cheats them. They return to their husband's home. The fact that they tried to escape from Rasheed make him more vicious than before. Laila is imprisoned with her baby without food or water after bouts of physical violence to both women. The bodies of these two women are targeted by Rasheed whenever they turn against him. He behaves as if they are his slaves. The female body bears the brunt of Rasheed's aggression.

The political set up in Afghanistan adds to the trauma experienced by Mariam and Laila. Surveillance by the Moral Police is in its most radical form in Afghanistan as depicted in the novel. They hand back the women to Rasheed when they run away from his brutal behavior. The same police beats Laila, when she ventures out alone to meet her daughter, Aziza, who is sent to the orphanage due to financial constraints. This treatment is meted out to her because she is not accompanied by a male relative. Women are subjugated by restricting their freedom of movement.

In the meantime, Laila has a son by Rasheed who becomes the apple of his eyes. Later on it is Zalmay's betrayal of Tariq's visit to their home which results in the aggression of Rasheed on Laila. It gets out of hand as Rasheed goes to the extent of choking Laila. Mariam cannot tolerate the plight of Laila and hits Rasheed dead with a shovel. For once Rasheed gets the taste of his own medicine. The battered mind and body of Marian cannot allow Laila to be taken away from her. She has suffered a lot since her marriage at the age of fifteen. Twenty seven years of marriage with Rasheed has made her highly embittered. She imagines when Rasheed looks at her before the

final blow, “Maybe he saw some trace of all the self-denial, all the sacrifice, all the sheer exertion it had taken her to live with him for all these years, live with his continual condescension and violence, his faultfinding and meanness” (Hosseini 340). The only regret she has is the fact that Zalmai will lose his father because of her.

The victim has for once succeeded in defending her body. The aggressor is vanquished. Mariam finds a sense of fulfillment in her entire life. She has secured a safe place for Laila and her children in this world and does not care for what lies ahead for her. Under the Taliban rule, Mariam is sentenced to death for the crime she has committed on the male body. The reasons for such a drastic act from Mariam’s side do not have any significance in their eyes. No one has come to alleviate the sufferings of the two women in Rasheed’s household. The wife is considered to be the husband’s possession and he has the right to treat it the way he wants. Though the setting of the story is Afghanistan under the Taliban, the situation is similar to most of the patriarchal societies.

The female body is vandalized to give vent to the desires of antisocial men. There has been a recent spate of horrific incidents in India over the recent years. Rapes have been perpetrated on educated women. The rape-murder of a doctor intern in Kolkata is one such recent incident which has come under a lot of criticism from different sections of society. The brutal nature of such crimes can be seen in gang rapes and violent murders. The Delhi gang rape and murder incident which happened many years back has shocked the conscience of people. The age of those involved in committing such crimes is very less. The main reason is the mindset of the perpetrators. They consider the female body as something to be conquered to satiate their desires. Some commit such crimes under the influence of alcohol and drugs. The idea that the perpetrators are committing such heinous crimes to a fellow human being is not ingrained in their minds. They consider the female body as a mere object which needs to be conquered to quench their bodily thirst. The dropping age of the people behind such horrific crimes call for immediate attention from the authorities. The hue and cry which start right after such incidents fizzles out after a while. The families of victims are left with long drawn legal battles and grueling court sessions at the end of which they feel drained out.

The influential people rarely come out in public in support of the victims' families. Veena Venugopal in an article in *The Hindu* rightly points out, "It takes a big crime for affluent Indians to be jolted into taking a look around them. This fortnight, news of the rape and murder of a young doctor in Kolkata managed to keep this group busy." The apathy of the affluent over crimes against women is abysmal. They can easily raise such issues to bring them to the limelight so that positive actions can be taken to prevent such horrendous crimes from recurring. This time they reacted because the victim happens to be a doctor from a reputed medical school.

The recurrence of heinous crimes on the human body is a disease which has engulfed the present world. The advancements in all walks of lives are shattered due to the atrocities committed against the human body. The empowerment of women should start from home. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni opines, "But now we need to teach them different things: to fight for their dreams, to stand up for themselves, report misconduct, reject victim-shaming, reclaim the night" (*Hindu* "Kolkata"). Most often the victim is made to feel guilty by the patriarchal society. Due to court interventions, her name and identity cannot be divulged in the current times. The grueling court sessions make her relive her bitter experiences. The victim and her family are distraught at the media attention they receive. If the victim is no more, the trauma and loss of the parents is irreparable. The financial burden involved in long drawn court proceedings adds to their woes. The authorities vow to take stringent measures for the safety of women. The public reactions die away and life goes on as normal except for the immediate family of the victims. The complacency is shattered only when similar incidents happen again.

A more viable solution needs to be found out in alleviating the atrocities against women. One's upbringing and education have to go a long way in stopping such crimes against the female body. Awareness classes at school level should be started to instill in the young minds the importance of human body and the need to respect the same whether it be that of male or female. Girls should be taught to be brave enough to speak up in case of miscreant behavior from those around them. "Even more importantly, we must educate boys and men to be respectful of all women – not just their mothers and sisters" (Divakaruni *Hindu*).

Women across cultures have been at the receiving end of patriarchal high handedness. Literature has often succeeded in depicting violence against women to evoke empathy in the readers. Hosseini in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* has portrayed minutely the plight of Mariam and Laila living under violence, both domestic and communal, and their struggle to find a place in the world. The resistance that they offer in the wake of hostility is truly commendable. The idea that the human body should be revered needs to be driven home at a young age itself irrespective of gender. Women should be emboldened to identify and speak out inappropriate behavior that they encounter, whether it is in home space or public domain.

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EXPLORING A PSYCHOANALYTIC DIFFERENTIATION OF EXISTENTIAL STRUGGLES THROUGH NATURE IN ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S *THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA* WITH JOSEPH CONRAD'S *HEART OF DARKNESS*

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Abstract

Literature connects human and the world. Each and every place has its own unique thoughts and ideas. Indeed, humans are same dealing with several problems in their lives even though they are not geographically connected with places. The writers like Ernest Hemingway and Joseph Conrad are from different areas; the former is an American writer and the latter is an English writer. *The Old Man and the Sea* of Hemingway and *Heart of Darkness* by Conrad have an adventurous journey. Through a comparative lens, this article aims to seek the existential struggles of the major characters and to explore whether they are psychologically stable or not.

Keywords: Existentialism, Isolation, Unconscious, Domination and Atmosphere.

The two novellas *The Old Man and the Sea* and *Heart of Darkness* give a wide interpretation about nature and its role. The characters of these novellas question more about their 'existence'. Moreover, existentialism, as a theory, is a belief that one should create a proper meaning for leading a better life. It echoes the existence of a human in the world. If one has a right purpose to live, it provides a fruitful path and one does not fall into any kind of dilemma. 'Water' serves as a symbol to play a puzzling role with the characters. Santiago's demotivation and Marlow's journey into the Congo convey the psychological problem of the characters.

Due to isolation, most of the characters undergo self-clashes which arises doubts about their own individuality and skills. Most of the fishermen start to mock Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea*, due to his inability to catch a fish in the sea at his old age. This demotivated Santiago and he fell into a dark isolated world. His lovable assistant, Manolin boosts Santiago with his cheerful words. The characters, Santiago and Manolin say, "There are many good fishermen and some great ones. But

there is only you. Thank you. You make me happy. I hope no fish will come along so great that he will prove us wrong.”

The same isolation is experienced by Marlow who goes to explore Africa for a purpose in *Heart of Darkness*. He comes across a dark journey and an oppressive jungle. He explores how the whites treat native inhabitants which arises a colonial power structure among them. The entire atmosphere around Marlow makes him uncomfortable which leads to isolation. He makes a statement having an imperial atmosphere, “It was the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention. It looked at you with a vengeful aspect.”

The characters Santiago and Marlow have instability with their own situations. Santiago’s dreams always project the present life where he is in need of something to achieve. The dream of lions and African beach suggest his youth life. He wanted to have the same spirit, with good physical and mental strength as he had in his childhood days. ‘Fish’ serves as a good companion of him in the sea but his ability to catch a fish determines his identity as a fisherman. If the old man is mentally stable, he can succeed anything even if there is a hard task. When he catches the big fish, Marlin, it is a boost for him to survive. Similarly, Marlow’s unconscious instability is different from Santiago’s situation. As an innocent character, he falls into a different world, meeting different people around him while searching the ivory trader, Kurtz. He finds the behaviour of the colonizers and the native inhabitants of Africa. It happens to him because he does not know whether the journey to the Congo River leads to any dangerous situations.

Santiago and Marlow express their struggles while having the journey. Both of them do not know how a day can turn into a strange weapon which acts as a poison. At the end of both the novellas, the two characters succeed in their goals due to optimistic situations. They adjust into the societal norms and follow the same every day. In the words of Albert Camus, he gives a statement about ‘the meaning of life’ in his famous *The Myth of Sisyphus*.

To see psychologically, Santiago is satisfied with catching the fish, Marlin, but the shark, as a ‘destroyer’, reflects how one’s life struggle happens at any time.

Santiago is satisfied with his superego mindset, in terms of Freud, even though he brings the skeleton of the fish. The people and other fishermen mock his ability but this achievement makes him think that something is achieved but there is again a question whether the same will happen in the future which leads to an existential thought. Marlow finds Kurtz and sees his character as a demigod, the leading superiority of colonial domination among the people. His superego suggests to tell that this is not a right way to lead a proper life. This behaviour is completely a cannibalistic attitude. From Kurtz's life, the central character finds the absurdity of existence. Both characters, Santiago and Marlow, give a great psychological input to their lives. Freud in *The Ego and the Id* states, superego is an "energetic reaction-formation". "The superego is, however, not simply a residue of the earliest object-choices of the id; it also represents an energetic reaction-formation against those choices."

Nature serves as a symbolic representation of the inner journey of the characters in a psychological point of view. The 'sea' controls the mind of Santiago whereas the 'river' controls the mind of Marlow. Santiago thinks about the fears, memories and desires. Nature teaches him a moral lesson to live a happy life without disturbing any individual. The same is with Marlow where he observes the role of a human in arresting physical and mental tortures into one's mind. Kurtz serves as a best example of this notion. Marlow understands that one should not dominate the other. Kurtz's last words, 'the horror' depicts an imaginative picture of the title of the novella, that is 'darkness'. Both the central characters in the chosen novellas do not have a stable mind to lead their further life. But, each and every day, the characters learn about life. So, this creates a differentiation within the characters.

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IMPERATIVE OF ACTUAL CRIME RATE AND ITS IMPEDIMENTS IN MEASURING CRIME INCIDENCES: A VICTIMOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE IN INDIA

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Abstract

Accurately measuring actual crime rates is pivotal for developing effective policies and strategies to combat crime. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics in 2023, a significant portion of violent crimes (50%) and property crimes (70%) remains unreported to the police, while 75% of sexual assault incidents may never be officially documented. In India, an alarming 99.1% of sexual offences are not reported to the police. This study emphasizes the critical role of actual crime rates in victimological research within the contemporary criminal justice system and broader society. The traditional focus of the criminal justice system on reported crimes and associated tasks such as prevention, awareness, investigation, and sentencing fail to provide a comprehensive understanding of the true extent of criminal activities. The rising trend in unreported crimes is due to a myriad of reasons, including subjective attitudes, lack of trust in law enforcement, uncooperative systems, and insufficient attention to crime investigation and recording. This article investigates the common barriers hindering the revelation of unreported crimes within society and argues that criminological and victimological perspectives provide essential frameworks to unveil the crimes.

Keywords: Unreported Crime, Dark Figure, Crime Measurement, Victimology, Criminal Justice.

1. Introduction

Crime rates serve as crucial indicators for understanding the safety and security of a society. Policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and the public rely on these rates to assess the effectiveness of crime prevention strategies and to make informed decisions about resource allocation. Actual crime rates, also known as the true prevalence of criminal activities, are essential for crafting effective policies and strategies to combat crime (Lim, et al., 2010). Understanding the real extent of criminal behaviour enables

society to address root causes, allocate resources efficiently, and provide adequate support to victims. However, arriving at accurate crime rates is a multifaceted challenge that involves considerations beyond reported crimes.

Crime reporting and measurement, along with the examination of victimological perspectives, constitute critical dimensions within the field of criminology that shape our understanding of the prevalence, dynamics, and impact of criminal activities (Hope, 2005). The assessment and interpretation of crime statistics play a pivotal role in guiding policy decisions, law enforcement strategies, and societal responses to criminal behaviour. Moreover, victimological perspectives contribute significantly to the comprehension of the experiences and repercussions faced by individuals who fall prey to criminal acts (Hall, M. 2022).

In India, crime reporting is deeply influenced by multiple factors, including police strength, deficiencies within the criminal justice system, and the challenges associated with the application of forensic science. One primary concern is inadequate police strength, which directly affects law enforcement's capacity to respond effectively to reported crimes. India's police-to-population ratio is considerably lower than international standards, leading to an overburdened and often under-resourced police force. This shortage can result in delayed responses, insufficient investigation, and a lack of follow-through, all of which can discourage victims from reporting crimes. When individuals perceive that the police are either unable or unwilling to provide adequate protection or justice, they may choose not to report their victimization, contributing to the growing issue of unreported crimes.

This article explores the escalating rate of unreported crimes, emphasizing the various subjective and objective factors contributing to the lack of trust in reporting. It delves into the common barriers hindering the revelation of unreported crimes within society and argues that criminological and victimological perspectives provide essential frameworks to unveil the dark figure of crime. By identifying the bottlenecks in actual crime rate determination, these perspectives offer a nuanced approach to understanding the complexities faced by crime victims and potential victims who refrain from engaging with the criminal justice system. This article highlights the

necessity of addressing unreported crimes and recognizing the impediments faced by victims, as this knowledge is crucial for fostering belief and confidence in the criminal justice system.

2. Crime Reporting Accuracy and Reliability

The accuracy and reliability of crime reporting are integral components of a fair and effective criminal justice system. Crime reporting serves as a cornerstone in the administration of justice, providing critical data for law enforcement, policymakers, and the public. However, for these data to fulfil their intended purposes, accuracy and reliability are essential (Lowry, C. 2021). Reporting crime plays a crucial role in shaping public safety policies, allocating law enforcement resources, and fostering community awareness. The effectiveness of crime reporting depends upon the accuracy and reliability of the data collected and it delivers the foundation of the criminal justice system, providing a vital channel through which society stays informed about criminal activities. The reliability of crime reporting plays a pivotal role in maintaining public trust, aiding law enforcement, and ensuring a fair and unbiased legal system (Ariel & Bland, 2019).

Estimating the true number of crimes and actual crime incidences through crime victimization surveys or victims' self-reporting may affect the accuracy and reliability of data received from the police. Various factors can lead to overreporting or underreporting, such as subjective perceptions of police trustworthiness, fear of retaliation, or the belief that reporting will not lead to any significant action. These statistical discrepancies pose challenges in crime reporting analysis and can lead to distorted perceptions of actual crime rates (Brunton & Allen, 2016; McDevitt et al., 2002; Logan & Ferguson, 2016).

Overcounting and undercounting of crime can significantly affect the accuracy and reliability of crime statistics, leading to distorted perceptions of actual crime rates. Overcounting occurs when the reported or recorded number of crimes is higher than the actual number of incidents, often due to duplication of cases, the inclusion of incidents that do not meet criminal activity criteria, or pressure on law enforcement agencies to show higher crime clearance rates. Conversely, undercounting happens

when the reported or recorded number of crimes is lower than the true number of incidents, typically due to failure to report certain crimes, victims' reluctance to report, or incomplete documentation by law enforcement (Klinger & Bridges, 1997).

The issue of misclassification of crimes, for instance, the incident of crime counted in one, however, the victimization or victims are two or more; the same victimization or victims were one then the incident of crime counted has counted two (if two criminals involved robberies throughout the same incident) (Morgan & Thompson 2021); (index crimes affects the over-undercounting such as murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, larceny, and arson) (Nolan et.al., 2011).

The process of collecting and reporting crime data serves as the foundation for informed decision-making within the criminal justice system. Official crime statistics, often compiled by law enforcement agencies, are central to measuring the magnitude and nature of criminal activities in a given jurisdiction. The accuracy of crime reporting data is most needed to find the linkages of further crime analysis also step forward the threshold of innovative investigation strategies and identify contemporary the Modus Operandi of crimes (Davies & Woodhams, 2019). However, the reliability and accuracy of such statistics are perennial challenges, as they are influenced by various factors, including reporting practices of victims and police forces recording crime on the fundamental law legislative changes, and societal perceptions of crime (Patrick, 2011). Understanding the complexities involved in crime reporting is crucial for policymakers and researchers alike, as it directly impacts the efficacy of crime prevention and intervention strategies.

3. Crime Trend in India (2020-2022)

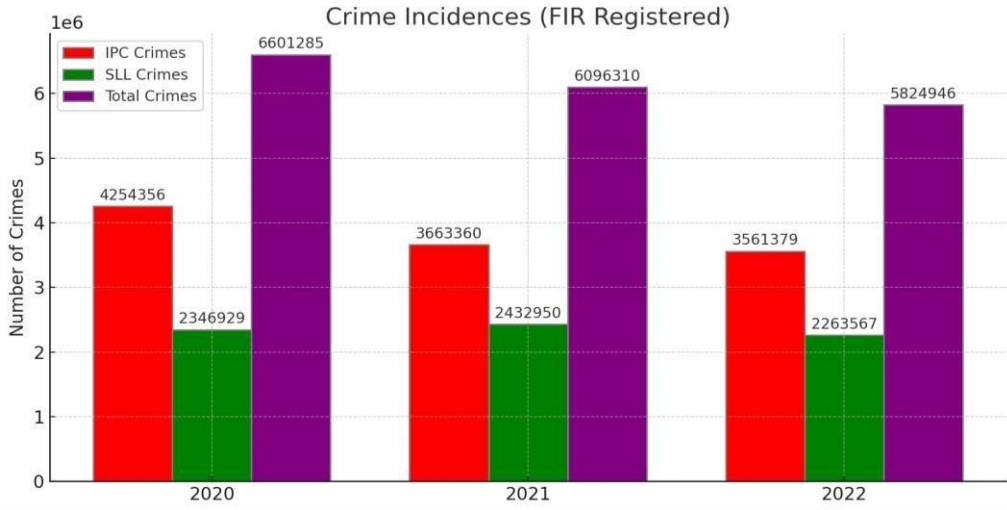
Based on the data provided by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for the years 2020 to 2022, there has been a noticeable trend in crime incidence under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Special & Local Laws (SLL) in India.

3.1. Crime Incidence: In 2020, the total number of registered crimes was 6,601,285. This figure decreased to 6,096,310 in 2021 and further reduced to 5,824,946 in 2022. This shows a declining trend in the total number of crimes registered over these three

years. Specifically, crimes under the IPC decreased from 4,254,356 in 2020 to 3,561,379 in 2022. Similarly, crimes under SLL saw a reduction from 2,346,929 in 2020 to 2,263,567 in 2022.

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3.2. Crime Rate: The crime rate, calculated per one lakh population, also followed a



downward trend. The overall crime rate, combining IPC and SLL, decreased from 487.8 in 2020 to 422.2 in 2022. The IPC crime rate dropped from 314.3 in 2020 to 258.1 in 2022, while the SLL crime rate slightly decreased from 173.4 in 2020 to 164.1 in 2022.

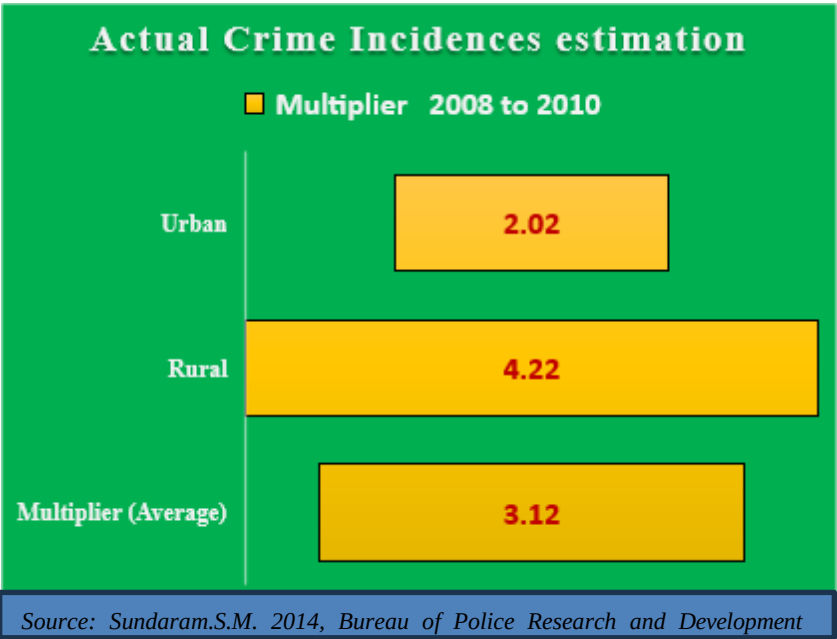
3.3. Proportion of IPC Crimes to Total Cognizable Crimes: The percentage of IPC crimes compared to the total cognizable crimes showed minor fluctuations. In 2020, IPC crimes constituted 64.4% of the total, which decreased to 60.1% in 2021, before slightly increasing to 61.1% in 2022.

While the data provided by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) shows a declining trend in the number of crimes reported and recorded from 2020 to 2022, it is essential to consider that these figures may not fully reflect the actual crime scenario. One crucial factor that could explain this decline is the prevalence of unreported crimes. The phenomenon of unreported crimes, where victims choose not to report their victimization to the police, plays a significant role in understanding the apparent reduction in crime rates. Several factors contribute to the underreporting of crimes; Fear of Retaliation, Lack of Trust in Law Enforcement, Social Stigma, Economic or Social Pressure and Pandemic-Related Factors (COVID-19). the NCRB

data indicates a decline in crime from 2020 to 2022, the influence of unreported crimes must be considered to gain a more accurate understanding of the crime landscape in India. The decline in reported crime numbers could thus be misleading if unreported crimes are widespread. The true crime rate may be higher than what is reflected in the official statistics, highlighting the need for efforts to encourage reporting and improve the accuracy of crime data.

4. Estimating the True Crime Rate from Reported Incidents

To accurately assess the true extent of criminal activity in India in general particularly in Tamil Nadu, researchers have developed a 'multiplier coefficient' that accounts for the significant gap between reported crimes and the actual number of crimes occurring. This gap exists because many crimes go unreported, and even among those reported, not all are recorded by the police.



