

REFLECTIONS



Edited by
P. SIDHIQUE

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KorambayilAhamed Haji Memorial

Unity Women's College, Manjeri

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FOREWORD

Joining the academic dialogues, through publishing, adds to the research index of any institution. Researchers come up with new assertions, observations, coinages, evaluations and concepts through that the widening of knowledge community occurs, which is envisaged as a pioneering aspect of knowledge dissemination and transfer of knowledge. I believe that, by giving opportunity for young and emerging academic groups to grow and flourish through their own ways of doing with English Language and Literature, the institution contributes to an academic continuum. Though the easier access to academic works, faster publication and the era of open access publishing have altogether changed the reading and publishing scenario on one hand, the very idea of bringing young minds to the sharing of their research thoughts has its own dimensions with regard to a teaching department in higher education institution. *Reflections* is published in connection with the thirtieth anniversary celebration of KAHM Unity Women's College, Manjeri. It carries contemporary responses to texts-literary, visual and cultural. It will be a critical reading experience to any serious reader in general and students of literature and cultural studies in particular. Moreover, by bringing an edited book of students and alumnae of the department, we aim to cultivate an academic culture that can amplify research and critical engagement among our stakeholders. We believe that a culture of careful and systematic examination of texts and contexts should exist. Department of humanities and languages must channelize it to preserve democracy and lives. The book contains eight chapters with contemporary reading, analysis and revision of various texts.

The book will open up new discourses in the field of literature and culture studies. It can improve the research inquiry and critical outlook of the readers. I congratulate the editor of the book Mr. Sidhique. P., Assistant Professor of English at K. A.H.M Unity Women's College, Manjeri and all the contributors too. Join the research. Your reading will take the research questions into larger contexts.

Dr. Shahina Mol A. K.

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MIRRORED IMAGES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF *BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE* AND *EK VILLAIN*

Ms. Neelima

ABSTRACT:

Batman: The Killing Joke, published in 1988, occupies a special place in the comic canon for it puts forth an origin story for the superhero's arch nemesis, the Joker. Released in 2014, *Ek Villain* is a typical Bollywood film, with a reformed mobster seeking revenge for the death of his beloved. What, if any is the connecting link between these very different stories? This paper attempts to trace the common factors connecting the two tales. The Hero is a powerful agent operating within the discourse in both cases, always in conflict with the othered villain. Violence is conceived as the consequence of this othering. While the two stories can be considered mirror images of one another, neither suggests a probable solution to stabilise the structure in question.

Considered one of the best Batman stories of all time, *The Killing Joke* is iconic for several reasons. Ambiguous in word and image, the comic is nevertheless notorious for its origin stories; the birth of an Oracle at the expense of the leading lady denies the woman in question an agency while the Joker's purported origin as the failed comedian humanises an otherwise mythical construct, placing the antagonist within the realm of reason and sane logic. The final confrontation between the masked vigilante and his arch-nemesis discloses the co-dependency defining the nature of their relationship, where killing one would mean an end to the Other.

When Sudhish Kamath writing for *The Hindu* titled his review of the 2014 Mohit Suri directorial "Ek Villain: Ek Joke", he wasn't alluding to the more popular comic. Instead, the critic was pointing out the many shortcomings of *Ek Villain*, a revenge thriller which oscillates between romance and horror quite so often in the narrative. The tale of a reformed criminal going rogue in pursuit of vengeance, the film has its protagonist confront a serial killer who insists they are different parts of the same coin. Rakesh Mahadkar, the killer in question, murders his victims in an act of transference. Constant humiliation at work and home front exacerbates the character's homicidal rage. He then goes on a killing spree, picturing his wife in the several

women who have been rude to him. Mahadkar collects souvenirs after every successful kill; this includes jewelry he gifts his wife.

Katherine Ramsland in “Shame and the Serial Killer” notes the persistence of humiliation as a motivator influencing the behavioral patterns of at least some of the serial killers convicted in the present era. Mahadkar’s double life considered as the result of a life lived in shame could accommodate similar discourses. The few breadcrumbs thrown in by Suri however are insufficient to make a proper diagnosis; Rakesh Mahadkar is the villain without a past. Nevertheless he identifies with the antihero of the story and effects a reconciliation between the latter’s past and future. In the final fight sequence which is replete with images, including a broken mirror, the villain claims kinship with the hero, though his reasoning is particularly vague.

The Killing Joke is built around the Joker’s conviction that the sane man is an unreasonable construct. While he attempts to discredit the morale of established order by manipulating Commissioner Gordon, his muse is always Batman. The running time of the comic is centered around his determination to bring Batman up to par with his madness. This is different from the cat and mouse chase that takes up the latter part of *Ek Villain*, where power and fear set the tone of the characters’ exchange. Revenge and redemption are the movie’s central concerns and the characters’ motives are personal and articulate, unlike the ambiguity steeping each word and image in *The Killing Joke*. Concluding panels of the comic underscore the absurdity of existence while the thriller ends on a note of hope for the future. The meaningless state of chaos characteristic of the former seems incompatible with the pollyannaish optimism of the latter. It would therefore seem bold to assume the two works as mirror images of one another. A close reading of the structural intricacies of the texts however yields interesting results.

The origin of the supposed heroes would be a convenient point to begin this discussion. Eric Doise in his reading of *The Killing Joke* considers the random conditions that led to the birth of Batman, elaborating on the unreasonable nature of his quest. His privileged and philanthropic upbringing plays a crucial role in the young Bruce Wayne’s adoption of vigilante justice. While Christina Dhanasekaran conceives Gotham City as a spatial extension of ethical and moral deliberations, it is also possible to conceive the city as a probable surrogate occupying the void qualifying the existence of Batman. The birth of Batman, on initial perusal seems to

parallel the rise of Guru, the protagonist of *Ek Villain*, from innocent boyhood to a life of crime and violence.