In a study conducted by Sundaram. S. M. 2014 between 2008 and 2010, data were collected from both urban (Chennai) and rural

(Tirunelveli) areas to determine these multipliers. Using an Ordinary Least Squares regression model, researchers found that for urban spaces like Chennai, the multiplier is 2.02. This means that the actual crime rate is more than double the number of incidents reported to the police. In rural areas such as Tirunelveli, the multiplier is even higher at 4.22, indicating that the true crime rate is more than four times the reported figure. On average, across Tamil Nadu, the multiplier is 3.12. Therefore, to estimate

the actual number of crimes in a given area, one would multiply the reported crime figures by this coefficient. This method reveals a more accurate and alarming picture of criminal victimization, emphasizing that the true extent of crime is significantly higher than what official records suggest.

5. Unmasking the Dark Figure of Crime

Crime, as a social phenomenon, casts a shadow that extends beyond the visible spectrum of reported incidents. The "dark figure of crime" refers to the vast expanse of unreported or underreported crimes that elude official statistics. This dark figure includes crimes that go unreported due to victims' fear, stigma, or mistrust of the criminal justice system. It encompasses severe crimes, such as murders, serial killings, underreporting of missing persons, and unsolved murder cases (DeLisi, 2023; McKinley & Lark, 2023). Unreported crimes are those that victims choose not to disclose to authorities, while underreported crimes are incidents that are reported but not accurately reflected in official crime statistics due to various reasons such as biases, inadequate reporting mechanisms, or systemic issues within the criminal justice system and one of the major issues in dealing the empirical analysis of actual crime statistics and come under the hidden crime victims (Hilton, 2023; Brunton, et al., 2023). In victimology, the study of victims and their experiences in the criminal justice system, understanding the dark figure is essential for comprehending the full scope of criminal activities and their impact on society.

6. Fear and Stigma: The Causes of the Dark Figure of Crime

Fear and stigma are significant factors that contribute to the dark figure of crime. These emotional and social barriers can deter victims from coming forward and sharing their experiences with law enforcement authorities. Victims may fear reprisals from perpetrators, particularly in cases of domestic violence, sexual assault, or organized crime, where the offender may have significant power over the victim's life. Concerns about personal safety and the safety of loved ones can lead victims to choose silence over justice (Papp, et al., 2019; Singer, 1988; Orth, et al., 2006; Vergani & Navarro, 2023).

6.1. Stigma and Social Judgment: Societal prejudices, particularly in cases of sexual assault or domestic violence, can discourage individuals from seeking help and reporting the crimes. The people and place of the victims were lived and criminalization was devaluated and discredited in the context of policies framed, authoritative actions and added to media portrays, political influences lead the stigmatization of dark figures of crime in local aspects (Schwarze, 2023; Slater, 2021, Crampton & Krygier 2006). Societal attitudes that place blame on victims or perpetuate harmful stereotypes can create an environment where reporting a crime is seen as socially undesirable. Informal way of approach in society dealing the non- serious crimes leads to non-reporting their victimization or crimes against them not report to the police; at the same they perceived that reporting non-serious crimes is moral and non-reporting is least moral (Himmelfarb, 1980; Dollar & Tietjen, 2023).

Cultural norms and societal expectations may discourage individuals from reporting crimes, especially if the act challenges established gender roles or norms. Victims might fear being ostracized or shamed for deviating from traditional expectations. In the aspect of community trust, victims perceive that their privacy is not adequately protected when reporting crimes, it can erode trust in law enforcement and discourage reporting, hindering the overall effectiveness of crime prevention. In some cultures and social living aspects, there may be pressure to prioritize family or community reputation over individual well-being, leading victims to keep silent about crimes committed against them (Goudriaan, et al., 2004; Ayodele & Aderinto, 2016).

6.2. Concerns About Privacy

Victims may be reluctant to report crimes due to concerns about the invasion of their privacy. This is particularly relevant in cases involving sensitive information or crimes that occurred within intimate relationships. They may fear retaliation, social stigma, or unwanted attention and not social legal support. Ensuring confidentiality and sensitivity in handling such reports is crucial to encourage victims to come forward (Allen, W. D. (2007). The privacy-related issues are also found in the ecological context in urban and rural contexts; comparing the stigma of the rural closed relative setup of living conditions to less reporting attitude and in urban setup on the

strangers and fewer challenges to reporting a crime in the factors influencing the privacy plays role in the ecological conditions (Laub,198).

Victims who choose not to report crimes may do so to protect their privacy and ultimately the victims fail to do the duty of reporting crime. This influences the decision of victims reporting crime; broadly violent crimes are reported more and crime against property is less in the victim decision; could stem from concerns about the criminal justice process, fear of retribution, or a desire to keep personal matters private. Undoubtedly the victim's privacy is encompassed once reporting crimes to the police or neighbours about the decisions of crime reports (Tarling & Morris, 2010).

In criminal trial witness appearance and statement is crucial in the court of law, the Witnesses may hesitate to come forward due to privacy concerns. The witness safeguard is prolonging problems and various incidents of attacks took place against them during the trial and further process. Protecting the identity and information of witnesses is essential to encourage their cooperation in investigations (Khamari & Mishra 2021). Individuals who witness crimes but choose not to report them may be influenced by privacy concerns. Fear of involvement in legal proceedings or concerns about personal safety could be contributing factors (Bajpai, 2010). People might be hesitant to report crimes if they perceive that law enforcement or other authorities might intrude excessively into their lives during the investigation process. Some individuals may choose not to report crimes out of concern that doing so would invite unwanted scrutiny into their personal lives.

Privacy in digital security and technology- As reporting mechanisms increasingly shift to digital platforms, there are concerns about the security of personal information. Ensuring robust data protection measures is crucial to prevent unauthorized access or data breaches (Moses, et al., 2022). Individuals who refrain from reporting crimes may be concerned about the security of their information even if they do not officially engage with law enforcement. The potential for personal details to be exposed can influence victim's decisions based on digital data security and privacy (Chen, et al., 2019).

7. Cost-Benefit Analysis of Crime Reporting

Victims often weigh the costs and benefits of reporting crimes to the police. It's essential to consider both tangible and intangible factors to make a well-informed decision. While reporting can lead to justice and accountability, it may also involve significant emotional and time-related costs. The legal process can be time-consuming and emotionally challenging, and increased police presence or potential retaliation from the perpetrator can further deter victims from reporting crimes (Roman & Farrell, 2002).

However, reporting crimes can also provide victims with access to support services, counselling, or compensation, which are crucial for coping with the emotional and financial aftermath of the crime. Despite these benefits, the burdens of reporting such as providing statements, attending court hearings, and cooperating with law enforcement can be overwhelming for victims.

8. Police Strength, Criminal Justice Professionals, and Forensic Science Barriers

In India, various factors contribute to the underreporting of crimes, which in turn leads to an incomplete understanding of crime trends and hampers the effective application of justice. Among these factors, the strength and efficiency of police forces, the gaps in the criminal justice system, and barriers to the application of forensic science play significant roles.

8.1. Police Strength and Efficiency

The strength and efficiency of the police force are critical in shaping public confidence in the criminal justice system. In India, the police-to-population ratio is often inadequate, leading to overburdened law enforcement officers who may struggle to respond promptly and effectively to reported crimes. According to the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD), as of 2023, India had a police-to-population ratio of 152 per 100,000 people, which is below the United Nations recommended standard of 222 per 100,000 -70 below the United Nations (UN) standard of 222 police per lakh population (Bureau of Police Research and Development, 2023).

This shortage can result in delayed responses, insufficient investigation, and a lack of follow-up, which in turn discourages victims from reporting crimes. When victims perceive that the police are either unable or unwilling to provide adequate protection or justice, they may choose to remain silent, contributing to the dark figure of crime (Verma, 2020).

8.2. Criminal Justice Professionals:

- a. Lack of trust in Authorities: In the complex contexts of crime reporting in India, the issue of the lack of trust in authorities plays a pivotal role. Reporting a crime to the authorities is a fundamental step in the criminal justice process, serving as the first link between victims and law enforcement. However, a significant challenge arises from the widespread scepticism and distrust that many individuals harbour towards authorities, leading to underreporting of crimes.
- b. Perceived Inefficiency: A considerable number of individuals in India perceive law enforcement agencies as inefficient and slow to respond. The bureaucratic hurdles, delays in investigations, and lack of visible progress in solving cases contribute to a diminished faith in the criminal justice system's effectiveness. This perceived inefficiency discourages victims from reporting crimes, as they believe that their efforts may not yield meaningful results (Dhingra & Subramanian, 2022; Singh & Sharma, 2021).
- c. Corruption Concerns: Corruption within the law enforcement system is a pervasive concern in India. Victims may fear that reporting a crime could lead to further victimization, extortion, or manipulation by corrupt officials. This fear hampers the willingness to cooperate with authorities, further contributing to the underreporting of crimes (Banerjee, 2021; Gupta, 2020).
- d. Lack of Sensitivity: Instances of insensitivity and bias exhibited by law enforcement officials, especially towards marginalized communities, discourage victims from approaching authorities. A lack of empathy and understanding exacerbates the trust deficit between victims and the criminal justice system (Dignan, 2004; Patel, 2019).

8.3. Forensic Science Barriers:

Forensic science plays a crucial role in the criminal justice system by providing scientific evidence that can support investigations and prosecutions. However, in India, several barriers related to forensic science contribute to the underreporting of crimes and impede the justice process.

- a. **Limited Access to Forensic Services:** In many parts of India, particularly in rural and underdeveloped regions, there is limited access to forensic services. The lack of nearby forensic laboratories, coupled with inadequate infrastructure, means that many crimes go unreported because victims believe that the chances of solving the crime are low without scientific evidence (Sharma & Kumar, 2021). This limitation is particularly pronounced in cases of sexual violence, where forensic evidence is critical for prosecution (Sinha & Kandpal, 2024).
- b. **Delays in Forensic Analysis:** Even when forensic services are available, delays in forensic analysis can significantly hinder the investigation process. These delays, often caused by backlogs in forensic laboratories and a shortage of trained personnel, can result in the loss of critical evidence or the deterioration of its quality, thereby reducing the likelihood of successful prosecution. Such inefficiencies discourage victims from reporting crimes, as they may feel that the slow pace of justice will not serve their interests (Joshi & Singh, 2022).
- c. **Forensic Science and Trust Issues:** The credibility of forensic evidence is also sometimes questioned due to issues such as tampering, contamination, or mishandling of evidence. In cases where victims or their families are aware of such possibilities, there may be a reluctance to report crimes, fearing that forensic science will not be able to deliver justice (Verma & Raj, 2021). The lack of trust in forensic capabilities, combined with the perceived inefficiencies, further exacerbates the problem of underreporting.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

The accurate measurement of actual crime rates is essential for a just and effective criminal justice system. Unmasking the dark figure of crime requires a multifaceted approach that addresses the various barriers to crime reporting, from fear and stigma to

systemic inefficiencies in law enforcement and the judiciary. Addressing these issues necessitates a collaborative effort between policymakers, law enforcement agencies, forensic experts, and victim advocacy groups. Policymakers must prioritize increasing police strength and efficiency, ensuring that law enforcement agencies are adequately resourced and trained to handle reported crimes effectively. Simultaneously, the criminal justice system must be reformed to provide timely and effective responses to reported crimes, with a focus on supporting victims and ensuring their privacy and confidentiality. Forensic science must be integrated more fully into the criminal justice process, with investments in technology, training, and resources to ensure that evidence is accurately collected, analyzed, and utilized in investigations. By addressing these challenges, India can move toward a more accurate understanding of crime rates, ultimately leading to a safer society where victims feel empowered to report crimes and seek justice.

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BREAKING THE SILENCE: ADDRESSING RAPE CULTURE IN LITERARY WORKS

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Abstract

The paper aims to identify the female victims of war rape and assault in the sequel novels of Pat Barker namely, *The Silence of the Girls* (2018) and *The Women of Troy: A Novel* (2021). Rape of women by Gods and men had been a prevalent theme in Greek myths and it is a serious issue of discussion in the current era. Media's portrayal of rape and the victim's narrative have often been shadowed by commercial narratives. Authors like Atwood and Barker are true to the portrayal of victims and their mindset in their fiction. Barker in the above mentioned two novels writes of women of royalty, nobility and common birth who are suffering as slaves and sex slaves. They are often described in a line by Homer in his greatest epics. The purpose of the paper is to explore the female body, mind and experience which Hélène Cixous explains as *écriture féminine* in her phenomenal essay "The Laugh of Medusa" (1975).

Keywords: Victim, War, Assault, Slaves, Female, Body and Rape.

The article aims to explore the silenced narratives of female characters during the Trojan war. The greatest bards of Ancient Greece like Homer glorified men and women but the subtle way in which they gave voice to one and silence to the other is to be noted. The female characters in Homer's epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, were merely presented as secondary beings in the works. The lives of these characters often deemed famous for their beauty, virtue and constancy are often narrated by men and Gods. They almost lack their own narratives which the contemporary feminist authors

take up as a task to challenge the issues of assault, abduction, rape and violence which lie hidden in the grand narratives.

“Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time. Write yourself. Your body must be heard” (Cixous 880) says Cixous in her essay stating that a woman’s body which had suffered violation and pain is censored in order to cover up her voice that remain muffled under the history of great cultures. The major myths are stories of men going on war, adventures to satisfy their pride and thirst for knowledge. But the other side which survived with them remained passive without a role of their own. Their existence is interlinked with that of the male characters who are known for their valour and strength. Barker writes about the brutal realities of war and the treatment of war slaves, especially women in the camps which exhibits close connection with that of contemporary war crimes against women. The book does not miss out on narrating the female experience of rape and how it changed the victims for life. The mainstream literary works and media often blame the women or the victims involved instead of the perpetrator. Thus, victim blaming has been a trend since Homer’s time in the notion of rape culture.

Language and speech are the means of establishing culture, ideology and narratives. The grand narratives proved to be phallogentric in nature in both Greek and Indian cultures and this in turn renders the narratives of women marginalised. Freudian and Lacan analysts support the views of Castration and the Phallus signifier which Cixous opposes to be patriarchal and comparative in nature. She reveals how the notions create a hierarchical structure in which men occupy the dominant roles while the women remain passive. Their arguments are solely designed in a set of binaries and they restrict the opportunity for women to create their own symbol and narrative. The image of Medusa’s head has been studied by Freud and concluded to be a symbol closely related to castration and the psychological development of a male child. Her decapitation according to Freud symbolically signified the fear of castration in young boys. But the symbol of Medusa nowadays come to represent the survivors of rape and assault in feminist narratives, and her decapitation could be closely related to victim blaming and silencing her trauma. Thus, Cixous asserts:

[w]oman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies- for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Women must put herself into the text- as into the world and into the history- by her own movement (Cixous 886).

Amina and Helle, the minor characters in the novel, *The Women of Troy: A Novel* broke the binaries set by the phallogentric narrative. Amina was silent but that did not stop her from challenging the injustice of not burying the dead king of Troy. She escaped the women huts and buried king Priam's mangled body without a man's help, astonishing the Greek men who believed that no woman would dare act alone. She did not run away from facing Pyrrhus and mocked him straight before he strangled her to death. Helle worked as an entertainer in her past and life in camp was not much different from the previous one. She underwent worse treatment in the hands of clients more than she does in the camp but it only made her strong in mind. She used her body movements in the fire dance to show the women that she was free in her mind though restricted by her body. Briseis describes her as such:

I've never seen any girl dance the way Helle danced that night. At weddings and religious festivals, girls do dance, but always modestly, covered from collarbone to ankle in flowing robes, careful not to let their gaze stray beyond the movements of their feet. Helle was wearing a sleeveless tunic, the hem well above her knees— basically, a man's tunic" (Barker, *The Women* 92).

The protagonist of the selected two novels is Briseis, a female character known for being Achilles' lover or that was how the media represents her. Briseis was a queen of the smaller kingdom surrounding Troy known as Lyrnessus. Her city was sacked by the war hero, Achilles. Women of kingdoms in war tend to hide in the towers and temples and thus she witnessed the scenes of the killings of Achilles. She mocks Homer's Achilles by saying: "Great Achilles. Brilliant Achilles, shining Achilles, godlike Achilles ... How the epithets pile up. We never called him any of those things; we called him 'the butcher'" (Barker, *The Silence* 3). He killed her husband and brothers and she was forced to be his bed slave. She bursts the bubble that cultural patriarchy had built around her and says "We women are peculiar creatures. We tend

not to love those who murder our families” (Barker, *The Women* 249). Most of the women are made to face the torture of being the sex slaves of the men who killed their family. Briseis also witnesses Priam begging Achilles for the return of Hector’s body and voices out:

I do what no man before me has ever done, I kiss the hands of the man who killed my son”. Those words echoed round me, as I stood in the storage hut, surrounded on all sides by the wealth Achilles had plundered from burning cities. I thought: "And I do what countless women before me have been forced to do. I spread my legs for the man who killed my husband and my brothers” (Barker, *The Silence*, 267).

The two novels bring out many instances of female experience of rape and their stories of how scary and disgusting the experience was. The women of defeated cities all experienced humiliation and sexual assault which is described by Briseis: “Two men, who never spoke except to each other, walked along the line of women, pulling down a lip here, a lower eyelid there, prodding bellies, squeezing breasts, thrusting their hands between our legs” (Barker, *The Silence* 19). The day Briseis was dragged out of her city, she was showcased in front the Greek crowd before Achilles approved of her. After spending the night with Achilles as his bed slave, she had the urge to follow her brothers in death. But the helplessness, fear and frustration pushed her towards the sea and she cleansed herself from every trace of Achilles. This she says: “...I put my hands and washed him out of me” (Barker, *The Silence*, 32). He did not want to get pregnant with his child and Andromache, wife of Hector (killed by Achilles) puts forth the psychological turmoil of a mother and a slave as, “How are we supposed to love *their* children?” (Barker, *The Women*, 64).

The women of Troy and the surrounding cities were said to be sacked along with other loots. The hierarchy in the camps were strictly divided and women of common birth suffered more as public properties for the soldiers and worked their lives off in the laundry hut which Barker notes as: “A slave isn’t a person who’s being treated as a thing. A slave is a thing” (Barker, *The Silence* 38). Chryseis, Agamemnon’s prize was abducted from the temple of Apollo and Greeks believed that the plague was the reason for the insult to the Gods and the priest who was the girl’s father. The

conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon with which the *Iliad* opens is due to the conflict of stealing each other's prize. Chryseis was returned to her father in fear of God Apollo and Agamemnon took away Achilles' prize, Briseis. Agamemnon took out his anger on Achilles by raping her violently. The violations and objectified views over women in the camp were obvious through the exchange of women without their consent. Achilles completely abandoned the Greeks in the war for taking away the women he considered his wife as accounted in Homer's epic. But Barker differs to say:

She's his prize, that's all, his prize of honour, no more, no less. It's nothing to do with the actual girl. And the pain he feels is merely the humiliation of having his prize stolen from him—yes, stolen—by a man who's his inferior in every way that matters. The cities besieged and sacked, the fighters killed, the whole unrelenting bloody grind of war...And he takes her, just like that. That's what hurts—not the girl—the insult, the blow to his pride (Barker, *The Silence* 117).

Briseis being the victim in the situation was blamed by the Greek men for being the reason of conflict between two mighty leaders instead of their pride.

Cassandra is a famous Trojan priestess who is known for her bane from Apollo who cursed her when she failed to accept his kiss. She was cursed to live with the fate of unbelievable prophecies and people never believed her words and thought she was mad. When Troy was sacked by the strategy of the wooden horse, she was raped by Ajax the lesser in the temple of Athena which Briseis recalls how the Greek men discussed as: "it wasn't the rape that bothered them; it was the desecration of the temple" (Barker, *The Women*, 71). Later in the novel, Briseis meets with Cassandra who asserts that her rape in the temple was not an offence against the gods but an offence towards her and she never wants to discuss the details because of its cruelty. Cassandra slowly reveals to Briseis: "You know the worst thing?" she said. "I was on my period. Made no difference, he just pulled the bloody clout off me and threw it away...I wouldn't have wanted my own sister to see that" (Barker, *The Women*, 122).

Helen, wife of Menelaus and lover of Paris, for whom the wars were, was hated by men and women alike. She was hated by both Greeks and Trojans the same and she was often portrayed as the master seductress in the modern novels and she was blamed for the loss of so many lives especially for the loss of many young war heroes

and the fall of the towers of Ilium. Briseis was acquainted with Helen from her young age and she describes Helen as a confident woman who was the object of everyone's envy but she had a lonely side which most failed to notice, she always weaved the story of the war in her dark room. Helen, after the war, was returned to her husband Menelaus who raped and assaulted her every night. While others believed that she managed to seduce Menelaus again, the bruises on her body say otherwise. Her encounter with Briseis shows she was a woman who just wanted to survive more than anything, a woman desperately holding onto her life. The soldiers in the camp chanted against Helen wishing for her early death:

Fuck her standing,
 Fuck her lying,
 Cut her throat and fuck her dying.
 When she's dead but not forgotten
 Dig her up and fuck her rotten. (Barker, *The Silence* 202)

This brings out the ideas of honour rape to restore the honour of men through violence against women.

Barker through her novels draws the picture of a woman's body throughout the novel from her suffering to pride. The women hidden in the towers surrounded by the smell of menstrual blood and breast milk waiting for their stories to turn out better symbolically represent Cixous', "There is always within her at least a little of that good mother's milk. She writes in white ink" (Cixous 881). Briseis writes the voices and experience of the women in her white ink. She also reveals the harsh patriarchal views from the words of Hecuba when she accuses Helen: "Oh, and the lies she comes out with! She was raped—my son raped her? She couldn't get enough of him!" (Barker, *The Women* 76), which clearly is a case of victim blaming and slut shaming, when there was a possibility of Helen being raped as Homer justifies her actions to be the influence of Aphrodite to make her fall in love with Paris out of her choice.

Atwood in her retelling of Penelope says, "the consummation of a marriage was supposed to be a sanctioned rape" (Atwood 37) to assert dominance over the woman and her family, stating the circumstances of women in political marriages. But the situation in which the female characters of Barker were exposed to did not differ

much except for the label of their relationship. While Penelope was the wife of Odysseus, the women of Troy were the slaves of the Greek kings and soldiers. Atwood in the guise of Penelope states:

My past life was fraught with many difficulties, but who's to say the next one wouldn't be worse? Even with my limited access I can see that the world is just as dangerous as it was in my day, except that the misery and suffering are on a much wider scale. As for human nature, it's as tawdry as ever (Atwood 151).