The former occupies a position of power and responsibility in his society as the heir of Wayne Enterprises. Young Bruce is forced to shape his vendetta around the weight the role brings into the equation. The perceived sense of 'greatness', a consequence of this positioning, also elevates the scope of redress. Batman as an overseer of law and order is above personal paybacks. The latter's predicament situates him on the opposite end of the spectrum. Helpless and powerless, the little boy has to wait for his foster father to bring Justice home. Caesar, the crime boss 'empowers' the hero while moulding him into an ideal version of himself.

But the 'actual' transition begins much later, towards the tail end of the story. While the veiled vigilante has the entire city under his wings, the erstwhile villain's redemption is particularly personal. Aisha's death is the real turning point in *Ek Villain* not because it brings the villain within the hero's field of vision; it is the bloody event trigger starting the antihero's transition, this time 'real'. Her death and his suffering qualifies Guru, who has evolved as an individual. As a helpless little boy witness to his parents' murder, he is once again caught unawares, this time listening in while his wife is assaulted before being pushed to death.

Once fiercely loyal to his mentor to the point of being suicidal and apathetic, this time around he doesn't hesitate to pull a gun on the father figure; the first indication that Guru has changed. The flashback sequence opening a portal to the antihero's past has the very disturbing image of a crying mother dragged along on her knees. She begs the protagonist to spare her son, only to see him go up in flames moments later. The lack of empathy displayed in this scene is unsettling and is part of what made him the protege of the crime boss. Caesar has no qualms seeing Guru disintegrating what is supposed to be his people; instead he invites the young man back into his lair straight from his beloved wife's pyre. While he goes on to engrave himself deeper into the narrative, murdering the serial killer's wife in cold blood, Guru in deciding to spare the young son chooses to deviate.

The quest for vengeance further signifies the growth of the character as an individual. While he had his parents' murderers handed out to him bound and helpless, as prime targets for initiation by the father figure, the solitary hunt for Rakesh is set at his own pace. While the game of chase is power play for Mahadkar, it evolves into something quite different

for the antihero. The parallels between Batman and Joker at this point in the narrative is hard to overlook. In both cases the villain intends to provoke the hero to kill.

While Batman is worried about the implications of this possibility from the very beginning of *The Killing Joke*, Guru confronts the dilemma only for a brief moment in time. Batman confronts the Joker after the latter has paralysed Barbara and tortured the old Gordon in an attempt to drive him insane. The Commissioner's resilience is meant to empower Wayne to make the 'right' decision. Guru, on the other hand, confronts Mahadkar after the law has given up on him. He is primed to die, having destroyed the hero's one last connection to the dead wife.

The protagonist is at an impasse here, as killing the villain would mean immortalising him. Eliminating him would also mean denying his dead wife her purpose. The death of his father-in-law as collateral damage from their previous encounter looms over Guru, complicating the decision making. It is at this point that Suri decides to play the fate card, framing the serial killer's death as an accident. The arc is complete with the hero choosing to adopt the villain's orphaned son. In a re-enactment of the hero's past, Guru finds the little boy huddled beneath furniture and chooses not to kill. While the flashback sequence has him hesitating to hurt the enemy's brother under similar circumstances, the decisive 'no' makes the difference. Putting the gun down is symbolic for the character has decided to eschew violence once and for all. He has finally crossed over, ironically fulfilling Aisha's last wish. The origin of the Dark Knight seems simple enough in comparison.

The little boy is Guru's personal Gotham. Ending the film on a high note, the director seems to have glossed over the implications of this little detail. Dhanasekaran in her reading of *The Killing Joke*, analysing the role of space and use of images, situates Arkham Asylum within Gotham City as the "little anarchy that upsets the established order" (31). While the asylum for the criminally insane can be conceived as a microcosm of the bigger city, it can also be said to contain within what can be termed the 'insane' elements of ordered society. While questioning the existence of sanity outside the Asylum's gates, Dhanasekaran in her reading analyses the space Gotham occupies in Batman's narrative. While Gotham seems to be a part of Batman, influencing and determining his existence as part of the structure, the little boy is but a reflection of Guru, the reformed villain. While Batman seeks to correct the order gone wrong, Guru is provided an opportunity to salvage the future by preventing history from repeating itself.

The masked vigilante's hope for a better world is thwarted at least in *The Killing Joke*. With the Joker negating any attempt at a compromise, the Batman is forced to confront his predicament. The villain would keep unleashing mayhem until and unless he is contained permanently. In contrast, *Ek Villain* ends with the protagonist chasing peacocks with the adopted boy and cracking jokes to cheer him up; a nod to the optimism of the dead wife. While the ending seems picture perfect, it leaves much to be desired. The young orphan had grown up in an abusive household; he is seen offering God his favourite toys in an attempt to strike a bargain to keep home life peaceful. The mother's frequent fits, father's accident and subsequent police and media scrutiny is bound to unsettle the young mind. To exacerbate an already difficult upbringing, his personal space is invaded by rogues. With the mother shot dead in front of his eyes and both parents out of the picture, there is no question of the trauma the series of events might unfold. The smiling child is a fanciful concoction much like Batman's reasonable world as pointed out by Doise. It does succeed however in creating an illusion of purpose in an otherwise meaningless array of chaos.

While the hero's origin story appears to follow a seemingly coherent structure in *The Killing Joke*, the villain's tale and their fateful confrontation is another story. A comparison would find the film lacking in what can be argued to be a case of lateral inversion. The Joker's ambiguous backstory is established as the consequence of a series of unfortunate events. Doise in his analysis considers the veracity of these impressions. While the Joker claims to often misremember his past, Doise takes the string of events into consideration while reading into the relationship between the archenemies. When considered alongside Mahadkar, the sequence provides quite a few parallels.

Both men struggle to fit in what is conceived as a persecuting system and aspires to please. The women in both cases are represented as emasculating agents, downplaying the identity of the male agents. Sulochana's hold over the household is established even before the character is introduced. The nameplate only bears the wife's name, establishing her position in the discourse. She berates the husband for failing to provide for the family, a far cry from Jeannie, the struggling comedian's pregnant wife. He is nevertheless restless, reading into her exclamations and their homeowner's looks. Rakesh aspires to be employee of the month but has no idea how to go about it, unlike his friend Brijesh who fakes it with ease. The desire to please, impress and make a mark is presented as the root cause of all problems, with the characters

finding it difficult to compromise their individuality for the sake of recognition. The Joker's tale is particularly painful for unlike Rakesh, he had taken a gamble, giving up his steady job for a career in entertainment. For a man weary of people, his choice of a dream job is peculiar and appears hopeless. In both cases the 'weak point' serves as the qualifying agent signifying success within the structure. The wives assume their roles as initiators satisfying the partners' urge to be recognised. Any talk of sex in this context is discomfiting. Sulochana derides the act of intimacy berating Rakesh for getting her with child. Jeannie's attempt at humour, describing her husband as 'good in the sack' has the opposite effect.

Doise notes how after his first and fatal encounter with Batman, the Joker becomes one with his mask. With the death of the woman figure who is supposed to espouse sanity, the Joker is free to finally run amok. The chemical vat only has symbolic significance in the narrative and is not a causative agent in itself. In Mahadkar's case the weak point is eliminated only at the very end of his confrontation with Guru. Hence while the Joker is enabled to embrace his madness as a free agent of disorder, Mahadkar is restricted by the structure. In a way the Joker resonates with Batman and wants the latter to give up his quest for meaning. While Mahadkar wants Guru to kill him, it is but to be recognised by the order. Rakesh masks himself when confronting his victims while the Joker basks in the attention his infamy brings. The former lacks the authenticity of the latter.

Dhanasekaran's take on the placement of 'mirrors' within the narrative of *The Killing Joke* underscores this difference. Mirrors placed conveniently around the panels reflect the comic's major contention, that Batman and Joker are two sides of the same coin. She assimilates the suggestions put forth by the reflections at various points to build her argument. The symbolism in *Ek Villain* falls short in this regard. While there is a mirror scene comparing and contrasting the villain and hero during their final confrontation, Mahadkar's reasoning waters down its significance. He reasons that the both of them (the hero and the villain) are essentially the same for they kill for the sake of the women in their lives. While his argument fails to convince, it brings into perspective one particular element crucial to the narrative. The hero is the living embodiment of what the villain had always aspired to be.

Batman is a powerful force inducing awe and admiration. The Joker in attempting to claim kinship with the hero might be reflecting own desire to be accepted into the dominant discourse. Rakesh in attempting to break Guru into killing him is assuming the role of the lead in

the narrative, rejecting his status within the structure as an unassuming nonentity. He invades the hero's personal haven and recollects the wife's last words in a ritualistic enactment of role reversal. The Joker in undressing and clicking pictures of an injured Barbara is in effect violating the masked vigilante; he had no right to play the good guy after what he had been through. Batman's resilience seems to give him an edge over the psychopath, who intends to bring him down.

There is also the dichotomy of the two cops to be considered. Commissioner Gordon is the good cop, always playing by the book. His refusal to give in even after being made a spectacle of speaks for his belief in the system. But this can also be conceived as an unhealthy preoccupation. His inability to remove Joker out of the picture once and for all might, at least within the context of *The Killing Joke*, represent 'splitting'. He envisions Batman as virtue personified and cannot comprehend the hero committing the ultimate sin. The little scrapbook he rereads before the break in suggests the same. ACP Rathore is the bad cop in this equation. He identifies the flaws of the order he upholds and has a very flexible work ethics. While Gordon strives to maintain his objective stance even when singled out for the villain's experiment, Rathore lets his rage and revenge interfere with work. Even seeing his daughter violated Gordon is a stern believer in the order of things, while Rathore haunts Guru for his involvement with crime. Speaking of the police men slayed by Caesar, Rathore calls them his men. Both men does the 'right' thing for different reasons. Gordon's decision to rehabilitate the Joker is a result of his compulsions while Rathore's decision to persecute the serial killer is an acting out of personal grudge.

To kill or not to kill seems to be the central question here. The officer and vigilante joins hands to rehabilitate a certified psychopath in *The Killing Joke*. With the narrative acknowledging that the mad man is beyond help, the sanctity of the order will have to be breached at some point in the distant future, before the villain dismantles the framework beyond repair. This decision if and when it comes might have alarming consequences for all the parties involved; the believer, upholder and the Other. *Ek Villain* is a realisation of the ideal. Fate takes the decision to annihilate the Other out of the hero's hands and order is restored as the end result; improbable but desirable. Neither narrative is self contained, but together might have some semblance of stability, complementing each other.

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POLYMORPHOUS MAINTENANCE OF GENDER STEREOTYPES AND ITS RESTRUCTURING: A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The socio-cultural perspectives of any society have got huge impacts on stereotypes, especially gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes are like the parasite that grows on society. It is the same in every aspect of culture and tradition. The status of men and women is bound by the prevalent gender stereotypes. Gender is a social construct whereas sex is biological. From birth to death, the society teaches men and women some values that are to be followed. These are nurtured through various social institutions. Scientific discourses have proved that rather than the physical differences male and female are equal as far as their intellect and mental capabilities are considered. Still there exists gender-based stereotypes. Religiously speaking everyone is equal before the God. It can be seen that the gender stereotypes are well exercised through the family, education, media, advertisement, social media etc. While men enjoy all the privileges, women suffer the most. This chapter deals with a general analysis of polymorphous gender stereotypes with respect to Keralite society, examine the ways through that these stereotypes strengthen in the society and also looks at the possible ways of restructuring in the light of certain cultural texts.

Key words: Gender stereotypes, deconstruction, institutions, discrimination.