This hints the readers on continuous rapes, assaults and other societal issues against the voiceless in the form of violence and to bring out the silent narratives that are censored to the public eye. Thus, the works taken for discussion loudly voice out the silenced narratives of women. These female narratives break the silences that surround the rape culture and serve as a plea for social justice and equality.

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**THE TRAUMA AND FRAGMENTATION NARRATIVE IN
MARGARET ATWOOD'S *THE TESTAMENTS***

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Abstract

This study analyses Margaret Atwood's latest novel *The Testaments* (2019) which takes the readers back to the totalitarian society of Gilead. The novel is a sequel to Atwood's famous *The Handmaid's Tale*, a story about a Handmaid called Offred documenting her life amidst the new society. *The Testaments* follows three female protagonists moving their way through the ultimate patriarchal society called Gilead, 15 years after the events of the preceding novel. This study examines Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments* and its depiction of trauma. This study also aims to focus on both the individual and collective trauma of the three protagonists, their fragmented identities, and the possible attempts to rebuild their sense of identity.

Keywords: Trauma, Gilead, Identity, Testimony, Narrative and Fragment.

Atwood's *The Testaments* is a typical trauma novel which portrays three trauma narratives, each addressing a different generation with a different type of trauma. Aunt Lydia is reintroduced to the readers, the antagonist who ruled her empire of Handmaids in *The Handmaid's Tale* with an iron fist. She writes her memoir directly to the readers hoping they find an explanation for her way of acting. Agnes, a young girl raised in Gilead by her Gileadean adoptive parents. Agnes's storyline revolves around the everyday life of a young Gileadean, followed by being a child bride and the traumatic flashbacks of being forced from her birth mother's arms. The third protagonist, 16-year-old Nicole, gives an insight into life as a Gileadean refugee living in Canada, not knowing her birthplace and her biological parents. All three narratives are interconnected, although they are mostly apart in time.

The readers meet three very different narratives, each offering different perspectives on the ways of life in Gilead. With Aunt Lydia's narrative, the dominance and power of Gilead are explored along with the internal struggle she faces while resorting to doing horrific things for survival. When the narrative switches to Agnes, more mundane issues are described and the hierarchy inside the higher-ranking family is also discussed. Additionally, Agnes's interaction with girls of her age portrays the normal attitude the girls have toward the unusual and traumatic ways of Gilead. However, Nicole's narrative first focuses on the Gileadean society across the border, thereby providing the audience a chance to look at the measures other countries have taken to help the refugees, and control the spread of Gileadean thoughts as well as guarding the rebellions against it. Then, Nicole's narrative moves to Gilead shortly who becomes a part of the rebellion group and infiltrates the Gileadean society.

The analysis will examine *The Testaments* as a trauma novel highlighting the trauma and the consequences endured by the protagonists. For instance, Aunt Lydia's inner battle in trying to survive in the patriarchal and totalitarian society shows no respect for her previous life as a judge. She has no other way but to harden to live and forget the horrors surrounding her. In the case of Agnes, the trauma starts from her flashbacks of being separated from her birth mother, then the death of her beloved stepmother, and the terrible future of being a child bride to an elderly Commander. Moreover, most of the girls surrounding Agnes are suffering either from sexual trauma or the fear of being forced into marriages. In Nicole's life, the trauma is not as obvious as in the other protagonists' cases. Although she has no memory of being sneaked out of Gilead, her life has not been normal or safe. Each character faces and copes with their trauma individually, which affects the way their identities are shaped by it.

Trauma fiction is defined by questioning how one explains trauma and represents the unrepresentable, putting in other words how to "narrate the unnarratable" (Whitehead, *Trauma* 4). Eaglestone defines fiction as "a living tradition of writing, in a range of forms, which can tend toward being closed, or formulaic, or open: this latter is called literary fiction" (Eaglestone 287), along with "writing that draws on the historical record as well as works of total invention" (Eaglestone 287).

Balaev views trauma novels as “a work of fiction that conveys profound loss or intense fear on individual or collective levels” (Balaev, “Trends” 150).

Testimonies are profoundly used in trauma novels as a means of describing the trauma: “The structures through which trauma underlies, writing are more profoundly seen in testimonies by people who have witnessed terrible events” (Eaglestone 288). Trauma novels specifically use testimonial narratives, which in their fragmented nature bring about a different way of reading (Whitehead, *Trauma* 7). As stated above, trauma fiction helps to narrate the unnarratable and to portray something that even the character might not understand (Whitehead, *Trauma* 4). In *The Testaments*, Atwood presents three different narratives, showing the harmful environment of trauma in Gilead. As Vickroy remarks, trauma fiction “substantiates that trauma is often evidence of forms of domination and misuse of human power, and underscores that people generally try to evade the psychological consequences of objectifying individuals” (Vickroy, *Reading* 33). Moreover, both of Atwood’s works exploring Gilead are examples of Balaev’s explanation of trauma fiction where they express the traumatizing and unpredictable atmosphere and its impacts on both collective and individual levels (Balaev, “Trends” 150).

Rigney states that Atwood’s protagonists are lost in their traumatic environment and how they “often move through mirrors and their self-deluding fictions into worlds of myth, where it is possible to lose the self and where they flounder amidst the ruins of traditional roles and obsolete images of women” (Rigney 2). Rigney’s observations are accurate to the characters of *The Testaments* because the three characters often seem to be lost in themselves. None of the main characters are ordinary heroes, and none of the narratives tries to depict them as such. Aunt Lydia can be termed as a villain, Agnes is a determined product of Gilead, and Nicole is operated by anger and confusion.

Shown in the novel’s name and its narration, it is obvious that Atwood emphasizes the significance of sharing the trauma of the characters. For instance, Aunt Lydia’s narrative in the novel frequently addresses the reader to understand and empathize with her, and thus her writing of a memoir calls the reader to share her

trauma. With Aunt Lydia, Atwood challenges the audience's reading process most, because she is known as the antagonist in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Each narrative addresses the reader directly multiple times, thereby inviting the readers into the reading process, in the same way the narrative structure is used in *The Handmaid's Tale*.

The narrative of Aunt Lydia examines the problems and helps her to navigate through the present trauma at the same time also dealing with the past. Heidarizadeh argues that "past trauma and traumatic memories affect the mind of the characters" (Heidarizadeh 789) in Atwood's writing, and how her characters respond to trauma differently – not everyone's trauma is the same or have the same responses (Heidarizadeh 789). Although Atwood's characters are fragmented and have a disorientated sense of self, Heidarizadeh additionally mentions how the trauma in Atwood's narrative is not always a bad thing: "Significantly, trauma does not always have a negative meaning; Atwood likes to give a new version to this evolution. It is a movement which picturizes an episode of changing that starts with trauma, suffering, and pain and ends with knowledge and understanding" (Heidarizadeh 791). This applies to Aunt Lydia's narrative specifically because a character who is depicted very much as an antagonist is given a chance to redeem herself in *The Testaments*. With knowledge of her trauma and violence that led her to become a villain, Aunt Lydia utilizes her newfound strength and anger for the destruction of Gilead.

Gilead is a fictional place, and everything the readers learn from it is through the stories Atwood presents. As trauma fiction often portrays real and terrible environments, readers usually have some idea about the damaging aspects, as in Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, where the said social environment is racism. From the point of view of collectivity, one of the main traumas is the loss of the Western culture where the customs and beliefs are replaced by a biblical, conservative society and the former pleasures are avoided. This is mainly a major problem for Aunt Lydia, due to Agnes's slightest memories of her short stay in Gilead and Nicole's escape as a baby. Nevertheless, everything mirrors what was once aware of, and that is the part that the audience is well familiar with.

In addition, Atwood employs the physical environment to represent the trauma fiction: “[p]lace, therefore, becomes central in representations of trauma in the novel because the physical place of suffering and remembrance of loss becomes an identifiable source for the author to explicate the multiple meanings of the event” (Balaev, “Trends” 161). From the clothes to the buildings, Gilead appears as neat and serene, a place where everything runs effortlessly. Nevertheless, the readers are reminded of its hidden nature, with the sight of a dead body hanging from a wall or a public execution happening during the daytime.

To portray these fragmented characters and traumatizing environments, Atwood employs various devices characteristic of the genre. Firstly, the narrative is complex and fractured as it consists of three lines, each giving different perspectives on the effects of Gilead and its traumatizing effect on the individual. Furthermore, according to Vickroy, writers like Atwood “emphasize the narrative and expressive aspects of harsh circumstances” (Vickroy, “Voices” 130) thus creating a narrative where the reader is left to fill in the space within a character’s trauma narrative. Through the two testimonies from Agnes and Nicole and the memoir written by Aunt Lydia, the readers are provided with scenes and fragments from a first-person point of view. While Atwood utilizes fragmentation of the plot, the portrayed events are often said in detail by the narrators. In Agnes’s “Transcript of Witness Testimony,” horrible events from her childhood are told just as they happen to highlight the fact that it is, in fact, a testimony. Additionally, the narrative moves between the past and the present, and the timelines of the three protagonists evolve toward the same conclusion, albeit at different speeds. This nonlinear plot helps understand the disorder that the characters might feel while struggling with the trauma and its responses (Balaev, “Trends” 159). With flashbacks and “interrupted fragments” (Bouson, *Brutal* 136) which are used already in *The Handmaid’s Tale*, Atwood, once again, challenges the readers to participate actively.

Lastly, Atwood utilises a commonly used device in trauma fiction which is a testimony. From the name of the novel *The Testaments* to Agnes and Nicole’s narratives titled “Transcripts of Witness Testimony,” they are described as a testimony of trauma. By using testimonies told by Agnes and Nicole, and Aunt Lydia’s memoir,

Atwood connects the characters' individual experiences to a larger collective traumatic memory, which is particularly the purpose that the testimony as a technique attempts to fulfill (Miller and Tougaw 13). While Agnes and Nicole's narratives are named as testimonies, Aunt Lydia's narrative is described as "The Ardua Hall Holograph." Consequently, her narrative may as well be a testimony of her experience in Gilead, only written using a different style.

In addition, testimonies are used as a healing technique in trauma fiction. As discussed earlier, Agnes narrates her story of how Gilead is traumatizing her, while at the same time she thinks about the good memories attached to her in Gilead. Agnes is on her way towards healing. This can be termed as an example of the healing quality of testimonies whereby addressing the damaging event and its consequences.

To conclude, the study aimed to show the characteristics of trauma novels and how Atwood's novel belongs to the trauma genre with its portrayal of traumatized individuals. Atwood uses a variety of tools typical for the genre like complex structure, fragmentation, and testimony. Atwood's protagonists in *The Testaments* are not ordinary heroes, or even likeable at times. Additionally, the analysis attempted to highlight how Atwood asks the audience to share the character's trauma and enter their confused state of mind. The social surrounding of trauma is shown through the damaging social structures and rules of Gilead, and Atwood also specifies the harmfulness of the physical environment by creating juxtapositions – a neat and simple building that has a heavily armed guard in front of it. A conclusion is drawn that *The Testaments* also belongs to the genre of trauma novels due to Atwood's use of testimonies, which root the individual trauma into larger, collective traumas. Finally, the study attempts to highlight *The Testaments* through trauma suffered by Agnes and Nicole, and by giving a sort of redemption for Aunt Lydia.

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REVIEWING THE ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY, POLLUTION, ANTHROPOGENIC INTERVENTIONS AND THE POTENTIAL FOR RESPONSIBLE TOURISM: INSIGHTS FROM PATHIRAMANAL ISLAND

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Abstract

Kerala, known as "God's Own Country," boasts a diverse coastline, including Alappuzha, a popular destination for nature lovers. However, the migratory bird paradise, Pathiramanal Island, is at risk of extinction in the Vembanad Lake. The Thannermukkam Salt Water Barrage (1975) and other anthropogenic interferences has caused rapid ecological changes, leading to fish mortality, weed growth, and water quality decline. This study investigates water pollution, environmental degradation, plastic waste issues, and Vembanad Lake pollution on Pathiramanal Island and evaluates responsible tourism's potential to reduce pollution issues. Primary and secondary sources were examined for data, and secondary sources on pollution, the effects on the ecosystem, and the prospects for responsible tourism were looked at. The research identified seventeen sustainability challenges including climate change, overfishing, unsustainable fishing, Thannermukkam barrage, dredging, mangrove depletion, weed growth, sand mining, oil spills, backwater tourism, and bird attacks. This paper explores the need for responsible tourism practices and the implementation of a sustainable development plan with a high ecological concern in order to protect the island's biodiversity and natural beauty.

Keywords: Anthropogenic Interference, Water Pollution, Bio-Diversity, Ecology, Preservation, Responsible Tourism and Sustainable Development.

The Prelude

Alappuzha, the jewel in the crown of Kerala, is well known for its breathtaking beaches and backwaters, a system of lakes and brackish lagoons running parallel to the Arabian Sea coast. The largest lake in Kerala is the Vembanad Lake, also known as Punnamada Kayal (near Kuttanad), Kochi Kayal (in Kochi), Vembanad Kayal, and Vembanad Kol. It is situated between the districts of Kottayam and Alappuzha. It runs

through 2033.02 km² and connects the Kerala districts of Kollam, Ernakulam, and Alappuzha, Kottayam. The Meenachil, Achankovil, Pampa, and Manimala are the four major rivers that supply water to the lake.



Image 1: Vembanad Lake

Pathiramanal Island in the Vembanad Lake is a refuge for migratory birds. This little, uninhabited island falls under the jurisdiction of the Muhamma Grama Panchayath of the Alappuzha District. However, it is a part of Kottayam Wildlife and Forest Division because it is a restricted and conserved region. Not only does it have no private property to it, but there are now no civilian residents. It has 28.505 hectares of total area. It covers an area of 13 kilometers and 1.5 km away from Muhamma Boat Jetty. The island was formerly leased to private company owners, but Kerala's tourism department currently has direct control over it. Tourists and bird watchers are only allowed to visit the island during the daytime hours due to the lack of housing and electricity. The island is home to exceptional plants like *Aponogeton appendiculatus*, *Macuna Gigantean*, *Flagellaria Indica*, and mangrove variety. Mussel colonies of

Villorita species grow near the island, and therapeutic plants like *Calophyllum*, *Inophyllum* and *Tylophora Indica* are also found. There is 98 bird species, 34 butterfly species, 160 plant species, 55 fish species, and 23 spider species.

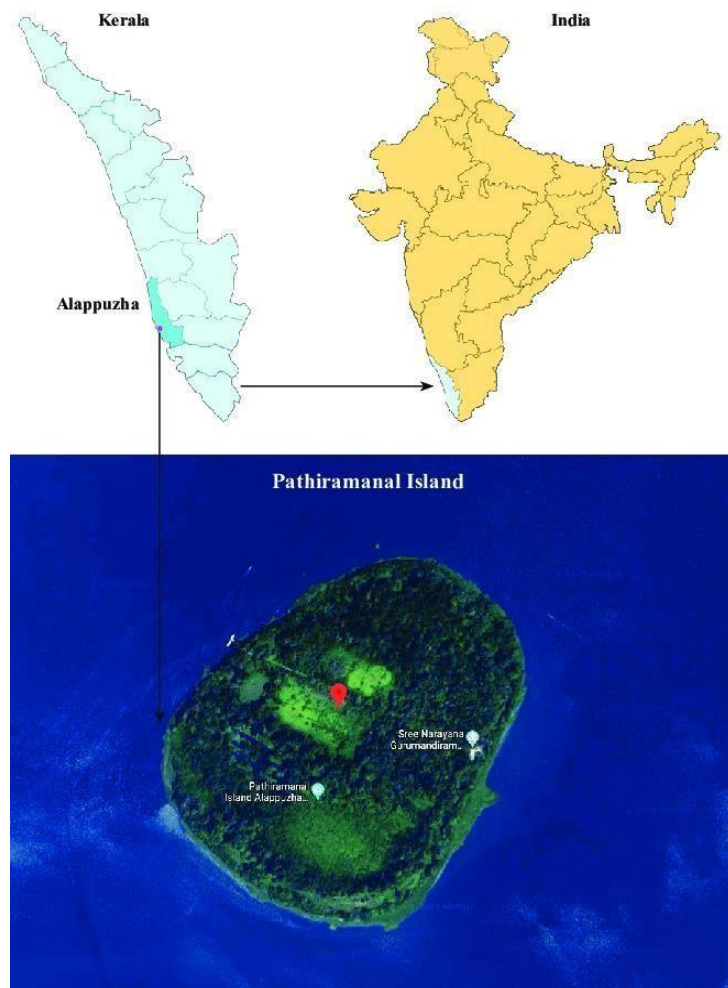


Image 2: Locating Pathiramanal Island

Pathiramanal: Historical and Mythological Allusions

The term Pathiramanal factually refers to ‘midnight sand’. As per the folk myth, during one of his overnight water journeys across Vembanad Lake, the renowned Brahmin Vilwamangalathu Swamiar dove into the lake to perform his evening ablutions. As a result, the water made way for land to rise from below, creating the charming island of Pathiramanal (sands of midnight). The island was also known as Anantha Padmanabhan Thoppu. History paints a different tale. A landowner by the

name of Parayi Tharakan owned the island. He sold it to Bheemji Devji, a Gujarathi trader from Kochi. Subsequently, Chevalier ACM Anthraper assumed control of the coconut plantation, there after purchasing the land from M/s. Bheemji Devji Trust of Cochin. During that period, fourteen laboring families claimed the island home. With the enforcement of the Kerala Land Reforms Act, 1963, the excess land in the possession of the family was identified. The Island was one of the lands surrendered by the family in favour of the Government. As a result, the Department of Tourism eventually received possession of the property from the government. As of now, no one lives on the island. After the 14 families in Muhamma Panchayat received rehabilitation, the island progressively turned into a refuge for migrating birds.

The island has become a roosting site for aquatic birds, primarily cormorants, due to the low level of human disturbance. The darter, Indian Shag, Purple Heron, Indian Pound Heron, Cattle Egret, Grey Heron, Large Cormorant, Night Heron, Black Bittern, Chestnut Bittern, and Yellow Bittern, as well as Little, Median, and Large Egrets, are the other birds sighted. There are other birds that live on the island, such as Common Teals, Pheasant-tailed and Bronze-winged Jacanas, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Whistling Duck, Cotton Pygmy Goose, Whiskered Tern, and Smooth Indian Otters (*Lutra lutra*). European and Siberian migratory birds like the waterways between the tiny island and the Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary.



Image 3: The Island

Background of the Study

As part of its Golden Jubilee celebrations, St. Michael's College, Cherthala has started long-term activities against plastic pollution in Vembanad Lake. At Pathiramanal Island, the NSS unit has been active in cleaning and awareness programs, involving stakeholders, assessing pollutants, and erecting hoardings. Every year on September 24, which is National Service Day, the NSS unit works with the District Panchayath and the District Tourism Promotion Council to clean up and spread awareness about plastic pollution in Vembanad Lake and Pathiramanal Island. During the cleanup drive, it was observed that the amount of plastic rubbish on and surrounding Pathiramanal Island is increasing year after year. NSS volunteers raised the question of how and why there is so much plastic waste in this area of Vembanad Lake. They looked into the disposal of plastic and other rubbish, as well as the piles of waste on Pathiramanal Island. The findings indicate that unethical human interventions and tourist activities in Vembanad Lake, which violate responsible tourism standards, are the primary causes. This rubbish disposal eventually pollutes the water and endangers the environment of Vembanad Lake and Pathiramanal Island. Following that, as the Programme Officer of the NSS unit, the current investigator began follow-up research into the topic of pollution and environmental issues in Pathiramanal Island and Vembanad Lake, as well as the necessity for responsible tourism.

Objectives of the Study

The prime intent of this work is to examine the primary aspects contributing to water pollution and environmental degradation in Pathiramanal Island and Vembanad Lake. It also sought to evaluate the problems of plastic waste at Pathiramanal Island and the degree of water pollution in Vembanad Lake. The other intent of the study is to determine how well responsible tourism may reduce Pathiramanal Island's pollution issues.

Materials and Methodology

Owing to its dense vegetation and extensive forest cover, Pathiramanal Island, a small tropical island in Kerala, is an abode to a diverse range of flora and wildlife. Spiders make up a sizable portion of the island's population. In 1979, the Kerala

Government seized ownership of the land and gave it to the Department of Tourism. This study on Pathiramanal Island's biodiversity and the problems caused by man-made pollution was carried out between October 2018 and September 2020. Using the historical research approach, the data was gathered from primary and secondary sources up to the present day. After examining and evaluating published works, media reports, investigation outputs, and databases from consultancies and non-governmental organizations involved in Vembanad Lake water pollution and environmental issues, the researchers decided to employ the qualitative technique.

In order to arrive at reliable references, the secondary sources pertaining to responsible tourism are also examined. In order to contribute creative insights on the themes and to complement the thematic analytical findings of the researchers, tourism officials and industry operators were consulted via social media platforms and email. For ecosystems to remain healthy and function well, ecological sustainability is essential. Seventeen sustainability challenges that have an impact on the livelihood of fishermen in ten areas were found in a research conducted using the Multi Dimensional Scaling (MDS) technique. Climate change, overfishing, unsustainable fishing, Thannermukkam barrage, dredging, mangrove depletion, excessive weed growth, shrinkage from sand mining and reclamation, fertilizers and pesticides, oil spills, backwater tourism, and bird attacks are some of these challenges.

Ecology of Pathiramanal Island

Pathiramanal Island boasts a towering biodiversity, a large waterfront, floating weeds, coconut palms, and uncommon wildlife, all contributing to its healthy ecosystem. A large variety of arachnids, including spiders, can be found on the island, greatly enhancing its biodiversity. Even though 23 spider species have been unofficially named, many more remain unexplored, emphasizing the necessity for thorough exploration to fully grasp the island's potential and protect spider species (Devi, 2009). Travelers should be aware that the venomous spider *Loxosceles rufescens* is present on Pathiramanal Island, which accounts for 10% of the overall species diversity, 22% of the total genus diversity, and 43% of the total family diversity, according to specific studies. The majority of the island's green vegetation is made up of mangroves. Mangroves and their associates make up 28% of the total, with

non-mangrove trees accounting for 72% (Satheeshkumar et al., 2011). More than 22% of the island's territory is covered in herbs, which come in 107 variations among 23 families. There are 64 families and a total of 169 plant species known from the island. Of these, seven trees and nine species of herbs that grow along the island's shoreline are listed as endangered.