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United Nations' Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights reports: "A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women's and men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and/or make choices about their lives" (OHCHR 1). Gender stereotypes are exercised from the very early phase of human lives. If the new-born baby is a girl, she will be given toys like dolls, kitchen sets, dresses in pink etc. In the very early age itself, the girl child is injected with the thought that they should be confined to the four walls of a house, so that it becomes easy to play the traditional female home making role and remain

submissive for all the time keeping inequality and injustice unquestioned. “Discrimination against girl child and gender inequality in Indian Society is associated with the ethos of patriarchy, patriline and traditional gender stereotyping” (Bhadra 6). If it is a baby boy, he will be provided with the guns and cars and are groomed with masculine colors like blue in the very childhood itself. Elders always tell boys that “boys don’t cry”, which is also a kind of stereotyping that exerts more compulsion on boy child.

Boys are asked to lend a helping hand in marketing, going out and fetching things, escorting sisters etc. They can go for acquiring education without any limits. Men are always considered as the permanent and prominent members of family and inheritors of the family line. For that, they are taught to be masculine. Men who are interested in cooking, knitting, embroidery and other household chores hardly get any encouragement from the family members. It is a shameful act when views through the perspective of a society. In fact, men having such interests are branded as man with feminine traits and are ridiculed and discouraged to follow their dreams. Men are always the head of the family and even the society. They can be violent, uncompassionate, arrogant, and tough. No one argues about it. At this point, the power of the this socially constructed gender stereotypes are evident in the society and in the socio-cultural texts.

Men are also having certain compulsions to face in the life due to stereotyping and manly expectations from them. They are supposed to find a job, marry a girl, set up a family, make a home, setting the financial needs, work for the family accepting the burdens etc. It keeps on repeated. Whoever deconstructing these norms in the society are hardly accepted.

Female children are discriminated even before they are born, in the form of sex determination tests. The society practices this kind of high-tech atrocities through the amniocentesis. By female foeticide and female infanticide girl children are denied the life. According to a report published in national daily, approximately 1000 fetuses were destroyed in Delhi alone in 1991 of which near about 995 were female fetuses (Bhadra 71). In a chapter entitled “Subversive Bodily Acts” in her groundbreaking work *Gender Trouble* (1999), Butler terms both gender and sex as “enactments” operating performatively “to establish the appearance of bodily fixity” (qtd. in Mamona et al. 179)

There is a connection between the preference of son over girl, and the discrimination against girl child in the society. Girls are confined to do household works and are well trained for the future of marital relationship and child rearing. They are actually having no space of their own in their own home as well as in their husband’s home. They are being injected to maintain a good

behavior in their own home for their husbands' homes and in their husband's home they are supposed to act like servants without any payment, often. Here the state of being homeless in home is visible. They are not allowed to go out and do their needs on their own. Their education is limited. They are most often the victims of patriarchy and partiality. They are always ill treated. They can only enjoy the secondary status because of these existing social ideologies, value system and cultural ethos. They have no permanent roles and are trained to be serving, subjugating, sacrificing and obedient. They are objectified in the name of beauty. They are discriminated in education, clothing, nutrition, healthcare and general upbringing. Pure instances of gender marginalization are visualized in various fields of lives. All these result in the acquisition of meagre share of their family's affection and resources for women.

Hence in can be observed that these gendered layers of society are preserved through polymorphous maintenance of gender stereotypes in many institutions. They are well maintained through the three important institutions namely family, education and media. Other than that, it can be witnessed in food, clothing, medicine, advertisement, marriage, health and even in care and affection. Butler also observes: "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (Butler 1999 43).

Family is the basic institution of a society. This itself intoxicate individuals with the thoughts of gender stereotypes. It is uprooted from here. At the time of having food, the male head of the family, is given superior position for seating followed by male children and female children. The mother is out of this very act and stay there as if she is the servant. So is the quantity and quality of the food they get. Sisters are often advised to serve the brothers. It will never go round the way. There is the concept of housewife but not househusband. It is the mother of the family who sacrifice her entire life for her family. She should take care of her husband, children, house and everything connected with the house. They keep on doing all the domestic jobs. Their female children may help them or they are forced to help women but rarely a male child. This social structure is also administering this societal norm of gender stereotypes. Anyhow, these domestic chores of women are unpaid ones. Fathers are the one who support them financially. So that they could maintain a superior position. There is an unseen power in their voice. Patriarchy primarily rules the family. Moreover, men can aspire education at any time but in most cases, marriage will be a block often for a girl's education and even if they aspire for it, by the domestic chores they are often denied the same in schools and colleges, though not always.

Education is the actual door to deconstruction of such gendered stereotypes. But at the same time, education in early ages seems to be strengthening the stereotyped images among children. For example, the textbooks show women doing all the household chores, whereas men sit straight and keep reading newspaper or going out for a job. Even the science textbooks do the same. Chemistry text books introduces some chemical reactions with example of women burning woods or making curd from milk. All these indirectly create the notion that women are meant for kitchen or should be confined to the four walls of the house. The textbooks directly or indirectly promote leadership qualities among men. Certain teachers too aid for that. In common classes while selecting leader, the position of first leader will be that of a boy and girl comes only as second. It is the same in campus politics too. In a college of co-education, the chairperson will be most probably a man and the vice chairperson will be a girl. Moreover, most of the tasks are given to the boys thinking that they are strong, having leadership qualities and it is easy for them to handle. In the case of access to higher education also, it can be perceived that increased rate of educational opportunities are for men. They have no much limitations. They can go to any place fearlessly. They can cross states and even nations. But when women do the same, the society will probably begin to start spreading rumors about them. Perhaps, it seems that the educational system which preaches for equality and justice is actually doing its opposite. A contrasting nature is visualized here. The gender stereotypes are practiced at home, at schools and colleges. “The parents at home and teachers at schools and colleges are very often promote leadership and competitiveness among boys while encouraging girls to be generous, accommodating and feminine” (Bhadra 67). In the case of media and advertisement women are always objectified. Like the textbooks, advertisements too showcase visually recurring imageries as women doing domestic chores or rearing the children. In most of the advertisements, the beauty products, washing products, utensils, different powders and mixers are in the hands of women while men behold vehicles, energy drinks, investment centers, building products etc. So it is very transparent that women are portrayed as beauty objects and house keepers and men stand for strength, power and energy. Even though there are lots of changes coming against these traditional gendered representations of media, advertisement and other institutions, changes are not so common. Media misrepresent the actual proportions of men and women in the population. Only less percent of television writers, executives and producers are women. Female film directors are even more scarce. Women are represented as passive, dependent on men and enmeshed in relationships or house works. Many films value men and his power over the

hardships of women. The real negligence can be observed, only while seeing through the lens of women.

In short, gender stereotypes are not something that is taught in schools by as texts. But they are exercised indirectly through the power of these institutions. It only seems to support the existing patriarchal values. This gender marginalization hinders the girl children and women from aspiring their dreams. In reality, family, education, media and other institutions do not often use any force or violence directly, to keep up this typical stereotype. But they are administered through different ideologies and culture. By activating this, women are suffering a lot. To put an end to their sufferings, conscious deconstruction of such gender stereotyping seems to be an obligatory tool.

While observing the stereotyping through the multiple angles, some men, the interpellated women and the women who always lay in the comfort zone of institutions, are ready to accept all these stereotypes. They themselves follow these. They are trained for that. But some men who realize the real pain and plight of women by these stereotyping. Most of the men do not care about it, because they do not have any problem and there is no boundary for them. Since it is mostly affected on women, it is true that, they are the right ones to raise voice against it. But overcoming these stereotyping is actually a need of the progressive society.

The views about the personalities who deconstruct is really different. Those who argue about doing something I this regard is being called as feminist. They are disobedient, disrespectful and disgraceful in others' eyes. The prominent writer Adichie in her talk mentions that she is a Happy African Feminist Who Does Not Hate Men. She points out that in others' views feminist seems to be unhappy, un- African and the ones who hate men. But what actually they do is that, they protect themselves. Freedom is not something that can be distributed or withdrawn. It is within oneself. Each individual has the right to have their own stand points. For most of the family members who are holding orthodox values, the proponent of the deconstruction is a real trouble maker. They will not allow or support any kind of breaking of stereotypes. They view it as the biggest mistake. Moreover, the society does not have such a tradition of repairing norms. So, the society too nip it in the bud. They never let girls to grow up like boys. They set lot number of rules to home to arrest women. The society and in the name of society, family, suppress the freedom of girls. Actually, women are not really sure what they are rebelling against whether it is suppression by males or the suppression exercised by the other women in the family.

Recently many gender stereotypes are restructured. Women came to the forefront of the media. They began to start getting education even after fighting with their family. Early marriages are comparatively rare. Even mothers too make a comeback after a wide gap. Now there are plenty of women entrepreneurs, workers and employers. Women have been exhibiting their role in the society. Apart from the domestic life, they have begun to enter the socio-political life. Women work somewhere even with the low wages though it is an injustice to them. Women are also going out, enjoying and travelling with their friends. With the advent of technology and the supportive nature of people from their inner circle, they are even able to reach higher peaks and succeed with their potentials. The social media like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube etc., help to picturizes such women who even dare to take journey alone. It is a wider platform for their abilities. Unlike earlier times, women are seen on roads not walking but by driving their own vehicles. Earlier it was simple two wheelers, but now they are driving every vehicle including heavy ones that were once dealt only by the man. Likewise, girls are not that restricted in posting their pictures and videos. The faulty notions during the first wave feminism are dismantled. Now there is no sector-based jobs. Most of the jobs can be handled by men and women alike. Women of today are able to react to the injustice prevalent against them. Now the strategies are quite different. Their economic stability helps them to stand in their own feet. Men too have begun to accept women. Apart from profession of chef, men don't usually cook in their own kitchen. But now men too began to cook and make the dishes. They also began to do household chores. Women's entry to politics is also remarkable in this regard. Earlier women were confined to studies of arts and hobbies of artistic nature only. But nowadays each sport activities have the names of women in them. Women even started to protect man and provide employment opportunities to men. They have become a savior and they inspire other people. In short, the dressing style, the mode of transportation, the educational level or qualifications, etc. are on the progressive scales. Now men do not try to make their girls stand in the border. Instead, many men are seen as supporting their spouses, children, sisters etc.

As an impact of these social deconstructive activities, women are also able to enjoy certain spaces in the social, cultural, educational, personal and political spheres of lives. Moreover, now women could contribute to their family as well so they are not at all seen as a big burden for the family. Rather than that their loneliness and trauma in home space is not at all extending to their future life. Social restructuring of institutions and domestic spaces have been made possible to some extent, so that women do not want to beg for their pocket money to someone else.

Dowry system, another cause of gender discrimination is said to be decreased due to the advent of modern education and women's higher education. But, a 1997 report claimed that at least 5,000 women die each year because of dowry deaths, and at least a dozen dies each day in 'kitchen fires' thought to be intentional. (Mehrotra 60). But many has really understood the hardships of fathers to make the dowry and the girl's traumas in the name of dowry.

Family, schools and colleges are in some way accelerate deconstruction of gender stereotypes into gender justice. In family irrespective of all the limitations the children aspire their dreams. Lately in schools and colleges, girls at least participate in sports and politics. Certain advertisements enhance the upliftment of women. Some women are also finding their space within their acquired potential of family building. Home making, managing an event, organizing things, catering services, small scale industries to big enterprises, gardening etc. are various areas in that women marked their powerful presences. They began to make profit out of these jobs that stabilizes them. Apart from these, a group of women are working internationally too.

Thus, it is clear that gender stereotypes are detrimental when it violates the fundamental freedom of individuals. The society's full potential can be achieved when these kinds of stereotypes are wiped out. It is very true that society's progress can also be achieved by deconstruction of gendered bias. Gender stereotypes is an impediment for the progression. So, if it is removed there will be free flow of the innate abilities and talents of women community too. Absolutely, there will be innovative and reasonable ideas from women and they will also get qualified to be the best professionals with the support of the society and they also will have a creative, free space of their own. New platforms and innovative ideas are also developing. The upliftment of girls includes social mobilization and transformation of outdated values and notions. It also enhances the progression of the entire society as well.