The inland vegetation's tree community was represented by 23 species. The shrub community of the coastline vegetation was comprised of thirty species. The herbaceous layer of the seashore is comprised of 31 species, comprising 23 seedling plants, three grasses, and five herbs. There were eighteen species in the inland herbaceous vegetation, which included two grasses, thirteen seedling plants, and four herbs. This island is a haven for birdwatchers, drawing in a variety of uncommon migratory birds from all over the globe. Winter, from November to March, is the greatest time to watch these birds. The island is also home to resident species, including owls, woodpeckers, parrots, and cuckoos. There are 10 amphibian species, including the Malabar Gliding Frog, Golden Frog, and Common Tree Frog. Bush frogs are heard during monsoon months, but common species like *Hoplobatrachus tigerinus* and *Euphlyctis hexadactylus* are declining (Malamel & Sudhikumar, 2020). This region has 23 reptile species, including Testudines (turtles and tortoises) and Squamata (lizards and snakes). Five lizard species, Southern Green Calotes, Monitor Lizard, and 15 snake species are reported. Wetland dwelling snakes like Checkered Keelback, Siebold's Smooth Water Snake, and Dog-faced Water Snake are well represented. Poisonous snakes are also present.

Environmental Concerns

The Anthraper family's land was surrendered to the government in 1963 due to excess land. The government initially planned to lease the land to Oberoi Kerala Hotels and Resorts Limited for tourism development. However, protests and environmental concerns led to the withdrawal of the plan. The island remained unorganized until the late 20th century, with the state tourism department taking over. In the 1990s, a boat service was introduced, and the island was declared an eco-tourist place. Due to human influence, the Pathiramanal section of Vembanad Lake is undergoing significant ecological changes. There are a lot of foreign, domestic, and local tourists visiting the

island, however there aren't any basic facilities for them. Furthermore, a buildup of plastic and biological garbage was left on the island as a result of neglecting to check on plastic and other debris (Remani et al., 2010).

The area is becoming more eutrophic because of nutrient flow from urban areas and pesticide residue from rice polders. The area is seeing higher levels of turbidity, high levels of chlorophyll, and enhanced organic productivity as a result of the rise in backwater tourism. High amounts of plant nutritional elements have been found in fish, sediments, soil, water, grain, straw, and clams. These elements include phosphates, nitrates, and nitrites. The biodiversity and ecology are threatened by contaminated lake water from disposal of plastic and organic garbage. This leads to widespread pollution, resource depletion, and worker health issues. Studies show the effects of organic and industrial pollutants on benthic populations in the backwaters.

Table 1: Endangered Species of Birds

Sl. No	Species Name	Family
01	Pelecanus philippensis (Spot billed pelican)	Pelecanidae
02	Anhinga melanogaster (Oriental darter)	Anhingidae
03	Gallicrex cinerea (Water cock)	Rallidae
04	Gelochelidon nilotica (Black billed tern)	Laridae

Pathiramanal Island is habitat to approximately 90 kinds of migratory and resident birds, including rare and endangered species like the purple heron and Indian darter. Nevertheless, four bird species have completely vanished from the Pathiramanal and Vembanad regions as a result of ecological shifts and changing environmental conditions (Tale 1).

Table 2: Endangered Species of Fish

Sl. No	Species Name	Family
01	Labeo dussumieri	Cyprinidae
02	Horabagrus brachysoma	Bagridae
03	Gonoproktopterus curmuca	Cyprinidae
04	Wallago attu	Siluridae
05	Nandus nandus	Nandidae

Thirteen new native fish species, three species of shellfish, and two foreign genus (Sutchi catfish and Sucker catfish) were found in Vembanad Lake according to the 2009 fish count (Joseph et al., 2018). The Thannermukkam salt water barrier resulted in the introduction of eight estuary species, whilst five were common riverine species (Ashok Trust Report, 2009). Five species—Walking catfish, Indian mottled eel, and Indian shortfin eel—vanished (Table 2). Numerous factors contribute to the environmental alterations and ecological harm occurring in Vembanad Lake and Pathiramanal Island. The most detrimental and unavoidable aspect of this degradation is manmade interventions, such as pollution from plastic and organic garbage dumping and other careless human actions.

Reports show Vembanad Lake's total area decreased from 44,000 ha in the 19th century to 21,000 ha in the 20th century, highlighting human intervention in the lake's ecology.

Table 3: Shrinkage of Vembanad Lake due to Anthropogenic Interference

Time	Reclaimed Area (@ hectares)	Percentage of Area	Function
1833 - 1905	2226.71	6.186	Farming Activities
1910 - 1930	5252.15	14.593	Farming Activities
1940 - 1950	1326	3.67	Farming Activities
Up to 1970	5100	14.165	Paddy cultivation
1969 - 1985	800	2.223	Paddy cultivation
1900 - 1985	1500	4.165	Shelter, farm etc
Up to 1975	6900	19.167	Thannermukkam Bund
1979 - 2010	350	0.971	Super tanker berth
Till 2020	800	2.223	Resorts and Tourism development
Total	24254.86	67.372	

Source: Kurup (2006) & Archival Reports of Kerala Land Board

It is projected that anthropogenic interference has reduced the size of Vembanad Lake by 24254.87 hectares (67.371%) since 1834. The respondent fisherfolk argue that indiscriminate reclamation by national and regional governments

or classified parties has reduced shrimp nursery ground and altered estuary features, affecting fishery wealth. Resorts have been established on the lake side in Thannermukkam and Muhamma villages, affecting the lives of fisherfolk and causing issues related to fishing activities. Resort proprietors have erected large fortifications around the resorts, forbidding many services accessed by the fisherfolk. Landowners have also taken apart their land through compound walls contiguous to the lake. Landlords who once gave free access for fishermen activities are now hesitant to do so since land prices have gone up as a result of resort development and tourism. The smell and smoke released during the boiling of clam shells have also been reported by the fishermen. Sand mining in Vembanad wetland ecosystem is causing ecological changes, affecting fisherfolk's catches and income. The sand bed is crucial for fishery life and clam production, but mining dwindles wealth and threatens endemic and endangered species. Bird attacks, particularly the Neerkakka bird, are also causing concern due to the changing bird migratory patterns and global climate change.

Ecological Sustainability Index

Ecological sustainability refers to maintaining stocks and species in the environment without compromising future options, enhancing the capacity and quality of ecosystems and environments. Because of the loss of harvestable fish results in lower fishing revenue and longer fishing seasons, fishermen view the health of the ecosystem and the availability of fisheries resources as critical to their ability to secure a living. In Kerala, the insensate management of the state's fragile ecology, particularly coastal ecosystem, has contributed to resource depletion and destruction.

The Multi Dimensional Scaling (MDS) technique is used to portray the seventeen sustainability issues that have an impact on the livelihood of fishermen in ten different regions. The goal of multidimensional spatial point arrays reflecting the subjective distances measured by surveying participants is to represent subjective qualities in objective scales using the Multidimensional Distance System (MDS). The fundamental premise of multidimensional scaling (MDS) is that stimuli can be represented by values across a set of dimensions, and that the distances between equivalent points in the space of multiple dimensions are inversely related to the similarity of stimuli.

Sustainability concerns originating beyond the ecosystem (Dimension 2) and inside the ecosystem (Dimension 1) are attributed to the fundamental elements of the detected sustainability issues. Dimension 1 includes climate, overfishing, unsustainable fishing, the barrage at Thannermukkam, dredging, the loss of the mangrove forests, excessive weed growth, shrinkage from reclamation, and sand mining from the lake. Dimension 2 includes things like pesticides and fertilizers, oil spills, backwater tourism, coconut shell retting, distillery waste, coir factories, resorts, and bird attacks. The pattern of proximity among various opinions is visually represented by MDS, enabling interpretation beyond the scope of the approach.

Table 4: Ecological Sustainability Index

(Production alters in fish and clam supply of Vembanad Lake)

	1985-1999	Up to 2020	Share	The critical minimum	Comment
Fish hold alter	7202 t	686t	0.1	1	Far below the critical minimum
Vembanad Attukonju Macrobrachium (Rosenbergii)	1969	2001	Share	Critical minimum	remark
Catch Alter	439t	28t	0.06	1	Very below the critical minimum
Lime Shell collection alter	1991-95	1996-98	Share	The critical minimum	remark
White crust shell	104590 t	85315 t	0.81	1	Very low
Black crust shell	30772 t	29383 t	0.95	1	Very low
Total	135365 t	114699 t	0.85	1	Very low

Table 5: Ecological Sustainability Index (Fish Species)

Fish diversity alter	1990	2020	Share	Range	Remark
Reduction in fish diversity	149	66	0.434	1	Very low

Table 6: Ecological Sustainability Index (Sector wise - bird count)

Reduction in birds count	1995	2020	Ratio	Range	Comment
Vembanad Wetland	36489	27393	0.752	1	Very low
Vembanad Lake Region	25186	6712	0.265	1	Very low
Thannermukkam Bund Region	1422	287	0.201	1	Very low

The lake's shoreline zone is impacted by a number of issues, including soil erosion, mangrove destruction, marsh shrinkage, loss of arable land, water pollution, fish catch decline or stagnation, species extinction, and biodiversity loss. Regarding how environmental changes impact their sustainability and means of subsistence, fishermen have strong thoughts and opinions. Only two of the six significant inland fish species exhibit encouraging patterns in ecological sustainability. The production of fish, prawn, and clam resources in Vembanad Lake shows a devastating declining trend, with the number of species declining from 150 in 1989 to 65 in 2020. Water birds, which are ecologically dependent on wetlands, are another indicators of the richness and diversity of these productive ecosystems.

Because recent improvements along the shore have given prawns and estuarine fish species like *Etroplus suratensis* a place to spawn, they have had an impact on the sustainability of fishing ecosystems. Vembanad Lake's mean depth has decreased due to sediment buildup, which has an impact on the fishing industry and upsets the ecosystem's normal processes. Retting activities in Kerala's distinctive backwater system are very ecologically dangerous for biological production and biodiversity, negatively impacting the livelihood of impoverished fishermen and advocating against retting in backwaters.

Overexploitation, inadequate natural recruitment, habitat alternation, and human meddling are posing a threat to Kerala's indigenous fishing resources. Strategies including open ranching, habitat enhancement, open water culture, and protected sanctuaries have been suggested as solutions to this problem. Producing economically valuable fish species' seeds in hatcheries and the releasing of them into public water bodies is known as "open ranching." In open waters, this technique can greatly increase fish productivity, especially when it comes to the decrease of Vembanad denizer *macrobrachium rosenbergii*.

Table 7: Ecological Concerns with Vembanad Lake

Tally of faecal coliform	WHO Regulations	Actual	Surplus	Share	Optimum	Remarks
Upstream region	100ml water /350 faecal coliform	15020 per 100ml	14650	0.976	0	Surpassed the limit
Small stagnant channels of Kuttanad	"	130000 per 100 ml water	129650	0.997	0	"
Alleppey channels station	"	38000 per 100ml	37650	0.991	0	"
From water samples of Vembanad lake	"	31000 per 100 ml water	30650	0.989	0	"
Water carrying capacity of the lake	Beginning of 20 th century	1985	Share	Range	Remark	
	2.449Km ³	0.559Km ³	0.245	1	Very low	
Coconut husk retting area of the lake	Recommended	Real	Over limit	Ratio	Optimum	Remark
Portion of lake under retting	0	246 ha	246	1	0	Surpassed the limit

Source: Primary Source

Vembanad Lake in Kerala is facing increasing pollution due to pesticide residue from rice polders and nutrient outflow from urban settlements. This is causing damage to the wetland ecosystem and endangering its ability to attract tourists. Micro- plastics, less than 5mm in size, pose a significant environmental risk, contaminating the food chain for locals who consume fish and clams from the lake. The Thannermukkam regulator's poor maintenance and non-scientific operation have also led to a 40% decrease in bird numbers and the disappearance of mangrove forests. The lake's water quality has declined due to the daily entry of dangerous contaminants such as pesticides, sulfides, mercury, chromium, and fluorides. The Thannermukkam regulator-cum-bridge is the most damaging anthropogenic intervention in Vembanad Lake. The water pollution in Pathiramanal and Vembanad Lake is exacerbated by the excessive use of pesticides and industrial affluent (Nair et al., 2013). Houseboat tourism has significantly polluted Vembanad Lake, depleting fish stocks and livelihoods of 5,000 inland fishermen and clam collectors.

Discussion: Pollution Hazards

Micro-plastic pollution of Vembanad Lake has been extensively documented by research conducted on the lake and its ecosystem, particularly in the Pathiramanal region. Micro-plastic particles found in the lake's sediments are a serious hazard to the fish and clam populations in the area food chain (Ganesan et al., 2019). Low density polyethylene (LDPE) was the most prevalent polymer detected in all sediment samples taken from ten locations, including the area around Pathiramanal Island, containing micro-plastics. The bulk of micro-plastics were found as shards, films, and foam, indicating that larger plastic debris as well as personal care goods was where they came from. The majority of the plastic debris that ended up in the lake came from the nearby homes. The remaining portion was provided by visitors who utilize house boats to visit the lake and Pathiramanal Island. Water contamination in the area was brought on by the massive amount of plastic waste that accumulated around the Pathiramanal Island and accumulated over many years, leaving a layer in the water. The findings highlight the necessity of appropriate waste management and additional investigation into micro-plastic contamination in the lake's surface water.

It is also known from previous studies that Vembanad Lake's water quality is extremely contaminated, particularly in the Pathiramanal region. The sustainability of the island's ecology and the continued existence and health of species depend on the quality of the water. Estuaries are dynamic environments that fluctuate significantly over time and space in terms of their chemical, physical, and biological properties (Ramakrishnan, 2000). The ability of species to successfully deal with changes in salinity, currents, waves, suspended particle matter (SPM), temperature, air exposure, wetland contaminants, and biodiversity is essential to the ecological health of estuaries. The physical characteristics of water are significantly influenced by the depth of a body of water. The depth of the Vembanad Estuary is falling at a rate of 1% annually, and this trend has increased since the Thannermukkam barrier was built, especially the cofferdam that sits in the center of the estuary.

By examining previous studies, the physical properties of the Vembanad backwater, such as its depth, temperature, clarity, and salinity, were investigated in order to gain knowledge of the impacts that human engagement has caused to

Pathiramanal Island and Vembanad Lake. The lake's average depth in the island region has dropped to 2.14 ± 1.10 m from 2.52 ± 0.65 m in the 1990s. The greatest depth, which was 9 meters in the 1990s, is currently just 7. Sewerage reclamation and illicit building operations have also significantly altered the lake's depth (Laad, 2016). Climate, geography, solar radiation, and water depth all affect water temperature. Water temperature in the Vembanad Estuary was 27–33°C in the 1990s, but by 2020, it had increased to 30–38.5°C. Transparency is an indicator of relative primary production and pollution levels in the lakes's environment. In 2020, Chithirakayal had the highest level of transparency, while the Nehru Trophy finishing point and Meenappally had the lowest levels. Between February and April, the water column's average clarity was 0.53 ± 0.30 meters. In surface water, salinity levels varied from 2 to 29.5 ppt in 1990 to 0 to 11 ppt in April 2020. The amount of salt in water, or salinity, affects both the physical and chemical processes like flocculation and dissolved oxygen levels, as well as the kinds of species that live in estuaries.

pH is a crucial ecological factor affecting aquatic systems, as inhabitants are adapted to an optimum pH (Khator, 1988). Primary production, respiration, and mineralization processes can alter pH, affecting oxygen and carbon dioxide concentrations. In the Vembanad estuary, a slight acidic to alkaline condition was observed, indicating seawater influence and higher biological activity. Existing research studies revealed the following observations about the chemical features of surface and bottom water in the area, including pH, alkalinity, dissolved oxygen, biological oxygen requirement, and hydrogen sulphide. Surface water pH values ranged from 6.25 to 7.2 in 1990, but have now altered to 6.52 to 7.52 in 2020. In 2020, bottom water had a higher average pH than surface water, ranging from 6.93 ± 0.39 to 7.05 ± 0.33 , compared to 6.99 ± 0.37 to 7.11 ± 0.33 in 1990. In 2020, surface water alkalinity concentrations were between 20 and 100 mg L⁻¹; meanwhile, in 1990, they were between 15 and 90 mg L⁻¹. In 1990, the mean daily oxygen (DO) value of the surface water in the Vembanad estuary ranged from 3.94 to 11.81 mg L⁻¹ (Bhavaya et. al., 2016). However, it is presently 2.91–7.87 mg L⁻¹. The concentration of dissolved oxygen (DO) is essential to the health and diversity of aquatic life. Fish deaths, benthic defaunation, and a decline in diversity can result from inadequate DO.

The Vembanad Estuary's hydro-chemical composition is also altered, with an increase in ammonia, silicate-silicon, phosphate-phosphorus, and hydrogen sulphide in the bottom water (Sultan. et. al., 2003). The concentration of hydrogen sulphide rose from 0.05 to 2.7. From 6.08 to 9.86, the phosphate-phosphorus concentration rose. Hydrogen sulphide, a toxic compound, can cause acute mortality in aquatic animals at low concentrations. High concentrations were observed in upstream Vembanad backwater, with maximum concentration observed in Punnamada. From 1.72 to 13.64, the silicate-silicon concentration rose. It has no human sources and may limit diatom production at high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus. Increased silicate concentration in Vembanad backwater may be due to discharges from rivers and terrestrial runoff. In 1990, ammonia levels varied from 0 to 7.38 $\mu\text{mol L}^{-1}$; today, they range from 1.78 to 10.53 $\mu\text{mol L}^{-1}$.

Other contaminants include heavy metals, which are particularly dangerous for aquatic systems because they can cause cancer and other harmful effects on living things (Kumar et al., 2014). Different metals can be found in the Vembanad backwater from both natural and human sources. Physical and chemical factors such as temperature, salinity, pH, dissolved oxygen, particle size of the sediment, and availability of nutrients influence the distribution, sequestration, and concentration of heavy metals in aquatic settings (Laluraj et al., 2008). Urbanization and industrialization have raised the concentration of heavy metals in the Vembanad backwater (Selvam et al., 2011); more accumulation was seen in the monsoon season than in the hot season.

According to the study's data, the Pathiramanal region of the backwater had an average concentration of heavy metals that was higher than that of other regions, with higher concentrations recorded during the monsoon tourist season. The higher concentrations suggest a greater likelihood of human influence throughout time on the distribution of these metals in the estuary. Moderate pollution for Cu, Cd, Pb, and Zn was also identified by the study. High geo accumulation index values for Cd and Ni were also discovered in the current chemical investigations, indicating significant pollution from these heavy metals. Additionally, the average pollutant load index (PLI) was greater, suggesting that the Pathiramanal area contains contaminated sediments.

The Vembanad backwater included several newly discovered contaminants, including cyclonesiloxane, cycloheptasiloxane, benzyl benzoate, and benzenepropanoic acid, according to the recent study. These substances are common in tourist destinations, particularly in the Pathiramanal region and other populous places, and are important constituents in medications and cosmetics (Greenstone& Hanna, 2014). The biological activity and biodegradation resistance of pharmaceuticals are natural qualities that add to their environmental persistence. Concerns concerning possible risks provided by other drugs with little or no data are raised by the fact that only a tiny percentage of pharmaceuticals in use have environmental risk evaluations accessible.

The beautiful green scenery and many of backwaters in the Alappuzha district have led to considerable tourism developments; in 2018, 2 lakh domestic and 50 thousand foreign tourists visited the area. Aqua-based tourism is driving infrastructural development, eco-cultural revival, and resource protection as water bodies and marine resources continue to expand. Wetlands and tourism related to wetlands, such as Kerala in India, appeal to a variety of tourist demographics since they provide relaxing cruises and adventurous water sports.

The idea of "responsible tourism" pushes travel agencies to assume accountability for environmentally friendly travel. The 2002 Cape Town Declaration makes the case that ethical tourism reduces adverse effects on the economy, environment, and society; it also benefits local communities economically; it enhances working conditions; it helps preserve the environment and cultural heritage; and it offers visitors pleasurable experiences. Kerala's tourism policy was founded in 2007 with the adoption of Responsible Tourism (RT). Kumarakom, Thekkady, Wayanad, Kovalam, and Bekal were selected by the Kerala government to serve as pilot cities for the concept's implementation at that time. However, the District Tourism Development Authority's lack of attention to responsibility and sustainability is still apparent from the rising pollution levels in Vembanad Lake and Pathiramanal Island.

The RT agenda seeks to decrease undesirable effects on the environment, economy, and society; increase local economic gains; promote host community well-

being; and expand industry access and working conditions (Biju & Mathew, 2017). Due to its rapid access to innate resources, highly accomplished labor, encouraging entrepreneurial community, robust local self-government, civil society organizations, plethora of micro-businesses, professionals, academicians, and responsible media, Kerala has become one of India's leading tourism trendsetters. It will make a difference if we employ the potential protections of responsible tourism to check the amount of plastic and bio trash that is being dumped into Vembanad Lake.

Being blessed with attractive natural settings, Pathiramanal Island has all the potential to develop into an international biodiversity spot cum responsible eco tourism hot spot. But there are some serious challenges also. The first and foremost concern to develop tourism activities at Pathiramanal should be eco friendly transportation. Most of the domestic tourists prefer rental boats locally available which are petroleum fuel boats that may create water pollution in the lake as the number of visitors increased. If the authorities will ensure and provide public conveyance for the visitors, it will reduce the environmental pollution to a great extent.

The second need is electricity. There is no action for power supply till now even though solar and other non conventional energy sources are available there. The island is in total darkness during nights and thus visitors are evacuated from the island before the sun set. Moreover, the darkness is usually utilized by the anti socials, the major threat for the visitors, as there is no security measures or police assistance there. The authorities should take steps to install light inside the walkway on solar power; it will be attractive and beneficial for the visitors.