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REVISITING THE 'GULAGS': HARDENED LINES OF INHUMANE CONFINEMENT AND INFLAMING HOPE IN *BETWEEN SHADES OF GRAY*

Ms.Fathima Rimshi

ABSTRACT

A masterly crafted historical fiction, an insightful endeavour to unwrap the tales of prolonged repression and relentless hope - 'Between Shades of Gray' by Ruta Sepetys serves an immortal testimony for the camouflaged Soviet atrocities inflicted upon Baltic people. This paper primarily explores the under explored world of Soviet Gulags; rigorously organised and executed detention system under the clutches of Soviet union. Consequently, extra judicial encounters, enforced displacements, unwelcomed surveillance and unrelenting loss of life become the underlying pattern of the Baltic people. It also highlights various episodes of physical and emotional trauma foregrounding their estrangement, exclusion and exploitation. However, it also throws light on the radiating survival mechanisms fostered by them in the midst of unforeseen socio- political events. Additionally, it also highlights the transformative power of creative medium to uplifts their disquieted spirits and its ability to act as living testimony of their existence and Survival.

Keywords : Gulags, Incarceration, Individual and Collective Trauma, Creative Medium, Survivalism, Resurgence. A work of rare force, a profoundly concocted tale, the Lithuanian-American writer Ruta Sepety's 'Between Shades of Gray ' is a gripping yet clear sighted exploration to the under explored world of Soviet sponsored terror in Baltic States during 1940s. This exceptional historical fiction exhibits the systematic estrangement, exclusion and extermination of state assailants particularly Lithuanians. Ruta Sepetys herself acknowledges that this is a story of extreme suffering and tremendous hope. Crucially, this story revolves around a fifteen year old vibrant protagonist Lina Vilkas, her strong willed parents Elena Vilkas and Kostas Vilkas and her brother Jonas Vilkas along with other Lithuanias. Moreover,these deportees could be conceived as an epitome of traumatized individuals in the light of their terrific and excruciating life in gulags. A considerable section of society was well aware of the atrocities perpetrated by Adolf Hitler and Mussolini but What about the buried traumas and terrors inflicted by Joseph Stalin? He had killed over twenty million people during his reign of terror predominantly through the bloody brutal system of corrective labour camps or Gulags. A

masterly attempt of the author to fictionalize the excruciating history of Gulags without detaching from its essence is unequivocal throughout this literary work. Stalin-led Gulags are the perfect epitome of the paranoia of persecution and fanaticism unleashed thereafter. Traversing through the trials and tribulations of the protagonist Lina Vilkas and her people, the horrendous nature of camps as well as their relentless efforts to withstand these harsh realities was irresistibly evident. This stinging critique on state inflicted political and social barbarity validates the brazen attempts of Stalin's dictatorship on targeting Baltic citizens through fear, force and propaganda. Mirroring Lithuania of 1940s, author tries to expound the worth of human life, the strategic system of driving authoritarianism, normalisation of violence intertwined with ceaseless exploitation and encounters. "THEY TOOK ME IN MY NIGHT GOWN."(3). This striking statement of the fifteen year old protagonist Lina itself reflects the Soviet Union's ominous intention of othering and ostracizing Lithuanians from their mother land. Lina, her family with her people were casted out of their native land thrown into cattle cars and deported to Siberian labour camps induced by the hate driven propaganda. These innocent beings were labelled as ' anti-Soviets', the men separated from women not even sparing children and old folks with no signs of humaneness. This crafty bifurcation leads men to prison, women with young and old to Gulags with no risk for pregnancy conditioning a perfect breeding ground for exclusion and extermination of these masses. To put it differently, there is a discernible illustration on how their daily life and routines were transformed making them familiar strangers to themselves. Lina renders a notable description on her physical and mental state prior and latter to the Soviet annexation by expressing how contented and alive she was by clinging to all the comforts of her home and nation. On the contrast, her recollection on her bombastic birthday party with her parents in Lithuania while piling and chopping wood on labour camps was a poignant depiction on the absolute transition of their bygone life. She accuses Stalin for taking away her home, father and birthday from her. The probability for death, molestation, starvation alarmed them every then and now sparking discontent towards the authoritative government. When these beleaguered populations were expelled out of their homelands by encroaching into their territories and confiscating their belongings press them to reel under the pernicious wheel of displacement and deprivation of rights. Women with young and elderly folks were dumped into cattle car labelling them as 'thieves and prostitutes '. Is this label accurate? What rings at the core is nothing but the deterioration of human dignity and individuality. Once a shrewd soviet guard grabbed Lina's brother Jonas in order to disunite him from them, her mother begged and bribed

the officer with whatever valuable possessions she had. Unfortunately, he seized one of the most adored watches of her granddad where they have no other option but to witness it. This incident delineates how the state apparatus of xenophobia functions through the sophisticated structure of power. Even though their Lithuanian life was disrupted, their arduous attempt to connect themselves with the disconnected family ties is identified through certain occurring in forced labour camps. During the Christmas Eve in Siberian shacks, they placed the photographs of their family and friends on an empty space to sense their companionship and affection after all they were nowhere near. In other sense, NKVD became propounders of publicly spawned hatred where they tamed camp inmates like cattles. These guards made them to bent like dogs and lapping out of bucket while guards drink leisurely from large canteens. Crucially, it unveils the publicly spawned hatred towards these frail and impotent ones exclusively through NKVD commanders. What is it like to be a vulnerable individual who is entirely at someone's mercy? As Lina stated that it was like your very core has been hollowed out and fed back to you from a dirty bucket-which showcases the undermining of one's individuality and dignity. What's more when she nurtures the plant of hatred in her very thoughts and whispers which was capable of strangling all the war mongers one day or the other. She jabbed the shovel into the terrain land harder and harder pretending the soil was the authoritarian government. Essentially, their harrowing yet venturesome journey from Lithuania to Siberian camps asserted them to be certain of their death whether they were under the tyrannical clutches of Stalin or Hitler. A cloud of suspicion always lingered around the forced labour camps where every actions of the NKVD were shrouded in mystery which creates a flummoxed state amidst the inmates. The bald man Mr.Stalas accused everyone of being spy and people began to question each other's motives and planted seeds of doubt. "Traumatized people chronically feel unsafe inside their bodies: The past is alive in the form of gnawing interior discomfort. Their bodies are constantly bombarded by the visceral warning signs, and, in an attempt to control these processes, they often become expert at ignoring their gut feelings and in numbing awareness of what is played out inside. They learn to hide from their selves." (Van der Kolk, Bessel A.) Undoubtedly, this reflective statement best substantiates the trauma induced physical and psychological self of the Lithuanians who plunged into the destructive dynamics of Soviet administration. Mass deportation, enforced displacement, extrajudicial encounters embodied with relentless loss of life, family and property resulted in the systematic eviction of these deprived beings. It is an indisputable fact that every authoritative regime operates under the pretext of eliminating state

assailants who were threat to the smooth survival of their country in general but for the sole purpose of accumulation of power and authority in particular. The case is not different with Baltic people too. In the midst of their mass deportation to labour camps, certain groups of deportees were purchased, stuffed into wagons and driven off to anonymous places which were either hell or death chambers to them. All these covert and cunning operations were planned, organised and executed through well-conditioned and heavily armed soviet military wing who act according to the whims and fancies of Soviet government. Ona, a grieving mother who had been affected with insanity after the death of her baby in the awful environment of cattle cars was murdered by a brutal commander with no sign of humaneness. This pitiable incident validates the atrocities perpetrated by these militants where a lamenting mother was an annoyance to the strings of repression and brutality. In addition to this, various strands of challenges transpire into their daily routine where their food rations were proportionated according to the progress of their work in camps. They were only entitled for three hundred grams of bread per day which dispose them in to utter starvation where they had to frame themselves to devour whatever they hated by neglecting the fact that these extra foodstuffs were transported secretly in someone's undergarments. "People I didn't know formed a circle around me, sheltering me from view. They escorted me safely back to our jurta, undetected. They didn't ask for anything. They were happy to help someone, to succeed at something, even if they weren't to benefit." (306- 307). This narration illuminates the radiating camaraderie and companionship between the camp inmates in the hour of urgency even though they were tortured pitifully with no qualms of morality and justice.

In short, they were grinded like grains in these corrective labour camps culminating in the constant degradation and humiliation of the 'self'. These stinging occurrences scream out distinct realms of exploitation ranging from physical to verbal vituperation. The deliberate yet purposeful attempt of labelling these individuals with derogatory terms like 'fascist', 'pig' exhibits the verbal abuse inflicted by the blond Soviet guards only with an intention of deterring the prevailing vigor and vitality of the victims. Despite the recurrent episodes of ill treatment, the afflicted Lithuanians specifically the woman folks consciously or unconsciously descended into the abyss of exploitation and harassment. Mrs.Arvydas, a youthful yet good looking lady had to prostitute herself in order to save her son's life as the guards threatened to kill her child unless she slept with them. In contrast, the boy hates himself for putting his mother through this wretched state where he thinks of ending his life to rescue her life. Apparently such instance

points out the craft fully designed psychological move of Soviet guards to constrain the inmates where as these helpless beings were interpellated into the destructive dynamics of power. Affirming the purely oppressive nature of the NKVD or Soviet militants Lina expresses how the guards pleased and contented themselves by pelting guiltless children with garbage and food remnants and stamping them as stealers. Delving deep into the psyche of victims divulges the catch 22 situation of them characterized by profound physical and mental isolation. What they only knew was Stalin's psychology of terror was not patterned sometimes therefore they were absolutely ignorant about the upcoming happenings. In order to survive they want to condition themselves in the severe environment of poverty, malnutrition and bereavement. Mortality rates in these labour camps elevated into an appalling level when the inmates dreadfully longed for appropriate nourishment and adequate medical treatment during the contagious illness. Furthermore, the concealed economic motive of Gulag authorities also vitalized the exploitation of these individuals which was evidently portrayed in the novel. As soon as Lina and a bulk of her people were shifted to alternative campsite, they were dumped to a completely uninhabited barren land where they were enforced to construct buildings and fish factories only to accomplish the agricultural and infrastructural missions of Stalin. The centrality of Soviet sponsored terror progresses beyond political and economic repressions as it encroaches into the very personal and private domains of Lithuanians. For the Lithuanians, even their personal correspondence was not at all personal, their privacy was nothing but just a memory. Whatever they inscribe, carve or utter were under the strict surveillance of the commanders. Even a slightest discrepancy in their thoughts and outlooks could invoke antagonism and hostility towards them. By the course of time these expatriates not only struggled for recognition but also for their stability as they were shifted from one camp to another which underscores the fragility of existence.