There is no accommodation facility on the island. Only two toilets are available. During season, when thousands of visitors are at a time, this will create discomfort among the visitors. A watch tower, police Aid post, security room and clock room are the essential requirements, but not provided by the authorities. Multi storied and concrete buildings are not allowed as it is eco sensitive zone, but it is mandatory to provide at least basic amenities for the visitors. Night stay was the prime demand of the foreign as well as domestic travelers, but still no project is designed for the purpose. No seats or chairs are there for relax the visitors. No waste bin or waste

control measures are provided yet. As a consequence, the island is filled with plastic carry bags, bottles and other items carried by the travelers. If Kumarakom backwater tourism adheres to the true responsible tourism principles, it can succeed in protecting its natural resources, fostering socioeconomic growth, and bringing back endangered artistic traditions (Kokkranikal & Morrison, 2002). For long-term success, decentralization and environmentally responsible initiatives are essential. It is thought that responsible tourism enhances environmental enhancement and capacity building, necessitating stakeholder consultation and skill development.

The following recommendations are made to preserve Pathiramanal Island and Vembanad Lake; these could be implemented through initiatives for sustainable development and responsible tourism. The management of fishery resources, bird conservation, salinity intrusion control, flood control measures through responsible tourism is crucial for the protection of Vembanad ecosystem and Pathiramanal Island. Fishery resources can be managed through ranching endangered species, establishing protected fish sanctuaries, and regulating fishing gear use. Bird conservation should be based on ecological reasons and suitable protected areas. Salinity intrusion control should be studied and the Thannermukkam barrier's water tightness ensured. Flood control measures should be implemented, and houseboats should have separate collection chambers for waste treatment. Mangroves can be replanted in ecologically designated areas. Fifty percent of the catchment area should implement conservation measures related to soil and water. For efficient management, it is advised to regularly monitor and assess hydrological features, water quality indices, and biodiversity components.

The once-praised ecosystem and biodiversity of the Pathiramanal Islands is currently declining daily as a result of human meddling. Due to pollution and anthropogenic activity, the Vembanad Lake and its wetlands, which include Pathiramanal Island, are experiencing an environmental disaster. Major effects include avifauna reduction, mangrove vegetation, floods, sedimentation, deterioration of water quality, and lake depth. For conservation and management, an all-encompassing strategy is required, encompassing measures to preserve biodiversity, regulate pollutants, enhance water quality, and implement watershed area treatment.

Pathiramanal Island, a Ramsar Site in Kerala's Alappuzha district, is urgently requires true Responsible Tourism efforts to enhance sustainable resource management and local livelihood activities.

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IDENTITY CRISIS IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF TONI MORRISON**K. L. Shinde**

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Abstract

The term identity may be finite or infinite. The term is either abstract or concrete. All the human beings want to create their identity in society and family. Creating our own identity is the need of present hour. Identity is an important element in personality development. Through it, human beings are peeping into their self and self-esteem. Identity is a process of self development. In society, people are very conscious about their identity. Identity is a socially and historically constructed concept. This research paper is an exploration of the quest for identity in the select novels of Toni Morrison. A search for identity is a symbol of maturation and growth.

Keywords: Slavery, Deprived, Discrimination, Marginalization and Quest.

Toni Morrison is one of the representatives of Afro-American Black feminist writers. Her novels reflected the psyche of black women as well as men. There is social hierarchy in society and black women are treated as “other”. Through the medium of her novels, the picture of black women in past and present scenario can be witnessed. The concept of quest for identity comes under diaspora. All the characters in the novels of Gloria Naylor are deprived of their own identities. All her characters search their identity through others who influence them. Toni Morrison has very artistically portrayed the social, political, economic, historical condition of black females. Her novels mainly deal with identity crisis, slavery, racism, gender, injustice, powerlessness, despair, lechery, resistance, elements of tolerance, sacrifice, rebellion, human relationships, adjustability, mental psyche, suppression, inferiority complex, mental and emotional responsiveness in short elements of black female and blackness. In her novels *Beloved* and *Tar Baby*, she depicted the life of black females through different perspectives. Mainly the black females were totally unconscious about their

identity, race and gender issue. The black women were treated like slaves. For many years, it is believed that black women are born for reproducing. Black women are consider “Slave of Slaves”. When they were living in society they faced dominance of patriarchal society (Black and White Male). One of the important issues faced by the African Americans is that the white Americans defined the existence of blacks. The question of identity begins with their own names. All the Negroes are called slaves. The following women characters are identical examples of identity.

Tony Morrison has described the dilemma of a Black unwanted girl named Picola Breedlove, the protagonist of *The Bluest Eyes*. She was an ugly young girl of eleven years old. She is hated and abused everywhere in the novel because of her ugliness, dark skin and vulgar features. She has no friends. She always lives in a dilemma of identity and continuously searches her true identity. Her blackness depresses her. She wants love and acceptance from society. Her intense desire is to have blue eyes which makes society accept her. Every night she frequently prays for blue eyes: “please, God”, she whispered into the palms of her hand,” please make me disappear” (Morrison, 2016:43). She wants to look beautiful in the eyes of society. She tries to create her own innovative identity through blue eyes. There is an inferiority complex in her mind about her identity. The issue of identity crisis of Picola is because of an unsupportive broken family. The concept of beauty completely marked her entire life. One day when she washed plates her drunken father raped her. At that time she was totally unconscious about the physical injustice. It impregnated her. Then she decided to give birth to a child. But unfortunately the premature baby died. She always escapes from reality and lives in future.

Picola is the main character novel but she remains passive and mysterious. She is the victim of her parents abuse and brutal fights. She always accepts reality which is very cruel or unbearable. Her wish to have blue eyes remains unfulfilled. Picola is the representative of black women struggle for identity. Picola realizes that she is the victim of social oppression as well as rape.

Claudia is partly a narrator of the story. She is very confident and revolted in nature. Like Picola, she also suffers from racist oppression. When a group of boys teases Picola, she attacks them. Compared to Picola’s family, Claudia’s family is

loving and stable. Claudia and her sister plan to save Picola's baby from the rejection of community. Here Claudia wants to recreate separate identity of black women in society. Black females should live independently, and revolt against injustice experienced by them. Her decision making power and confident nature show new dawn of hope for black women. She is the voice of the black oppressed women. She is the representative of Black American female voice against patriarchy. She is always in search of self-identity in dominated society.

Claudia is black and is also insecure by her blackness. In school, there were many white girls and she questions herself about beauty. The question of self identity always comes in her mind. She also expects the life of social prestige and dignity but in reality it is impossible. She hates the gifts given by her parents on the occasion of Christmas, because they are dolls with huge blue eyes. In reality, she had no beautiful eyes like the doll. Maureen Peal said to Claudia, "I am cute! And you ugly! Black and ugly" (Morrison, 2016:71). It creates endless questions about her own identity in her mind.

Sethe is the protagonist of the novel *Beloved*. She is very devoted to her children. She is a black woman and a former slave. She wants to kill her three children. Her two sons are frightened and escaped from the place to survive. She kills her daughter 'Beloved' in order to escape from the physical assault and rape by the white slaveholders. Therefore, she is continuously haunted by guilt of her daughter's murder throughout the novel. The thinking of killing her children to save them from slavery is the ultimate expression of mother's love. Then she realized that her life is like broken mirror and her image is always fluid. She is an ideal example of black slave women and their escape from injustice and slave identity. She is mentally disturbed when she realized that White people treated the black slaves like animals. According to Sethe, death is more reasonable than the life of slavery. She experienced cruel and violating experiences of slavery. Her courageous and determined nature is shown through her escape from Sweet Home to overcome impossible circumstances and to keep her children away from being slaves.

Sethe was totally different from her mother because her mother abandoned her to become a slave. Her continuous internal struggle in mind depicted her struggle to create an independent identity. Her mind continuously goes back into the past and comes back to reality. The repressed memory of Sethe's past made her fragmented. Slavery made Sethe an inhuman psychological case. It spoils her relationship with her children.

In the novels of Toni Morrison, women characters as well as men characters experience identity crisis. Among the slaves of Sweet Home, Paul D is one of the former slaves in the novel *Beloved*. He is unstable, unsecured, emotionally detached, and his rootless existence of a fugitive ex-slave creates crisis of identity. He has endured incomprehensible pain and anguish and as a result, he has shut his mind and his heart to any idea or emotions, feelings and sentiments- anything that would make him attached to a place or a person and hence render him emotionally vulnerable--- "he had shut down a generous portion of his head, operating on the part that helped him walk, eat sleep, sing—he asked for no more" (Morrison, 2005:29). Like Sethe. Paul D is haunted by the horrific experiences of slavery about his past. He realized that the bird has more freedom than him. Paul D suffered from humiliation in the chain gang. He is an embodiment of the unstable, insecure, emotionally rootless existence. He is sold from one slaveholder to another slaveholder very inhumanly like cattle. All the brutal experiences created questions of identity in his mind. His two masters: Mr. Gardner treated him like a "animal" and Schoolteacher treated him like a "man". Paul D has constructed pseudo identity under the authority of Garner. Paul D's struggle to create his own identity as a separate individual is an example of African American man's journey to become a part of society. Paul D and Sethe symbolically represent loss of selfhood. Paul D continuously suffered from dilemma of his own self.

She experience torturing of her alcoholic husband. She transforms her identity as one of the black women to become the perfect servant to the white family. Not only black girls but black women are also fascinated by the culture and life style of white celebrity cultures. For eg. Pauline styles her hair like Jean Harlow to look prettier. She creates the world of illusion in her mind. Whatever treatment she experiences from a white employer and white doctors, the same treatment she offers it to her daughter

Pecola. She always tries to make herself more beautiful but it impossible for her. So she believes that she is ugly. This inferiority complex about her identity humiliates her. Later she constructs her identity based on the movies she watches. Pauline is one of the important sources of livelihood to her family. All the black women are totally unaware about their chastity and separate existence as human beings. Life for them is very worse like death. She continuously experiences alienation from her family. In reality, beauty lies in the eyes of the spectator. That was incomprehensible to Pauline and Picola.

The concept of identity crisis for African Americans is very confusing. Their forefathers also experienced the same thing. They were called the Negro slaves. They were sold to white people. Since that era the issue of their identity is a big question. They have no independent identity as well as no voice. They are born as slaves and they die as slaves. It is obvious that those black African Americans have no right of education or right of freedom. Those people are denied by society. They are living in a continuous state of humiliation, depression and anxiety. They are not rebels. They have been unable to come out of their present situation so their roots are fixed in slavery. The identity crisis of black Americans gives a thought provoking appeal to all mankind. It attempts to pave a new way to all the readers to peep into their minds and search for an independent existence of a common man.

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BEYOND AESTHETICS: SUBVERTING THE HANDSOME HERO IMAGE IN AADUJEEVITHAM

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Abstract

This paper explores the evolution of the hero image in Malayalam cinema, particularly the transition from traditional idealised representations to the rugged realism depicted in *Aadujeevitham*. Traditionally, Malayalam cinema has glorified heroes with refined, charming appearances, embodying ideals of elegance and bravery. The archetype of the “handsome hero” is a common trope in movies that mirrors societal standards of male allure and power (Sooraj&Kavya Krishna :2003). However, *Aadujeevitham* marks a significant shift by portraying its protagonist, Najeeb, with a physically worn and rugged appearance that mirrors his harsh realities and suffering. The study investigates how the movie challenges the conventional hero archetype by depicting its lead character with visible signs of fatigue and hardship, emphasizing the hero's vulnerability and resilience rather than traditional heroic ideals. Through an analysis of these contrasting portrayals, the paper illustrates how *Aadujeevitham* redefines the hero image, moving from idealized charm to a more authentic representation of human struggle and perseverance. This shift reflects broader changes in societal values and cinematic trends within Malayalam cinema. The paper concludes by examining the impact of this new portrayal of heroism and its potential influence on future cinematic narratives.

Keywords: Handsome Hero Archytype, Rugged Appearance, Human Struggle and Perseverance.

In Malayalam cinema, the concept of the “hero” goes beyond stardom. These actors have redefined heroism not just through their on screen avatars but also by inspiring the audience with their characters and roles. From intense action sequences to emotional performances, Malayalam heroes left an indelible mark in Malayalam film industry.

The ideal film hero is a perfect mix of physical beauty and charm. His face is chiselled with sharp features, a strong jawline and expressive eyes that can hold a world of emotions. His skin is flawless and his smile is dazzling enough to disarm even the most guarded hearts. His physique is the epitome of strength and fitness with broad shoulders, a toned chest and a sculpted body that conveys power and elegance in every movement. He is magnetic and oozes confidence and charm making him not just an object of admiration but a symbol of perfection in the cinematic world. This hero is the traditional masculine ideal, combining physical attraction with invincibility, captivating us with his looks and leaving an impact through his portrayal of strength and vulnerability.

Recent Malayalam cinema has seen a significant shift in the portrayal of heroes moving away from the traditional idealized figures to more complex and realistic characters. This is evident in films that have protagonists with moral ambiguities, personal flaws and vulnerabilities making them more relatable to the audience. The focus on realism has given heroes who reflect the everyday struggles of humans rather than embodying conventional masculine ideals. Also, the rise of women-centric narratives where male heroes take a backseat has further diversified the lead characters. This trend is also marked by the emergence of anti-heroes and the use of protagonists to address social issues, challenge norms, and offer new perspectives on heroism in contemporary Malayalam cinema.

Najeeb in *Aadujeevitham* redefines the traditional “chocolate boy” hero by being a character far away from the usual charm, romance and lightness associated with that image. The narrative strips off any romanticism and focuses on the raw and harsh realities of migrant labour. Najeeb’s physical and emotional suffering, his loss of innocence and his desperate struggle for survival show a very human and vulnerable side which is poles apart from the carefree and polished image of a “chocolate boy” hero. His character not only challenges but upends the audience’s expectations and gives a gritty, real and moving portrayal making his journey a powerful statement on human endurance.

Malayalam cinema, celebrated for its compelling stories and vibrant characterizations, has historically embraced a hero archetype characterized by idealized charm and bravery. Traditionally, heroes in Malayalam films have been depicted as paragons of moral virtue, physical prowess, and elegance, offering an aspirational image closely tied to classical notions of heroism. These characters typically feature polished looks, embodying a grand, larger-than-life heroism that aligns with the audience's expectations of a traditional movie hero.

In recent years, however, there has been a clear evolution in the portrayal of heroes within Malayalam cinema. This transformation is prominently showcased in the 2024 film *Aadujeevitham*, directed by Blessy. In contrast to the polished heroes of the past, the protagonist Najeeb is portrayed with a rugged, realistically worn appearance. This change reflects a broader trend towards more grounded and authentic depictions of heroism, marking a departure from conventional cinematic ideals.

This paper investigates the shift in the portrayal of heroes in Malayalam cinema, focusing on the contrast between traditional idealized images and the more realistic representation found in *Aadujeevitham*. By analyzing how the character Najeeb is depicted both physically and narratively, this study aims to illuminate the ways contemporary Malayalam cinema is reshaping the concept of heroism. Najeeb's portrayal, characterized by visible signs of fatigue, struggle, and vulnerability, challenges traditional heroic archetypes. This paper will examine how this new depiction reflects broader societal and cultural changes, emphasizing the move from glamorous, idealized portrayals to more genuine and relatable representations of heroism. Through this examination, the paper will assess the impact of these evolving representations on Malayalam cinema and explore their potential implications for future cinematic storytelling.

During the early days of Malayalam cinema, from the 1960s to the 1980s, heroes were depicted with a mix of idealism and grandeur that mirrored the societal values and cinematic norms of the era. These classical heroes were usually portrayed with qualities that highlighted their moral virtue, physical prowess, and a sense of refinement.

Classical heroes were frequently shown as having a refined, dignified appearance that adhered to idealized notions of strength and beauty. Idealised physical appearance was a significant element. The robust, athletic builds of the heroes of this age were typically indicative of their physical prowess and fortitude. Their bodies were designed with great care to convey a strong, resilient appearance that matched the heroic traits they were supposed to represent. Elegant attire frequently reflected their elevated rank and moral goodness. It was exquisite and sophisticated. Suits, elegantly fitted traditional garments, and formal dress contributed to the hero's refined and dignified persona. Heroes were frequently portrayed with a sense of grandeur and dignity. Together with their strong physical presence, they conveyed their leadership and moral guidance through their commanding screen presence and self-assured body language. When comes to 1980s and 1990s heroes like Mammooty, Mohanlal, Suresh Gopi, and Jayaram, they have greatly influenced the idealized hero's portrayal in Malayalam films. Mammooty had a dominating presence in his roles and was known for his thorough attention to detail and strong, authoritative demeanour. His portrayal enhanced the idealized image of strength and honour in *Oru Vadakkan Veeragatha* (1989) with a regal and dignified demeanour. Mohanlal is praised for his adaptability and charming naturalism; he frequently plays parts that strike a balance between authenticity and refinement. His approach in movies like *Bharatham* (1991) blended an elegant, dignified appearance with an approachable, common man appeal, adding to the complex picture of the Malayalam hero. Renowned for his commanding on-screen persona, Suresh Gopi frequently played the tough, self-assured hero in movies like *Commissioner* (1994) furthered his reputation as a strong, moral protagonist. The physical characteristics of the classical hero were only one aspect of their appearance; other factors included the symbolic imagery connected to their roles. And the traditional hero was portrayed as the epitome of morality and virtue. With a focus on hygiene, poise, and a general dignified bearing, their look was intended to mirror their moral position. Recently heroes with their unique looks and techniques, performers like Prithviraj Sukumaran, Kunchako Boban and Tovino Thomas are striking a balance between charm, intelligence, and moral purity, these performers have together formed the Malayalam hero image, which reflects the changing standards of heroism in regional film. Fahad Fasil's fame began after 2010 as a significant figure of the 'New

Generation' cinema in Malayalam. He complicated the centrality of the male star in the film narrative by disrupting the hegemonic models of heroic masculinity.

The way heroes are portrayed in Malayalam cinema has changed significantly in recent years; idealized imagery have given way to more realistic and grounded depictions. A few actors who best represent this shift are Vinayakan , Joju George, Soubin Sahir etc. Vinayakan, who is renowned for his unusual appearance and powerful performances, has reinvented the hero paradigm by accepting parts that emphasize rawness and vulnerability. His portrayal in movies like *Kammatipaadam* (2016) shows a hero who is very different from the refined, idealized characters of the past; instead, he has a rough, genuine look that captures the hard truths of life. However the current Malayalam film industry has adopted a more realistic and nuanced hero representation style. Kalabhavan Mani was well-known for his gritty, raw appearance, which gave an air of genuineness and empathy for the problems faced by common people. His portrayals departed from the conventional glamorous hero image, emphasizing the struggles and everyday sufferings that his characters experienced. In a similar vein, Suarj's approachable, commonplace style has aided in this development. Audiences looking for more real and emotionally relatable hero figures have responded well to Suraj's portrayal of characters with true, unpolished appearances in movies like *Thondi Muthalum Driksakshiyum*. His characters deviate from the idealized hero stereotype by emphasizing realism and humility.

Aadujeevitham(*The Goat Life*) is a 2024 Malayalam-language survival drama film directed, and produced by Blessy. The film is an adaptation of the 2008 best-selling Malayalam novel *Aadujeevitham* by Benjamin, which is based on the real-life story of Najeeb, a Malayali immigrant labourer. Najeeb, along with thousands of other Indians, was forced into slavery in Saudi Arabia as a goatherd on secluded desert farms by native Arabs. The movie stars Prithviraj Sukumaran, Jimmy Jean-Louis, and K. R. Gokul in lead roles. The gripping plot unfolds in Saudi Arabia ,where Najeeb and Hakeem two Malayali immigrants, arrive seeking a better life but find themselves laboring without pay as goat herders in a remote desert.

Aadujeevitham profoundly changes how heroic characters are portrayed in movies, marking a substantial break from typical Malayalam cinema hero portrayals. The favourable response highlights a change in the tastes of Malayalam film towards stories that are more realistic and approachable, making *Aadujeevitham* an important turning point in the history of the genre. "Playing Najeeb was one of the most challenging roles of my career. It required me to endure physical discomfort and emotional strain, which was essential for delivering a performance that felt genuine and impactful," says Prithviraj.

In contrast to the beautiful hero image of the past, Najeeb's portrayal symbolizes a raw and unadorned realism that stands in stark contrast to the polished, sophisticated looks and idealized physical appearances of the classic Malayalam heroes. Najeeb's harsh, unkempt appearance—which includes untidy hair, an unshaven face, and ragged, dirt-stained clothing—visually portrays the terrible cost of his difficult life as a migrant worker in the Saudi-Arabia throughout the entire movie. In stark contrast to the conventionally romanticized heroes who are usually portrayed as effortlessly strong and flawless, this portrayal is a stunning expression of the physical and emotional tiredness that comes with his arduous task. By highlighting the terrible realities Najeeb experiences rather than romanticizing his difficulties, the film painstakingly depicts his weariness through his thin visage and sunken eyes. By emphasizing these elements, *Aadujeevitham* breaks the mould of the genre by offering a striking, real picture of bravery. The tendency in Malayalam cinema towards prioritising authenticity and emotional depth above glossy and idealised depictions is evident in this move towards a more grounded and genuine hero image. The film establishes a new standard for hero depictions by emphasizing the protagonist's authentic, raw appearance and the real-life struggles he faces. This reflects the growing need from modern audiences for heroes who are relatable and humans. By doing this, *Aadujeevitham* not only reimagines the role of the hero but also highlights a revolutionary change in the way the film industry tells stories. Prithviraj talked about the hardships he has undergone for his body transformation, "I relied heavily on fasting and fasted workouts. I am making it sound very scientific like there is a method to it, but there really isn't a healthy way to be losing one-third of your body weight." His body trainer Ajith Babu certifies Prithvi's words, "Prithviraj went from the hot-shot

actor with a healthy body to a starving man's barely put-together body of Najeeb. His dramatic physical and emotional changes were an attempt to mirror the peril and desperation of his character's real-life struggles."

The way the Malayalam audience reacted to Najeeb's portrayal illustrates a significant change in cultural and cinematic predilections. In contrast to the polished, idealized heroes that are typically praised in Malayalam cinema, Prithviraj Sukumaran's portrayal of Najeeb is a more real and relatable character that appeals to modern audiences for a number of reasons. The portrayal of Najeeb's physical attributes, which include his rough, weary demeanour and disheveled features, resonated with viewers who respect authenticity and realism. In contrast to the glitzy, idealized portrayals of historical heroes, Najeeb's experiences and tribulations are more relevant because of the unvarnished and honest depiction of his trials as a migrant labourer. This move toward realism is in line with the audience's rising preference for real-life characters over idealistic, idealized ones. Viewers can empathize deeply with Najeeb because of the character's physical and emotional fatigue, which is depicted in great detail. The audience feels empathy and compassion for him because of his obvious exhaustion and the difficult circumstances he faces. *Aadujeevitham* encourages a greater emotional connection by portraying a hero who is obviously impacted by his hardships, enabling viewers to identify with and participate in his journey on a personal level. The adoption of this new hero image by the Malayalam film industry and its viewers represents a larger cultural shift. Stories that show more rich, varied individuals and delve into difficult social themes are becoming increasingly appreciated. The way Najeeb portrays himself questions conventional hero archetypes and addresses current societal issues resonates with a viewership that is more and more drawn to authentic, meaningful films. The movie's deviation from traditional hero representations won it a lot of praise from critics. Najeeb was greeted favorably as a hero because of the film's realistic portrayal of work and survival, which was appreciated by both critics and viewers. The movie's box office performance and high level of audience participation demonstrate how this new, more realistic hero image is accepted and valued.

Given the movie's success, realistic and grounded hero depictions may become more common in Malayalam film making in the future. The favorable response to Najeeb suggests that viewers are accepting of and supportive of this developing cinematic trend, which could have an impact on the kinds of characters and plots that directors decide to tackle in next films. In conclusion, Najeeb's genuineness, emotional range, and relatability have won the Malayalam public over to his character in *Aadujeevitham*. This acceptance signifies a dramatic shift in the expectations of both the audience and the film industry, reflecting a larger cultural trend towards appreciating realistic and complex hero depictions.. While conventional hero portrayals frequently place an emphasis on elegance and beauty, the movie's reception emphasizes that what really makes a hero is not their outward glitz but rather their ability to tell a compelling story and effectively engage the audience. Najeeb's raw and unpolished look, together with his intensely felt and accurate description, demonstrate a dramatic turn away from superficial qualities and toward substance. The film's engaging narrative and its true-to-life portrayal of adversity and tenacity strike a deep chord with audiences, demonstrating that a hero's lasting influence is contingent upon their ability to establish a strong emotional bond with the audience through authentic storytelling and representation. The capacity to express deep human experiences and emotions is the foundation of true heroism in cinema, as this paradigm shift confirms. Najeeb's character is a recognized illustration of how skillful storytelling and accessible portrayals define current heroism in Malayalam cinema.

Aadujeevitham is praised for its audacious representation of migrant labour and the harsh realities experienced by its protagonist, Najeeb. This movie represents a substantial departure from standard Malayalam cinema hero portrayals. The film's compelling narrative and its accurate depiction of adversity and tenacity are credited with its success. The rough, disheveled look of Najeeb, along with his obvious symptoms of weariness and difficulty, make him a very different figure from the beautiful heroes of the past. This move toward a more grounded and real hero image is indicative of a larger trend in Malayalam films where emotional depth and authenticity are valued more highly than ostentatious glitter.

The favourable reaction to *Aadujeevitham* in Malayalam films signifies a noteworthy change in the tastes and cultural awareness of the audience. Najeed distinguished himself from the polished, idealized heroes of the past with his relatability, emotional depth, and sincerity. These qualities struck a profound chord with modern viewers. A growing respect for stories that show more rich, varied individuals and address difficult social themes is a hallmark of this cultural shift.

The changing meaning of heroism in Malayalam cinema, where sincerity and depth are now prized more highly than outward appearance, is best illustrated by *Aadujeevitham*. The popularity of the movie highlights the fact that genuine cinematic heroism consists of the capacity to portray deep human feelings and experiences, which makes Najeed's character a well-known illustration of modern Malayalam film heroism.

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**MEMORY, THERAPY AND RESILIENCE: ANALYSIS OF ABANI'S
*SONG FOR NIGHT***

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Abstract

The historical trauma of the events associated with catastrophes often carry themselves transgenerationally. Traumatic stressors cumulatively affect the individuals and carves away the semblance of life from their lives. It is deemed that the psychological wounds owing to traumatic injuries do not limit themselves to single individuals or a finite span of time. It is with correspondence to this notion, major traumatic theorists have acknowledged the potential of trauma in transforming individual behaviour, characteristics and even identity. The materialisation of these notions prove that trauma exists outside the purview of conventional theory and praxis. **Keywords:** Traumatic Stressors, Transgenerational Trauma and Psychological Wounds.

Literature across the globe has its own stories of evolution, developments, changes, sacrifices, and tales of survival to share. These tales become the shared history of particular people and their generations, and what they have gone through. Likewise, literature of the African continent comprises a wide range of experiences of people from different parts of the continent. Today when African literature is considered, the writings from a variety of languages in the African continent and the African diaspora need to be considered owing to the vastness of its literary traditions. In African literature, the shared history of the people is deeper and has more intensity owing to the history of the continent. Africa is a land of large varieties of people with different cultural identities and ethnic roots. A pan African point of view inculcates multiple art forms and various modes of literary production. The diversity of the whole continent has resulted in a literature unique in its form, origin as well as expression. Even before the advent of literature from other parts of the world, the roots of African literature has been set in the life and experience of African people. The literature is deeply rooted in their daily life. Therefore, the profusion of literary forms as well as

themes is not at all a surprising element. The African literature is deeply embedded with their culture, values, and life experiences. The literature of Africa is always an expression of cumulative experiences which is an amalgamation of unique individual features.

The postcolonial period of African literature is filled with the literature of resilience detailing the way different countries in the African continent were subjected to tortures including colonisation by many countries. The writers of the postcolonial world, using the history of Africa have articulated the ongoing struggles that the continent undergoes. It can be understood that these struggles are the results of foreign intrusions that have happened in the continent during the course of its history. When the history of the world is analysed, without belittling any experiences of other nations and communities, the Africans have undergone many traumatic instances at a collective level of dehumanisation, slavery, discrimination, and other experiences more than any ethnic group or community of people in the world.

The impact of historical events can be seen in many of the Nigerian fiction written in contemporary times. It is noteworthy that the writers have vividly captured those events that have a constant presence in the minds of the people. Nigeria, a land that has a rich heritage of oral traditions and indigenous culture, also has in hold many of the most traumatic instances the world has witnessed. The catastrophic experiences the people witnessed have impacted even the subsequent generations. The Nigerian civil war during 1967- 1970 was one such event which changes the course of history of Nigeria after decolonisation.

The memory and trauma of such an experience can travel from one generation to the next. The wide range of civil war narratives that deal with multiple angles of perception shows that the impact of the civil war and the circumstances that had escalated and finally resulted in a horrible war. Though an event of the past, it still has its underlying effects on the psyche of the Nigerian people. This experience of the past haunting the present, unfortunately, is the matter of not only Nigeria, but also many of the previously colonised countries across the globe. The value of a work based on civil war fiction in a postcolonial nation primarily relies on an analysis to see the multiple

aspects of such internal warfare of a postcolonial nation and how it is linked to the creation of a continuing trauma across generations.

Chris Abani's *Song for Night* is about the child soldier narrative. Chris Abani (1966-) is known for showing his talent at a very young age through his authorship of the novel *Masters of the Board* (1985) at the age of sixteen. Continuous publication of the works which showed the nature of anti-establishment and anti-government made Chris Abani a controversial figure. It is to be noted that regarding these issues Abani has served jail imprisonment a lot of times. Abani's *Song for Night* (2007) can be regarded as one of that fiction written about the Nigerian civil war which has shown the emotions and trauma people have undergone, especially the child soldiers, something that a chronological account fails to do. The function of memory, as a pattern that at times helps heal but sometimes destroys people, is beautifully portrayed by Chris Abani through the protagonist My Luck in the novella *Song for Night*.

Song for Night by Chris Abani points out the trauma as well the atrocities done by the child soldiers who got into the war maybe wilfully as in the case of My Luck from *Song for Night*. According to Dominick LaCapra in "Writing History, Writing Trauma", a categorization, and compartmentalization of various categories involved in a traumatic event are very necessary. Identifying the victim based on the choices he/she makes is very crucial especially in historical trauma. In a war scenario, every victim cannot be the same. Some people who have undergone trauma may not be traumatized but at the same time someone who has gone through something even with less intensity might land up in a long-term traumatic agony.

It is a matter of general affirmation that in a war everything a soldier does is not according to his/her own subjective choices but what they have been trained to do. Even in such cases, every atrocity in a war is not justifiable. Trauma and the category of victimhood in the case of perpetrator trauma is always a complicated issue. Dominick LaCapra urges to consider the category of victimhood as an ethical category rather than a psychological category. In this sense, categorisation of soldiers under the label of victims is problematic. At the same time, some studies pertain to the fact the blurring distinctions of categories of trauma involved in a traumatic event can also be

taken into consideration. The subjectivity involved in the violence done by perpetrators is another issue while analysing perpetrator trauma, for, in a war situation, it has to be made clear whether the acts were done in obligation to the state or for mere individual's whims and fancies.

Everyone is subject to structural trauma. It is, in variable ways, a social, political, and ethical category. Victims of certain events will in all likelihood be traumatized by them, and not being traumatized would itself call for explanation. But not everyone traumatized by events is a victim. There is the possibility of perpetrator trauma which must itself be acknowledged and in some sense worked through if perpetrators are to distance themselves from an earlier implication in deadly ideologies and practices. Such trauma does not, however, entail the equation or identification of the perpetrator and the victim. (LaCapra 79)

My Luck, in *Song for Night* after witnessing the death of his mother and narrowly escaping from both Igbo and Fulani soldiers, joins the army with no hesitation and with no other choices. The only difference in My Luck's plight is that he has no one to search for or to keep up his hope to find someone in life belonging to him. His father is already killed and the soldiers have killed his mother too. Joining the army is the only thing that can make him safe and secure at least for some time in terms of food and water. In the situation of war, even food is a luxury item. It is during the third year of the war that My Luck joins the army and in fact, he is initially enthusiastic when they select him for a special mission.

Nobody explained it at first. Nobody had time; nobody cared; after three years of civil war nothing is strange anymore; choose the reason that best satisfies you. There are many ways to say it, but this is the one I choose: they approached me and said I had been selected for a special mission. I had been selected to be part of an elite team, a team of engineers highly trained in locating and eliminating the threat of clandestine enemy explosives. Even though I had no idea what clandestine enemy explosives were, I was thrilled. (Abani 18)

The war creates a situation in which young abandoned children are either forced to join or willfully join seeing there is no other chance of survival. For some,

the conscription itself turns out to be a traumatic event that forever haunts their psyche and for some others, the traumatic events force them to join the army. Either way, there is not much space for making a decision based on available choices. As Alcinda Honwana in *Child Soldiers in Africa* states “in practice, the distinction between voluntary and forced recruitment is blurred; in some circumstances, it is entirely absent” (Honwana 37).

The introduction to brutality and making the children do things that they do not want to do is one of the major sources of their trauma. My Luck and his platoon, without knowing the nature of their operation, opt for training to become mine diffusers. Taking advantage of the young age of the children and the complicated situation of the war Major Essien, also known as John Wayne, decides to cut out the vocal cords of the entire platoon. Without even giving anaesthesia, the doctor just severed the vocal cords to suppress their screams in a plausible mine explosion.

The mental stability of the young people or the plight they might undergo without having a proper voice for communication is not the concern of the major. “What they couldn’t know was that in the silence of our heads, the screams of those dying around us were louder than if they still had their voices” (Abani 22).

Sometimes My Luck cannot have proper food remembering the incident that shook him to his core. When he and his platoon have approached a group of women in a village sitting around the fire, having a meal, they ask for food. It is only a few moments later My Luck realises that what they have been eating was a small baby. “The woman holding onto the head let go as she fell and it hit the ground and rolled back towards me. It is that little face, maybe a few months old, that keeps me from the rest” (Abani 17). My Luck feels that after watching some events in life, a person’s mind cannot settle at any cost. “I haven’t rested since that night. There has been exhaustion; sleep even. But not rest” (16). My Luck from that point onwards has been seeing the same baby in his dreams leaving him with no peace at all. Even while having something to eat, finding it is another difficult task though, he has constant reminders of what he has witnessed. “I couldn’t eat it because it reminded me too much of the dead child in my dreams, and of that night we stumbled on that gory feast, those gorgons, and I felt the campsite as the others cooked and ate it” (41). Even

though many characters have exhibited symptoms such as insomnia and nightmares, My Luck does not even call sleep a rest. He differentiates the terms based on the amount of rest that his mind gets. Sometimes he can sleep for the sake of his body but his mind is always in a state of unrest because of the many traumatic instances he has witnessed. Even during day time, he cannot completely get rid of the traumatic images he has in his mind. “But even in day light, even in these siestas, I am plagued by vivid nightmares. I always wake up sweating, the dreams leaving a tangy bitter aftertaste for hours” (51). The limitation in communication adds up to the trauma because of the inability to express emotions properly. Being forced to remove the vocal cords and not being able to produce sounds from the teenage part of life is different from the inability to speak from birth or by accident. Here even if the characters reach a point where they can let out their trauma deep inside their mind, they cannot vent it for the lack of words and proper sign language. The silence prevails covering the sounds of the screams in their head.

The silence of traumatic memories and impact is another important factor of concern here. In the narratives about trauma, it is clear that silence plays a more subtle way of expressing trauma in children. While in many trauma narratives elements of clinical trauma can be seen and the silence of trauma is one of the most intriguing factors. My Luck in *Song for Night* gets severed vocal cords against his wish, without even being informed. “Silence is a steady hand, Palm flat” is the first chapter. The chapters are titled according to the gestures used by the platoon when their vocal cords get severed. The chapter titles are the hand gestures the platoon use for communication. The silence of the platoon has more impact and has affected their psyche. The first sentence of Chris Abani’s novella starts with “What you hear is not my voice” itself shows the silenced voice of the protagonist (Abani 9). “There is a lot to be said for silence, especially when it comes to you young. The interiority of the head, which is a misnomer – misnomer being one of those words silence brings you...”

(10). The trauma that the child soldiers undergo at an early age is inexplicable. These instances themselves make them victims of a war that has made them lose everything including themselves.

In *Song for Night*, My Luck is a walking cemetery with inscribed crosses on his hand reminding him of every murder he has done. He has even unknowingly killed a pregnant woman. Even if these murders are overlooked in the name of the war or My Luck being in a position of child soldier with the army, at times it is clear that he has enjoyed what he has done. "I have killed many people during the last three years. Half of those were innocent, half of those were unarmed- and some of those killings have been a pleasure" (Abani 60). Also he has questioned himself about those times in his life where he has started liking the atrocities he has done.

Who taught me to enjoy killing, a singular joy that is perhaps rivaled only by an orgasm? It doesn't matter how the death is dealt- a bullet tearing through a body, the juicy suck of flesh around a bayonet, the grainy globular disintegration brought on by clubs- the joy is the same and requires only the complete focus on the moment, on the act. (117)

The confusing factor at times is the change in reactions the child soldiers have to the actions they have done. The enjoyment part of the murder is a distressing matter especially when it comes from a child who is not even old enough to take part in the army. However, there is a trauma associated with it. My Luck has suffered mentally even from the instances he has claimed to have an enjoyment element. Kali Tal in *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* agrees to the notion of soldiers being both victims and victimizer. "Those exposed to combat or other life-threatening events, and those exposed to the carnage resulting from combat were traumatized...The soldier in combat is both victim and victimizer; dealing death as well as risking it" (Tal 10). When a pregnant woman sacrifices her life to save her husband, it is clear that My Luck and others in the platoon have grieved for what they have done.

We had seen fathers shoot their children on our orders, sons rape their mothers, children forced to hack their parents to death- the worst atrocities- all of which we witnessed impassively. But this was different. We all cried when the woman died, except John Wayne, who was well lost. It wasn't dramatic really, just silent tears and a shame that kept us from meeting each other's eyes. (Abani 83)

Despite the intensity of trauma experienced by the perpetrators or the nature of trauma they suffer and the further complications in their future with a potential Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, theorists like Dominick LaCapra are strong in their claims of perpetrator trauma being very different from that of victim trauma. Especially a gender-based issue is also involved in the categorization. While the female characters who have undergone trauma get more and more traumatized, male characters, particularly traumatized during childhood, tend to showcase more aggression. Judith Lewis Herman has strong validation in the case of gender-based trauma. “Trauma appears to amplify the common gender stereotypes: men with histories of childhood abuse are more likely to take out their aggressions on others, while women are more likely to be victimized by others or to injure themselves” (Herman 82).

A categorization of trauma based on the moral stance of the victim is very much needed. This is a further complicated issue when it comes to the healing part of the trauma. In terms of coming out of the trauma, there are many dimensions involved. In modern medical terms, psychiatry, psychology, and many methods of treatment are used. Many kinds of research are still going on regarding the latest research and methodologies involved in trauma therapy and healing. In the narratives of the Biafran civil war, the authors have presented a war scenario in which the psyche of the victims is compromised to a great deal. Irrespective of categories of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders, many characters are seemed to be tattered apart when they undergo a sudden psychic shock and thereafter repeated traumatic stressors. Even then many characters have either adapted to the new life with normality or have come out of it.

In the healing process of trauma, different characters seem to have their methods of coming out of the mourning process and working through their ways to the exit. My Luck in *Song for Night* has carved the name of the people whom he has killed intentionally and unintentionally. The hands of the protagonist are his cemetery for the people he has killed. When he touches the carvings on his hand, he remembers them, mourns for them and himself and he tries to communicate the pain in his mind through these carvings because a normal articulation is impossible for him as he does not have vocal cords. My Luck does not have an audience to share his agony fully. Though he has his platoon and he considers them as his family, the limitations of communication

with a newly acquainted sign language are more complex. The personal cemetery of My Luck in his hands becomes a source of atonement from his trauma. For the protagonist My Luck, the memory of his life cannot be expressed in any other way but physically. In the chapter titled “Memory is a Pattern Cut into an Arm,” Abani describes the personal cemetery of My Luck.

Trauma and memory are interlinked through intertwined and intricate webs of psychological wound affliction and coping mechanisms. Traumatic pattern shows a typical pattern of exhibition through the sub conscious mind. These patterns, though not collective, are deeply connected to the collective unconscious. The analysis of the novella further proves the importance of this pattern in the proper expression of traumatic stressors and symptoms.

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**RE-NEGOTIATING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN STRUGGLES:
POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION EXPLORED THROUGH ORAL
HISTORICAL SOURCES IN SOUTH INDIA**

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Abstract

Women's participation in struggles have always existed in the Indian scenario. Breaking the caste, class and gender barriers, women have been at the forefront of broad social and political struggles even if scarcely brought to the limelight. The women's movement aiming for societal change in India can be broadly categorized into mass movements and grassroots movements. Women who led movements were questioned for lack of leadership and inability to effect a meaningful change in society. Women's movements also survive the hierarchy that exists between urban class women rooted in western feminist beliefs and the mass of Indian women who struggle to articulate their needs. The current study seeks to analyze such women led movements in South India and how categorization has affected the implications and resultant effects of the movement. This study explores some of the famous movements and the work of established organizations like the All-India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) to spearhead the cause of social issues faced by women like gendered violence against women etc. The analysis will help draw conclusions with respect to categorization in women's movement and the unique features in feminist movements for other social causes.

Keywords: Women's Movements, Feminism, Identity, Margin, Politics in Translating History.

Oral history is a way of learning about history by listening to people's stories. It has become more popular since the 1990s because it helps us understand history from the perspective of ordinary people, not just famous leaders. It helps us study 'history from below'. Oral history has helped us understand the difficult experiences of people during the collapse of the British Empire in India. It has also given a voice to people who were previously ignored or silenced. Oral history has been used to study local communities and to understand the experiences of women in political

movements. Oral history is a valuable tool for historians and researchers to gather primary source material and to preserve the voices, memories, and perspectives of people in history.

In early 20th century Tamil Nadu, caste and class status intersected with social reform movements and the women's question in complex ways. On the one hand, social reform movements sought to challenge traditional caste and gender hierarchies and promote greater equality and social justice for all members of society, including women and lower-caste individuals. However, these movements often operated within the framework of existing caste and class structures, which could limit their effectiveness and exclude certain groups from participation.

Women's movements were influenced by three major factors. One influence was the Puranas. The examples of strong women characters such as Drapadi, Sita who faced certain adversities and emerged triumphant were often cited by activists participating in women's movements. The second factor was the influence of the European women's movement and its emphasis on political participation in the public sphere. The active agency taken up by women while the men were at war was instrumental in motivating the educated middle class and upper class Indian women. Thirdly, the anti-imperialist movement was the impetus that brought together a number of scattered women's groups from different parts of India (Chatterjee, 251). With an increasing number of women accessing education, the impositions of familial and cultural restrictions of patriarchal society were slowly overcome. Ladies Association (1886), Sharda Sadan (1892), Hindu Ladies Social and Literary Club (1902), Seva Sadan (1909), Mahila Samiti (1905) are a few prominent women's social groups. The Women's India Association (1917) set up in Madras aimed at women's emancipation and demanded rights such as widow remarriage and the right to vote. The journal brought out by this association was *Stri-Dharma*. *Stri-Dharma* and *Indian Ladies Magazine* were the two prominent women's magazines in English which had pan- Indian writers contributing articles.

Women's emancipation was one of the prime themes in the political agenda of the Self-Respect movement. In 1928 South Indian Reform Conference Periyar states,

“I have lost faith in social reform. For one who believes in radical change, self-respect, equality and progress, the alternative (to the present situation) is not mere reform; but radical reconstructive work which would destroy the traditional structures” (Anandhi, 25).

The Self-Respect movement actively engaged in grass root changes to address the woman question. The movement organised self-respect marriages, women’s conferences and encouraged women to participate in large agitations, “The central aim of self-respect marriages was to free the institution of marriage from Hindu rituals which emphasised monogamous familial norms and chastity for women and thus legitimised patriarchy” (Anandhi, 27).

The marriages were conducted without priests or rituals or tying of the Thali and mostly in Rahu kaalam to decry the religious connection attached to marriages. The conferences arranged by the Self-Respect movement were held at district and provincial levels. The first Conference was organised in Chengleput in 1929 Madras Presidency. The conferences addressed women’s issues along with general resolutions on political movements. Periyar believed women’s emancipation was possible only through the participation of women. “As of now, men’s struggle for women’s liberation has only strengthened women’s enslavement.”

There were also separate conferences held for women. In these conferences by women activists the issues addressed include compulsory education for girls, Anti- Child Marriage Act, Divorce act, equal rights to property, anti-Devadasi Bill, and so on. Women were also encouraged to participate in mass agitations voicing their concerns. The Self-respect movement, in many ways, brought to the forefront women’s representation for their issues. Women’s representation in Tamil political movements in the words of Singaravelu Chettiar:

What an ability women belonging to the Self Respect Movement have in organising their own conferences-independently and with true equality. In other movements, women figure only as an adjunct to men's activities; but in our movement, they function as an independent group and involve in-the movement's-activities demonstrating equality with men. (Anandhi,35)

The Tamil Revivalist Movement was a movement aimed at establishing the purity of Tamil language and culture. The movement sought an independent 'Tanitamil' identity. Tamilnadu in the 1930s witnessed huge participation by women essayists, journalists and short story writers due to the Tamil Revivalist movement and the radical Self-Respect Movement. According to Sumathi Ramaswamy in *Daughter of Tamil: Language and Poetics of Womanhood in Tamilnadu* (May 1992) Tamil feminism was gaining ground in two ways. The first was the feminization of Tamil language as a woman and as a mother (Tamiltai) especially as an endangered mother. Holmstrom comments that this "was a way of re-legitimising maidenly virtue and sexual fidelity under the mantle of devotion to the community" (Holmstrom, 55). The second was to appropriate this new found voice for their own empowerment.

In the review of Sumathi Ramaswamy's book, Holmstrom cites the example of two women writers who were part of the movement. "Nilambikai (1903-45), daughter of Maraimalai Adigal, of the Pure Tamil Movement of 1915-16, was a writer of essays and tracts which played an important part in crafting a new identity for Hindu middle-class Tamil women." (Holmstrom, 55). She adheres to the orthodox definitions of women as ideal wives and mothers educated in Tamil traditions, culture and spirituality. This echoed the appropriate teachings that society wanted women to conform to. The second example is Tamaraikanni, a writer who created women activist characters mirroring herself. She represented the emancipatory nature in the movements of the time. This is the complex backdrop against which women writers who came later negotiate their feminist concerns.

The Self-Respect Movement was a dynamic social movement that aimed to completely destroy the modern Hindu social order and create a new rational society free of castes, religions and gods. Founded in Tamil Nadu by E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker (popularly known as Periyar), this was an egalitarian movement that embraced the ideology of the collapse of Brahmin hegemony, the equal rights of the underclass and women in society, and the revival of Dravidian languages. The goals of the self-respect movement are outlined in two of Periyar's pamphlets, 'Namatu Kurikkol' and 'Tiravitakkazhaka Latchiyam', and are presented below.

The movement aims to abolish the social structure of a society where elitism and casteism are encouraged. It advocates equal opportunities for all, regardless of community and gender. All people should have the same opportunities for growth and development. It aims to completely eradicate untouchability and force people to remove caste titles from their names. This movement supported inter-caste marriage. The Self-Respect movement played an important role in the political, social and religious life of the South Indian people. It brought the message of Tamil nationalism to the masses.

The accounts presented in the sources highlight the marginalization of women's histories, which has been internalized by many women themselves. However, more importantly, they also highlight women's own agency in creating space for themselves despite these obstacles.

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DIASPORIC THEATRE: IDENTITY, DISPLACEMENT, AND ACTIVISM IN RANA BOSE'S PLAY

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Abstract

The concepts of home, belonging, displacement, as well as the reinvention of the self, are central to the phenomenon of diaspora resulting from migration. This paper aims to understand the nuances of the South Asian diaspora through the lens of drama and theatre. To substantiate the proposed arguments, the paper adheres to Rana Bose's play *The Death of Abbie Hoffman* as a case study.

Keywords: Activism, Diaspora, Displacement, Identity and Theatre.

The "other" is the unthought, my dear. Unexplored territory. The unknown frontier. The other side. (Bose 248). The reference to 'other' in the above quote entails a sense of otherness associated with a diasporic identity. A diasporic identity entails a sense of re-establishment and any kind of re-establishment is often a result of resistance and activism. The term (re-) becomes a matter of paramount importance and becomes a kind of theory based on which a diaspora identity rests. (Re) implies re-invention, re-incarnation, re-living, re-enactment, re-negotiation, and re-making of identities vis-a-vis diaspora. In a way, such manifestations of (re) give rise to an essence of volatility that prevents one from reaching a finality. Diasporic identity, thus, becomes an ever-evolving identity and each stage of evolution entails a struggle to come out of the former self and dive deep into the newer self. This tension induced by displacement gives rise to activism wherein there is a constant attempt to fight for one's identity. Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* looks at the transatlantic experiences of Black diasporic communities and the concept of "double consciousness". This term was first coined by W.E.B. Du Bois to describe the internal conflict experienced by subordinated or colonised groups in a society of oppression. Gilroy shows how diasporic identities are formed by the tension between

the homeland and the host country and are in constant re-formation and re-articulation. Arjun Appadurai's *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* introduces the idea of "global cultural flows" and how globalization shapes diasporic identities. He talks about how media, migration and technology create imagined worlds and communities and contribute to the ongoing (re-) construction of diasporic identities. Khachig Tölölyan's *Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment* looks at the political and social dimensions of diasporic communities, focusing on their transnational connections and stateless power. He shows how diasporic identities are fluid and dynamic and are constantly being reshaped by their interactions with multiple states and cultures. Sara Ahmed's *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* is about the encounters between diasporic people and others in post-colonial spaces. She talks about how these encounters require continuous (re-) negotiation of identity and belonging and how emotion is a part of this process.

The relationship between theatre studies and diasporic identities is an interesting area of academic inquiry that explores how the experiences of displacement, migration, and cultural hybridity are articulated, represented, and contested on stage. This relationship can be examined through various lenses, including the historical development of diasporic theatre, the thematic concerns of diasporic playwrights, the performative strategies employed to convey diasporic experiences, and the impact of diasporic theatre on both diasporic communities and broader societal discourses. For diasporic communities, theatre serves as a crucial space for negotiating their experiences of displacement, cultural hybridity, and identity formation. The historical development of diasporic theatre can be traced back to the migration patterns of various communities, including the African, Asian, Latin American, and Middle Eastern diasporas.

Diasporic theatre is characterized by a range of thematic concerns that reflect the diverse experiences of diasporic communities. These themes often include issues of identity, belonging, displacement, cultural hybridity, and the negotiation of tradition and modernity. One of the central themes in diasporic theatre is the exploration of

identity and belonging. Diasporic individuals often find themselves caught between multiple cultural identities, leading to a sense of in-betweenness or liminality.

South Asian diasporic theatre has flourished in countries like the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada, reflecting the diverse experiences of South Asian immigrants and their descendants. The history of South Asian migration is marked by various waves of migration, including the early indentured labor migration to the Caribbean and Africa, the postcolonial migration to the United Kingdom and North America, and the contemporary migration of professionals and students. Each wave of migration has contributed to the development of a distinct South Asian diasporic theatre tradition, reflecting the unique challenges and opportunities faced by different generations of South Asian migrants.

South Asian diasporic theatre often deals with themes such as colonialism, postcolonial identity, generational conflict, and the negotiation of cultural heritage in a foreign land. Playwrights like Hanif Kureishi, Ayub Khan-Din, and Tanika Gupta have been instrumental in bringing these themes to the fore, using theatre as a means to explore and critique the diasporic experience. South Asian diasporic theatre employs a range of performative strategies to convey the complexities of diasporic experiences. These strategies include the use of multilingualism and code-switching, the incorporation of traditional South Asian performance forms, and the use of non-linear narratives to reflect the fragmented nature of diasporic identity.

Rana Bose, a Canadian playwright of Indian descent, delves deeply into the intersections of identity, migration, and theatre. Rana Bose was a multilingual writer, playwright, engineer, poet, dramaturge, and novelist. Born in Kolkata, India, Bose resided in Montreal for over thirty years. During his college years in St. Louis in the 1970s, he created the lighting design for Gerry Mulligan's Jazz Trio and the Charlie Mingus Ensemble, drawing inspiration from Tapas Sen's sets in the Bengali theatre of the 1960s. Bose has written ten published plays produced in Canada, the United States, and India. Such a varied belongingness reflects his ability to trace and integrate diverse cultural contexts. His work bridges his South Asian heritage and his experiences in the diaspora, making him a prominent South Asian diasporic playwright.

Rana Bose's works are characterized by their exploration of complex identities and cultural negotiations. His plays often depict characters who navigate multiple cultural landscapes, embodying the tensions and contradictions inherent in diasporic existence. Bose's plays often incorporate multilingualism and code-switching, reflecting the linguistic diversity of diasporic communities. This strategy not only aligns with the diasporic experience but also challenges the dominance of a single language, promoting linguistic plurality. In his work, characters frequently switch between languages, mirroring the real-life experiences of many diasporic individuals who navigate multiple linguistic and cultural contexts. This performative strategy reflects the fluidity of diasporic identities and the hybrid nature of diasporic cultures.

Rana Bose's specific play *The Death of Abbie Hoffman* is a dramatic/theatrical attempt only in this direction. It was staged at the Firehall Theatre in Vancouver, Canada, in 1993. This production marked a significant moment as it reflected Bose's engagement with political and social themes. This play is inspired by the 1960s Bengali theatre he experienced as a child in Kolkata, particularly the works of Utpal Dutt and Badal Sircar. These plays combined radical politics with a sensory-rich approach, using spectacle, song, dance, and physicality. The political radicalism and general irreverence toward feudal and dominant cultural controls in 1960s Calcutta deeply influenced Bose. Growing up during the turbulent Naxalite movement, Bose admired Abbie Hoffman, whose suicide symbolized, for him, the end of an era. The physicality and absurdism of Badal Sircar's *Micchil* act as the foundation for this play.

Diasporic individuals often carry with them the political and social contexts of their homelands, which continue to inform their perspectives and creative outputs in their new countries. Bose's admiration for Abbie Hoffman, an American radical, and the decision to create a piece about Hoffman's death, reflects the blending of influences from both his homeland and his experiences in the diaspora. The theme of the death of an era and the end of radical critique in *The Death of Abbie Hoffman* can be seen as a metaphor for the diasporic experience of loss and transformation. The play highlights the state of restlessness that diasporic individuals undergo as they reconcile their past identities with their present realities in a new cultural context. The use of physicality and absurdism in the play symbolizes the ongoing dialogue between

absence and presence in the diasporic experience. Just as the play reflects on the passing of an era, diasporic individuals often deal with the absence of their homeland and the presence of their new environment, creating a unique and complex sense of identity. In the play, Abbie comments on this complex identity that demands constant workings when he says, “Don’t even tell them I am here . . . I am a journey person, I travel, I watch, I am a bystander, an onlooker.” (Bose 239)

In the play, Abbie Hoffman is depicted as a charismatic yet troubled figure, reflecting his vibrant activism and personal battles with mental health. Other characters include Hoffman’s family, friends, and notable figures from the counterculture movement, all contributing to the narrative by providing different perspectives on Hoffman’s life. The set design reflects the chaotic and vibrant spirit of the 1960s and 70s, using period-specific props and multimedia elements. Scenes shift rapidly between different locations, from protest sites to courtrooms to personal spaces, highlighting the varied facets of Hoffman’s life. The play features sharp, witty dialogue that captures Hoffman’s rhetorical style. Monologues are used to delve deeper into Hoffman’s thoughts and emotions, providing insight into his internal struggles. Visual and auditory elements include projections of historical footage, protest songs, and symbolic props like Hoffman’s iconic American flag shirt.

Abbie Hoffman’s activism, particularly his opposition to the Vietnam War and his support for civil rights, can be paralleled with the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles that resonate within the South Asian diaspora. South Asian activists often engage in transnational solidarity, connecting their struggles with those of other marginalized communities globally, much like Hoffman’s solidarity with oppressed groups in the U.S. Hoffman’s countercultural identity and his challenges with mainstream American society can mirror the identity struggles faced by South Asians in the diaspora, who often struggle between multiple cultural norms.

The play’s exploration of Hoffman’s identity crisis resonates with the diasporic experience of reconciling cultural heritage with the pressures of assimilation. Just as Hoffman faced marginalization and surveillance for his radical views, South Asian diasporic communities often confronted racial profiling, discrimination, and

xenophobia. The play's themes of resistance and resilience in the face of state oppression can be kept in parallel with South Asians who have experienced similar systemic injustices. The play's reflection on the legacy of 1960s activism can be linked to the ongoing struggles for social justice within the South Asian diaspora, such as movements against caste discrimination, gender inequality, and racial injustice.

In the play, Abbie Hoffman's life is marked by a sense of not truly belonging anywhere, reflecting a central theme in diasporic identity. Hoffman's activism and radical lifestyle can be seen as a quest for a place where his ideals and identity can be fully realized, mirroring the diasporic search for a sense of home. For the South Asian diaspora, the concept of home is multifaceted, encompassing both the homeland left behind and the new places of residence. Bose's portrayal of Hoffman's restless spirit and continuous search for a place of belonging resonates with the diasporic experience of having multiple identities and homes. The play's depiction of Hoffman's interactions with different activist groups highlights the importance of community in establishing a sense of belonging in a foreign environment. Hoffman's life, characterized by his constant clashes with authorities and his eventual suicide, reflects the feeling of displacement and the inability to find a stable, accepting environment. This reflects the diasporic condition of being perpetually in-between, neither fully part of the host society nor completely detached from the homeland. For the South Asian diaspora, displacement is not only physical but also cultural and emotional.

Robin Cohen's *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* lays out different types of diasporas such as victim, labor, imperial, and cultural diasporas. The South Asian diaspora often includes aspects of these types of labor and cultural diaspora. Cohen's work highlights how community and shared memories help keep a sense of who you are and where you belong. Hoffman's involvement with activist groups can be seen as his way to build a supportive community that shares his values and struggles. This is key for people living away from their home country who might feel out of place in their new society. Vijay Mishra's *The Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary* looks at how literature expresses the complex lives of people living away from their homeland. He talks about a "diasporic consciousness" that involves feeling out of place and longing for a lost homeland. Hoffman's life full of

fight with authorities and ending in suicide, can be understood through Mishra's ideas. It shows how the pain of being displaced and the search for identity can become too much to bear.

Hoffman's various personas—activist, prankster, fugitive—demonstrate the continuous reinvention of self that is necessary for survival in an often hostile environment. This aligns with the diasporic experience of constantly revising one's identity to sail through different cultural and social contexts. South Asian diasporic individuals often go through similar processes of reinvention, adapting their identities to fit into diverse settings while preserving their cultural heritage. Theatre, by its nature, poses provocative questions and represents the state of in-betweenness that defines the diasporic experience. Bose's play uses Hoffman's life to explore broader questions about identity, belonging, and resistance. The dramatic representation of Hoffman's activism and personal struggles invites the audience to reflect on their positions within society, particularly those who identify with the diasporic condition of being caught between different worlds. *The Death of Abbie Hoffman* is inherently a piece of protest theatre, challenging the status quo and advocating for social justice. This aligns with the tradition of South Asian theatre, which often serves as a medium for political and social critique.

The play's examination of Hoffman's radicalism aligns with the use of theatre in the South Asian diaspora as a form of activism, where performance becomes a space to exercise dissent and advocate change. The play also stands out as a piece of theatre for the South Asian diaspora because it does not just highlight the chaos but engages with it, and brings it to life on stage. In a way, through this play, Bose shows that South Asians in the diaspora not only create and perform in theatre but also shape and critique it. The influence of Rana Bose's play goes further than the stage. It also addresses the larger social dialogues about multiculturalism, migration, and equality for all.

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**AN ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL RACISM IN BENJAMIN KWAKYE'S
*THE OTHER CRUCIFIX***

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Abstract

The expansion of global village and flexible mobility of the people across the borders have accelerated the economic, scientific and political well-being of all nations. The erasure of the borders has strengthened the understanding and mutual respect to each other. However, the conflicts and racial aversion are still prevalent in the global world. Though international trade has been wide spread and the people are connected through technology, racial prejudice is yet to be evacuated. This research article aims to uncover the combating bias and racial disparities incorporated in society by analysing the novel *The Other Crucifix* of Benjamin Kwakye. The contemporary author Benjamin Kwakye has foregrounded the sufferings of the migrants particularly students, segregated based on race. The study focuses on the underlying concepts that structure the substantial disparities in the name of race.

Keywords: Discrimination, Institutional Racism, Power, Internalise and Ideology.

Carter defines race "as a social construction in which people in the United States are identified by their skin color, language, and physical features, and are grouped and ranked into distinct racial groups" (18). Racism is the complex set of rational principles framed by the dominant groups to justify their superiority and, maintain and manifest their superiority by subjugating the minority groups as 'other'. In the course of time, racism would result in racial segregation which would have a serious impact in the global arena. Though the tough times of racial discrimination have been controlled by the Civil Rights Act which announces racial discrimination as an illegal one, the contemporary racial prejudices cast its evil presence affecting the

lives of the people in an explicit manner. Benjamin Kwakye, the double Commonwealth Prize winner puts his soul and heart in bringing the racial disparities to light through his novels *The Other Crucifix*, *The Three Books of Shama* and *The Count's False Banquet*. Kwakye elucidates the psychological impacts of the migrants under the threat of racial discrimination through his works. The research focuses on how Jojo, the protagonist of *The Other Crucifix* is marginalised and denied of equal access and opportunity due to systemic racism in the host land.

Adichie's *Americanah* reflects the painful experiences of the black immigrant Ifemelu who migrates to America to fulfill her American dream. Adichie wants to portray how Blacks have been perceived as inferior. *Behold the Dreamers* by Imbolo Mbue discusses the challenges faced by the West African family to achieve the American dream and how it is shattered by the racial disparities in the U.S. *Black Like Me* by John Howard Griffin brings out the life of a black man tackling the issues of race by searching the trace of humanity. In the novel *Speak No Evil* Iweala discusses the intersections of class, gender, racial differences and the diasporic sufferings through the life of the protagonist Niru. Literature attempts to bring to the forum the existing, hidden discrimination in society to the attention of readers and make them understand the reality of life and find the ways to get through it.

In *The Other Crucifix*, Kwakye sketches out the life of a migrant young man, Jojo who prepared to move from Ghana to America to have his education and to make the dream of his family come true. The author symbolises the forthcoming experiences by probing "Was my arrival in the U.S a day of curse or bless?" (Kwakye 1). The very first line of the novel signifies the dilemma in landing in the new land. It too reflects the psychological state of every individual undergoing displacement. Right from the airport till Jojo reaching his death bed, he was racially discriminated even though he was naturalised as an American citizen. The official at the Immigration questioned "Where are you going nigger?" (Kwakye 7). As he was of racial consciousness, he could not understand the depth of the word but he could guess the word would carry definitely a negative meaning. The skin colour and the physical appearances "are held in low esteem by the dominant or majority group which treats them unfairly" (Henslin 217). It is the effect of the institutional racism that view black as inferior and less

human. Thus, racism is a complex construct of logical beliefs, emphasizing the dominant racial group instilled by the institutional racism. In terms of definition “Institutional racism refers to racially discriminatory policies and practices embedded in social institutions such as the government, the economy, the education system, the healthcare system, religious institutions, the family, and the media” (Needham et al.).

In the college campus, Jojo was warned to be aware as “you represent all of Africa, all of the black race” (Kwakyie 20). The racial notions are internalised and processed in the everyday practical life by familiarisation and repetition. The portrayal of people based on the colour is activated through the media, particularly in the contemporary times. This is what Essed calls as everyday racism, a “coherent complex of oppression continuously present and systematically activated personally through encounters... through media” (53). Jojo simply lived his life as a ghost in a land of flesh sometimes welcomed, sometimes feared and “In my own skin which I found so comfortable, I was perplexed by it all” (122). The effects of the racial inequities created psychological scars in Jojo which troubled him throughout his life.

Jojo was discriminated racially. He strove hard to meet his every day needs. The building in which the African and other immigrant students were staying held the name of Charles Brewer. The students of ISA (International Students Association) wished to rename the building from Charles Brewer who was a slave owner to Fidel Castro. The University President yelled at the ISA and punished the students involved in the matter. Jojo was called by the President and was threatened “Need I remind you that you are here at the pleasure of the University? Need I remind you that the University heavily subsidizes your tuition?” (Kwakyie 66). Jojo was selected for his academic achievements. Jones defines some sort of racial discrimination as aversive racism where the ambivalence is based on the egalitarian thoughts and the negative feelings are tagged to the blacks (368–370). Jojo felt happy when he got opportunity to have his higher education in America. He dreamt of America as a land of opportunities, freedom, democracy and equality for all.

But the University ill treated him as he felt inferior by getting the alms of the Superior (University). Thus, the system of ambivalence constructs the binary beliefs

and makes the minority groups internalise the feel that they are inferior. Jojo could realise the impose of the bias humiliating the self. The social categorisation of us and them forms the basement for the institutional racism. Jojo's academic excellence was not recognised rather he was ill treated for being black and was also threatened as he was receiving education from them. The education institution instilled the disparities and forced Jojo and other students to apologise. They could not even think of making a change. The students could not voice out as they were under the threat of expulsion. By stating so, the university dominates and sustains their power thereby creating the illusion of black as inferior.

Jojo went to Barcelona to attend his Language classes along with his peer students from various nations and in the airport all the passports were easily scrutinised except Jojo's. At the London's Heathrow Airport "my luggage was subjected to a criminal's scrutiny" (Kwakyee 123). He observed that none of his American colleagues were questioned. Kwakyee points out the systemic factors that structures and maintains the racial bias privileging the white and suppressing the blacks. The ideology of celebrating the whiteness and degrading the other makes the invisible chain to pass onto the socio- psychological construct. This construct is achieved by the power who frames the norms and principles of what is acceptable. Things that fit under the frames of the dominant group sets the norms as standard, civilised, good and the belief of the non-dominant group gets automatically suppressed, marginalised, inferior, savage, bad and so on. The ideology of the power constructs the base of the racist notions and keeps on humiliating and suppressing the others to sustain their power and dominance. Thompson and Neville call racism as ideology which inculcates "ideas about race and race relations, which serve to protect the status quo... the system of racial domination in which racial minorities experience institutional discrimination" (165).

Jojo fell in love with a white American girl Norah. Norah too loved Jojo. But the societal structures began to wag their accusatory voices. When Jojo was walkinh by holding the hand of Nora, one of the voices shouted at Nora "Have you been black all your life?" (92). Jojo was advised by the peer black men to break up with the white girl and to find a black girl. He felt too hard to understand the role of race in love affairs. Jojo explained to Norah that he was black and she was white and there was much

dividing forum between them. “Every time we step out it’s as if we are being observed and judged” (Kwakyé 98). Jojo did not have the courage to question racial discrimination and so he ended his love with Nora. “The normative cultural characterization of the superiority of whiteness and the devaluation of blackness (or people of Color), combined with economic marginality... can lead to self-perceptions of worthlessness and powerlessness” (Neighbours and Williams 112). Thus, Jojo felt powerless in the racist world. The internalised racism made him marry a black woman. He concludes by stating,

I was denied access to basic things because I was the wrong colour, of the denial of basic decency because of the colour of my skin, of the discrimination that denies a man his humanity on the basis of his skin pigmentation...denial, mockery and suppression of humanity and a continuing dehydration of the wells of justice by powers that believe perfectly legitimate that one group, by the distinction of different colour. (Kwakyé 187–88).

Kwakyé has depicted the sufferings and trauma of the people under racial discrimination through the life struggles of his protagonists. The research study has unfurled how the colour of black is perceived in society and how the access is denied in the label of racial discrimination. The study has brought to limelight the racism that is embedded through institutional racism, structuring and systemising the norms of society. The study has also pinpointed the crucial role of power in fabricating the thread of race to sustain the status quo.

The continual existence of racial disparities in society is discussed and the research tries to uncover the hidden powers that manipulate the inequalities. Even though the racial disparities cannot be eliminated or wiped out completely, researches could minimise the effect or reduce the categorisation of human race by presenting the impacts to them. There is a plenty of scope for the future researchers as equality to humanity is divinity and precious too.

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LEDA'S RELEVANCE: FROM MYTH TO THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD**A. Anto Crisphina**

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Abstract

The twenty-first century has already seen so many incredible advancements. Although women are improving in every aspect of life, they are still assaulted by men and abused women are blamed as victims. Molesting arises from the Greek Mythology. The Greek God Zeus was hooked on physical violence. It was recited as a melancholy song “Leda and the Swan” by William Butler Yeats. The fourteen-line sonnet portrays the agony of a helpless woman, Leda. No justice for harassment acts is persuading abusive men to do so. Here comes the gender bias with the stereotype that women are the weaker sex. But not every man is addicted to physical temptation. Most of them are protecting women. This paper attempts to dissect the portrayal of masculine physical power over women and analyses how to control this horrifying crime.

Keywords: Gender bias, Abusive men, Victim Blame and Greek mythology

According to Greek mythology, the Greek God Zeus disguised himself as a swan and raped Leda. As stated by Ovid, Leda was famed for her beautiful hair and snowy skin. Leda married Tyndareus, the king of Sparta. Zeus was captivated by the beauty of Leda. He appeared as a swan showing his idiosyncrasies. The double-egged Leda gave birth to Helen of Troy and Clytemnestra. Yeats explored the retelling of this Greek mythology in his sonnet “Leda and the Swan”. Clytemnestra is Agamemnon's wife as well as a murderess. Helen and Clytemnestra destroyed Greek civilization. If Leda was blessed by Zeus, their daughters will be sacred, not cursed. Mother Mary was blessed because Jesus Christ was born. It was also recited by Yeats in one of his Annunciation poems “The Mother of God”. William Butler Yeats belonged to the Anglo-Irish Protestant minority in the predominantly Catholic Ireland. Yeats believed in certain patterns of history. The most important of these was the "gyres" interpenetrating cones representing mixtures of opposites of both a personal and historical nature. A gyre

begins with the divine pregnancy of a mortal woman first, the rape of Leda by Zeus; later the immaculate conception of Mary.

This work “Leda and the Swan” demonstrated that victim blaming happened to Leda also. Leda turned out to be a cursed woman and Mary was praised by people as Virgin Mary. So Leda was affected a lot because of the Greek God Zeus.

“ A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs
caressed By the dark webs, her nape caught
in his bill, He holds her helpless breast upon
his breast.”

The logical reason behind the Greek God disguised himself as a swan was that he wanted to go down into the water because Leda was taking a bath at that moment. Zeus had a great sexual desire for Leda. Leda got to know the sudden blow of the swan and she was deeply astonished. The power of the swan was more intense. When Zeus started cuddling her thighs and clutching her throat with the swan's lips, it seemed that the swan was about to rape her with the power of a lion. Thenceforth Zeus puts his breast on Leda's breast. The breast is a sacred part of a woman's body. Breast resembles a woman's motherhood. Yet Zeus lustfully saw her breast. In the fourth line, Zeus considered her breast only as flesh and continued his physical violence. The Greek God did not even contemplate her breast pain because of his physical temptation.

Seducing is very popular in Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and The Jewel*. He beautifully contrasts the physical abuse and verbal abuse. The title of the play depicts two characters. They belong to the village of Ilunjile. The ‘Lion’ represents the African King Baroka and the ‘Jewel’ is a village bale Sidi. Baroka was captivated by the beauty of Sidi. Baroka is a married sixty two-year-old man. He has many wives, concubines and sixty-three children. Sidi is a young woman who is more conscious of her beauty. Another character, Lakunle is a village schoolmaster who wants to marry Sidi. The novel opens with the village schoolmaster convincing Sidi to marry him but Lakunle started admiring her body.

How often must I tell you, Sidi, that / A grown-up girl must cover up her...
/ Her...shoulders? I can see quite... quite/ A good portion of —that!

Here he mentions "A good portion" which is all about Sidi's front portion. Her

breast, shoulder and neck. Though Lakunle did not seduce Sidi physically, he assaulted her verbally. It is also an abuse. Baroka was fascinated by Sidi's beauty when he saw her picture in the magazine. At first, he stared at her and then he desperately wanted to seduce Sidi. So Laura Mulvey's term male gaze can be applied to Baroka. Laura Mulvey's *Visual Pleasure And Narrative Cinema* reinforces the male ego and turns women into objects. In this book, Mulvey addresses the male gaze on women. Without touching a person who is gazing at women is also abuse.

The same thing applies to Lakunle. He admired Sidi's physical appearance. It shows his disrespectfulness towards women. Baroka portrayed himself as impotent and convinced her to marry. That is a big lie. At last, she lost her life and turned into a victim of blame. There is no loss for both Baroka and Lakunle. This was beautifully mentioned by Samuel Richardson. He created a character called Pamela in his epistolary novel *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*. The fictional character Pamela was very much aware of her virtue.

“O how can wicked men seem so steady and untouched with such black hearts, while poor innocents stand like male factors before them!”

Pamela is a fifteen-year-old maidservant. When her mistress dies, Pamela gets an unusual proposition. The son of the mistress, Mr.B tries to seduce Pamela but she resists strongly. So Mr.B kidnapped Pamela and attempted to rape her. Mr.B presumes that he can take Pamela at any time. She repeatedly refused him and told that she would remain immaculate. In this novel, Pamela opened her eyes and escaped from all the attempts of rape. Yet in “*The Lion And The Jewel*” Sidi, an innocent young girl lost her life. Many educated women are also facing harassment in their real lives.

In Nirbhaya case, Six Indian men executed for 2012 Delhi bus rape and murder. Nirbhaya means courageous. A twenty-three-year-old physiotherapy student was dubbed as Nirbhaya. She was brutally assaulted and raped in a moving bus in South Delhi on the cold night of December 16, 2012. Nirbhaya and her male best friend were returning home in a bus after watching a night show. The bus started moving in a misdirected route and the men shut the doors of the vehicle. Four men on the bus

knocked down Nirbhaya's friend with a rod and started molesting her repeatedly for over an hour. As she fought back, one of the abusive men inserted an iron rod into her private parts. The bus driver drove the bus all over Delhi. After the attack, both of them were thrown out of the bus. The two were found half-dead by a passerby who informed the Delhi Police. She was taken to the hospital. Before she died, she asked for justice. This shows the ferociousness of the physical temptation.

Meena Alexander's novel *Nampally Road* depicts the real life of a woman. Nampally Road is located in Hyderabad, India. The book *Nampally Road* emphasises the real incident of a gang rape of a married woman. Rameeza Begum who was walking with her husband after watching a night show was raped by the drunken police officers in the Nampally Road. A small crowd of people agitated to save her but very soon, many are quickly arrested and carried off in the black vans by the reserve police. Rameeza was declared a source of turbulence. The student leaders, workers and some intellectuals were also arrested. There arises the question on for women's safety in this twenty-first century. As stated in Greek mythology, Leda has all kinds of similarities with Rameeza Begum. They both were brutally attacked by abusive men.

Women are continuously getting affected. To discuss what happened on August 9, the morning the body of a thirty-one-year-old postgraduate trainee doctor was found in the Kolkata hospital's seminar hall is painful and shameful. "All our dreams have been shattered in a single night" said the father of the young trainee doctor who was brutally raped and murdered. The father's mourning depicts his great loss. So there is no safety for women in any institution or organization. So the abused women who all have different names can be labelled as Leda.

Albert Einstein says, "Intellectuals solve problems geniuses prevent them." People can guide one another but the change comes from the bottom of the heart. Sex education will raise awareness and help to stop these crimes. Sometimes, the right men are also labelled as abusive men because of their gender. Generalising that men are abusive is a misconception. At the same time, victim blaming is also totally wrong. So the physical temptation is misleading women through prostitution. Both the genders were created to explore the world. People should focus on moral values.

The victims failed to show love and kindness towards the opposite gender. Not only the victims but also those who are empathetic towards the victims will hate the specific gender. This brings a misconceptual society. Prevention starts with parenthood. Parents should teach their sons to respect women and should focus on moral values. It will help to create a better society.

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GROWING OLDER, STAYING YOUNGER: THE TIMELESS MAGIC OF INNER VITALITY

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Abstract

Aging is a natural and inevitable process, but the secret to maintaining youthfulness lies not just in physical health but also in mental and emotional vitality. This paper explores the concept of "inner vitality" and how it contributes to a youthful spirit, even as we grow older. By examining the psychological and social factors that influence how we age, this study highlights the importance of purpose, passion, relationships, and a positive mind-set in maintaining youthfulness. The findings suggest that while aging is unavoidable, the quality of our mental and emotional health plays a crucial role in how youthful we feel and appear.

Key words: Spiritual connection, Altruism, Mental agility, Emotional resilience, Lifelong learning.

Introduction

Aging is a universal experience, yet how we age varies significantly from person to person. While the physical signs of aging are apparent, the differences in how individuals feel about aging and how they maintain their vitality are subtler and complex. Inner vitality, defined as a sense of energy, enthusiasm, and purpose in life, plays a critical role in how people perceive aging and how they maintain a youthful spirit. This paper seeks to explore the factors that contribute to inner vitality and how these factors can help individuals stay young at heart, despite the passage of time.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the concept of inner vitality and its significance in the aging process.
2. To identify the key factors that contribute to maintaining a youthful spirit.
3. To analyse the psychological, emotional, and social dimensions that influence how we age.

4. To provide practical insights on how individuals can cultivate inner vitality to stay young at heart.

Statement of the Problem

As people age, they often face physical, emotional, and psychological challenges that can diminish their sense of youthfulness and vitality. The problem this study addresses is the need to understand the factors that can help individuals maintain a sense of youthfulness and inner vitality, even as they age. This includes exploring how attitudes, lifestyle choices, and social connections contribute to a person's ability to stay young at heart, despite the inevitable aging process.

Review of Literature

The concept of aging has been widely studied across disciplines, from biology to psychology. Research indicates that while genetic factors play a role in how we age, environmental, psychological, and social factors are equally, if not more, influential in determining our sense of vitality as we age.

❖ Psychological Factors

Studies have shown that a positive outlook on life, resilience, and a sense of purpose are strongly correlated with longevity and a youthful spirit. Individuals who maintain an optimistic mind-set and find meaning in their daily activities tend to experience fewer negative effects of aging.

❖ Social Connections

Social ties are another critical component of aging well. Strong social relationships are linked to a longer life and greater well-being. Loneliness and isolation, on the other hand, are associated with negative health outcomes and a diminished sense of vitality.

❖ Life style Choices

Physical activity, healthy eating, and engaging in mentally stimulating activities have been shown to support both physical and mental health in older adults. These lifestyle factors are essential in maintaining not only physical vitality but also a youthful state of mind.

1. The concept of inner vitality and its significance in the aging process

The concept of inner vitality refers to an individual's mental, emotional, and physical energy, resilience, and overall sense of well-being. In the context of aging, **inner vitality** plays a crucial role in maintaining a high quality of life, as it encompasses the ability to adapt to the changes and challenges that come with growing older.

- ❖ **Mental and Emotional Resilience:** Inner vitality includes a strong mental and emotional foundation. This resilience helps older adults manage stress, maintain positive relationships, and engage in meaningful activities, all of which contribute to a healthier aging process.
- ❖ **Physical Health and Energy:** While aging naturally brings physical decline, maintaining inner vitality involves regular physical activity, proper nutrition, and a positive outlook, which can help sustain energy levels and reduce the impact of age-related health issues.
- ❖ **Spiritual and Psychological Well-being:** Inner vitality also touches on the psychological and spiritual dimensions of life. Exploring a sense of purpose, connection with others, and mindfulness practices can enhance one's sense of vitality as they age.
- ❖ **Significance in Aging:** Research indicates that inner vitality is a significant factor in successful aging. Those who cultivate inner vitality tend to experience slower cognitive decline, reduced risk of chronic diseases, and a greater sense of life satisfaction, despite the challenges of aging.
- ❖ **Strategies for Enhancing Inner Vitality:** The article could also explore practical strategies that promote inner vitality, such as engaging in lifelong learning, practicing mindfulness, fostering social connections, and adopting a proactive approach to health and well-being.

2. The key factors that contribute to maintaining a youthful spirit

Maintaining a youthful spirit as one ages involves more than just physical health; it encompasses mental, emotional, and social well-being. Identifying the **key factors** that contribute to this vibrant state of mind can help individuals remain engaged, curious, and resilient throughout their lives.

- ❖ **Positive Mind-set and Attitude:** A positive outlook on life is essential for maintaining a youthful spirit. Embracing change, cultivating gratitude, and focusing on the present moment can help individuals remain mentally agile and emotionally balanced, no matter their age.
- ❖ **Lifelong Learning and Curiosity:** Staying intellectually engaged through continuous learning, exploring new hobbies, and challenging oneself can keep the mind sharp and foster a sense of excitement and purpose. Curiosity about the world promotes a youthful mind-set.
- ❖ **Social Connections and Relationships:** Strong, meaningful relationships with family, friends, and the community are vital. Social engagement prevents isolation, fosters a sense of belonging, and provides emotional support, all of which contribute to maintaining a youthful spirit.
- ❖ **Physical Activity and Health:** Regular physical exercise not only supports physical health but also boosts mental well-being. Activities that promote flexibility, strength, and endurance can enhance vitality and keep the body and mind feeling young.
- ❖ **Sense of Purpose and Fulfillment:** Having a sense of purpose—whether through work, volunteering, creative pursuits, or spiritual practices—gives life meaning. It keeps individuals motivated and engaged, providing a reason to wake up each day with enthusiasm.
- ❖ **Adaptability and Resilience:** The ability to adapt to life's changes and bounce back from setbacks is a key factor in maintaining a youthful spirit. Developing resilience helps individuals approach challenges with confidence and optimism.
- ❖ **Playfulness and Humour:** A playful attitude and the ability to find joy in small moments are often overlooked but essential aspects of a youthful spirit. Humour helps alleviate stress and encourages a light-hearted approach to life.
- ❖ **By identifying and fostering these factors,** individuals can cultivate a youthful spirit that transcends the physical aspects of aging, allowing them to live with energy, enthusiasm, and a sense of wonder throughout their lives.

3. Exploring the psychological, emotional, and social factors that shape the aging process.

Analysing the psychological, emotional, and social dimensions that influence how we age provides a comprehensive understanding of the aging process beyond just the physical aspects. These dimensions play a critical role in shaping the quality of life, mental health, and overall well-being as individuals grow older.

a. Psychological Dimensions:

- **Cognitive Health and Functioning:** Cognitive abilities, including memory, attention, and problem-solving, often change with age. Factors such as mental stimulation, lifelong learning, and cognitive exercises can influence how well individuals maintain cognitive health. Analysing how attitudes towards aging and mental agility affect the aging process is essential.
- **Sense of Identity and Self-Perception:** How individuals perceive themselves as they age can significantly impact their psychological well-being. A positive self-image, acceptance of aging, and a strong sense of identity can enhance life satisfaction and reduce anxiety or depression associated with aging.
- **Resilience and Coping Mechanisms:** Psychological resilience—the ability to cope with stress, loss, and change—affects how individuals navigate the challenges of aging. Analysing how resilience develops and its impact on mental health and aging outcomes is crucial.

b. Emotional Dimensions:

- **Emotional Regulation:** The ability to manage and regulate emotions tends to improve with age for many people. However, understanding how emotional stability influences overall well-being and the ability to handle life's transitions can provide insights into healthy aging.
- **Mental Health:** Emotional well-being is closely tied to mental health. Anxiety, depression, and loneliness are common concerns as people age. Analysing the factors that contribute to or mitigate these emotional challenges can reveal strategies for promoting emotional health.

- **Life Satisfaction and Happiness:** The pursuit of happiness and fulfillment doesn't end with age. Analysing what brings joy, contentment, and life satisfaction in later years—such as relationships, hobbies, or spiritual practices—can highlight important emotional dimensions of aging.

c. Social Dimensions:

- **Social Support Networks:** Social connections are vital for healthy aging. Strong relationships with family, friends, and communities provide emotional support, reduce feelings of loneliness, and contribute to overall life satisfaction. Analysing the role of social networks in the aging process can shed light on the importance of maintaining connections.
- **Community Engagement and Participation:** Staying involved in community activities, volunteering, and other forms of social participation can enhance the sense of purpose and belonging. The social dimension of aging includes understanding how community involvement influences overall well-being.
- **Cultural and Societal Attitudes:** Societal views on aging and the roles assigned to older adults can influence how individuals experience aging. Analysing cultural attitudes and their impact on the self-perception of aging individuals can reveal important insights into the social dynamics of aging.
- By examining these psychological, emotional, and social dimensions, the analysis can provide a holistic view of aging, highlighting how interconnected these factors are and how they collectively influence the aging process. This understanding can lead to more effective strategies for promoting healthy and fulfilling aging experiences.
- **Cultivating inner vitality to stay young at heart** involves nurturing the mind, body, and spirit in ways that promote resilience, joy, and a sense of purpose. Practical insights can guide individuals in developing habits and mind-sets that contribute to maintaining a youthful outlook and a vibrant life, regardless of age.

4. Practical Insights for Cultivating Inner Vitality:

➤ **Adopt a Growth Mind-set:**

- Embrace challenges and view them as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles. Staying curious, learning new skills, and being open to change can keep the mind sharp and engaged.
- Regularly engage in activities that stimulate the brain, such as reading, puzzles, or learning a new language or hobby.

➤ **Prioritize Physical Well-being:**

- Engage in regular physical exercise that you enjoy, such as walking, swimming, or yoga. Exercise boosts energy levels, improves mood, and supports overall health.
- Pay attention to nutrition by eating a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains. Proper hydration and sleep are also essential for maintaining physical vitality.

➤ **Foster Emotional Resilience:**

- Practice mindfulness and meditation to stay grounded and manage stress effectively. Developing emotional awareness and practicing gratitude can help maintain a positive outlook on life.
- Surround yourself with positivity by cultivating relationships with people who inspire and uplift you. A strong support system can help you navigate life's ups and downs.

➤ **Stay Socially Connected:**

- Maintain strong social ties by staying connected with family, friends, and community groups. Social interactions provide emotional support, reduce feelings of loneliness, and enhance life satisfaction.
- Participate in group activities or volunteer work that aligns with your interests. This not only strengthens your social network but also adds meaning and purpose to your life.

➤ **Engage in Creative and Playful Activities:**

- Incorporate playfulness into your daily life through creative activities, hobbies, or spontaneous fun. Whether it's painting, playing a musical instrument, or engaging in games, creativity fosters joy and mental flexibility.

- Allow yourself to experience laughter and humour. Finding moments of light-heartedness can help keep your spirit youthful and reduce stress.

➤ **Cultivate a Sense of Purpose:**

- Identify what gives your life meaning and pursue activities that align with your passions and values. Whether through work, volunteering, or personal projects, having a sense of purpose can invigorate your daily routine.
- Set goals, both big and small, that challenge you and provide a sense of accomplishment. Achieving goals, even modest ones, reinforces a sense of vitality and progress.

➤ **Practice Gratitude and Positivity:**

- Focus on the positive aspects of life by keeping a gratitude journal or simply reflecting on the things you are thankful for each day. Gratitude can shift your mind-set toward appreciation and joy.
- Develop the habit of reframing negative situations into opportunities for growth and learning. A positive mind-set can help maintain emotional balance and reduce the impact of stress.

➤ **Embrace Lifelong Learning:**

- Keep your mind active by pursuing lifelong learning opportunities, whether through formal education, online courses, or self-directed study. Expanding your knowledge can keep you mentally agile and engaged with the world around you.
- By integrating these practices into daily life, individuals can cultivate inner vitality, leading to a youthful, energetic, and fulfilling existence. Staying young at heart is not about denying age but about embracing life with enthusiasm, curiosity, and resilience.

Findings

The study finds that inner vitality, fostered through purpose, passion, positive relationships, and a growth mind-set, plays a critical role in maintaining a youthful spirit. These factors contribute not only to better emotional and psychological health but also to physical well-being, suggesting that a holistic approach to aging can help individuals stay young at heart. The findings underscore the importance of cultivating a

lifestyle that prioritizes mental, emotional, and social well-being as key to preserving inner vitality.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the psychological, emotional, and social aspects of aging, emphasizing the role of inner vitality in maintaining youthfulness. While the study primarily addresses individuals in their midlife and older years, the principles of cultivating inner vitality are applicable across all age groups. The study is limited by its focus on subjective well-being and does not delve into medical or biological aspects of aging.

Conclusion

Aging is a natural part of life, but how we experience aging is influenced by our mental, emotional, and social health. Inner vitality, nurtured through purpose, passion, positive relationships, and a growth mind-set, is key to staying young at heart. By focusing on these aspects, individuals can maintain a sense of youthfulness and vitality, regardless of their chronological age. Embracing these principles can lead to a more fulfilling and joyful experience of aging.

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