” To the Soviets, there is no more Lithuania, Latvia or Estonia. Stalin must completely get rid of us to see his vision uncluttered.”(274). Ostensibly, this testament unveils the psychology of terror perpetrated by Dictator Stalin, but essentially it stands as a universal paradigm for whole dictatorial government. By venturing into the inner dynamics of Soviet Gulags, a strong arm tactics of Soviet leadership in consolidating the various strands of terror against the assailants are irresistibly visible. In addition, the chains of events portrayed in the work fall beyond the sight and grasp of an outsider while the inmates swing between unspeakable tortures and disrupted identity. The defining feature of gulag system is nothing but the bouts of extreme of brutality

without no essence of humanness. Consequently, the well structured system of gulag is an emblematic representation of well oiled state machinery for detention and forced labour of the so called 'political enemies' of the government. Ultimately, the triggers of the forced labour camp system were the sophisticated organization of power and intensification of that power through dreadful and dehumanizing mechanisms. Furthermore, this chapter also explores the sophisticated survival strategies adopted by the gulag victims to resurrect themselves from the inhumane confinement. The power of creative medium in revamping the conception of the Lithuanians regarding their normal and new normal state of being by igniting their consciousness on their subsistence, survivance and resurgence. Moreover, the profound expression "No. Don't be scared. Don't give them anything. Lina, not even your fear." (243). This utterance itself divulges their newly awakened consciousness to struggle against the prevailing injustice and inequality. Eventually, they reconditioned their true self letting the very essence of hope to distil in their whole being as an antidote to their disrupted physique and mind. Delving into sequence of the novel, the power of creative medium lies in their capacity to manifest and reflect on various domains of life which relentlessly engages and resonates with poignant realities of life. Art is an absolute medium to announce their sufferings and temperaments to the world in the midst of their silenced voices and sealed mouths. Art produced in Gulags were political, social and cultural in nature inclusive of all common concerns, perceptions and experiences. Presumably it voices out the voiceless victims by asserting their individuality and identity that had always been marginalised and deteriorated under the Soviet. All in all, this whole historical fiction concerns and concentrates on stories of inhumane confinement, stories of strenuous survival and stories of tremendous hope treading a path for their resurrection. Even though they had been forcefully severed from their personal belongings, knowing their prolonged efforts might not meet the desired end, these vulnerable beings united for their survivance and resurgence contracting the Soviet hatred. could be the trigger for their implacable resistance is the unquenchable hope, strength and courage as reflected in the evocative title of the novel. Unequivocally, the title 'Between Shades of Gray' is a stirring yet symbolic delineation of their thriving hope and optimism like a tiny silver of gold appeared between shades of gray on the horizon.

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FREEDOM CURTAILED AND CLOISTERED VIRTUE IN *THE HOLY WOMAN AND GOURISANKARAM*

Amna Athimannil

Women could either be the subordinate as the 'spent' mother, a childish wife (a younger wife), an imbecile sister, a fragile and beloved or a lost 'genetic lottery' (Hossaini, 130) in the form of a daughter. In Shirley Chisholm's words, 'the emotional, the sexual and psychological stereotyping of females begins when the doctor announces, 'it's a girl' (Chisholm, 36). The 'othering' process begins here and it continues till her death. This is evident in history itself as we can see Raja Uday Singh of Rajput gifted his beautiful daughter 'Jagat Gosain' or 'Jodhabhai' to Emperor Akbar or Jahangir or to both just for the sake of widening and strengthening his political position. The trend of selling off and sacrificing girls began ages before. Girls have always been made as 'convenient slaves' in every role, as the nuns in Christianity, Devadasis In Hinduism and Geisha cult in Japan and so on. Women are always hailed as some holy figures and all such candid images are attributed to the; she is Durga, Kali and Saraswati. They have always been worshipped and revered, but are deprived of basic human rights and life.

It is an age-old tradition in south India to dedicate young, innocent and illiterate women to the local deity. They are deprived of marital life and are condemned to a life of sexual slavery and will be hailed as 'public women'; a property or a possession of the men folk of the village. These systems and traditions give us a clear-cut idea regarding how the patriarchal ideology works through tradition. The lower caste women are oppressed within their community and outside. Usually, such subordination is mainly attached to Brahmanical culture and in this respect the lower caste women enjoy more freedom but are inflicted by those traditions. It is an obvious curse on women that they uphold women on a high pedestal with a label on them, 'holy'. These customs reinforce the 'culture of virgin' and for them, seclusion, celibacy and only a suffering body was the abode of divinity. This article analyzes the concept of 'holy woman' as reflected in the novel *The Holy Woman* by Qaizra Shahraz and the film 'Gourisankaram'. This study is not intended at questioning any true religious beliefs, but some man made customs and evil practices which suck female blood. It aims at analyzing cultural representation of women bearing the label of 'holiness' represented in various discourses such as a film and a novel. It also talks about the role of tradition, myth and religion in the construction and operation of patriarchy. The concept of 'Holy Woman' has been there in various places and cultures all the

time. Historical evidences can be seen in the Devadasi system in India. The mother centered religions worshipped feminine gods such as 'Ishtar, Inama, Iris and Kali' (Myers, 2002). They had to remain as celibate and their duty was to serve the gods by dance and music. The Devadasis were also known as Maharil Mohan Nari or Great Woman who can control natural human impulses and desires and submits themselves fully to God.

The history of male and androcentric Islamic interpretation could not recognize the importance of women from their experiences throughout history. In the case of Pakistan Muslim women or all the women across the world there exists a linguistic double talk. In a response given by a reo-conservative Pakistani Professor at international Islamic University in Malaysia about the election of Benazir Bhutto as a female Prime Minister of Pakistan pointed out that "Men and women are equal in Islam. Islam has nothing against anyone becoming a leader whether they are 5 feet tall and weigh 95 pounds or 6 feet, or weighing 200 pounds. Whether they are capable of being leaders, they can lead. Women simply cannot lead" (26 Wadud) Qaisra Shahraz is a U.K. based English Novelist and her writings are very much influenced by her experiences of living in two countries as a woman. Through her debut work, 'The holy woman', she redefined feminism for the Pakistani society. This novel has been widely analyzed in terms of 'Islamic feminism' or 'Muslim Feminism'. Within the Islamic society, Islamic feminism brings equality among women and men. There are many burning issues such as their claims for their rights and stand as an individual being. Islamic feminists struggle for the equality of all Muslim people to attain their goals and be content with their public and private life. There are also people who still believe that God has created discrimination. They propagate the real meanings of Islam and the things they preach where religion provides equal place for both men and women. God has equally created men and women and the discrimination they are facing from the patriarchal society is completely man made. In her novel, The Holy Woman, she corrects many western stereotypical misconceptions about Islamic cultures. The status of woman in Pakistan is under a very dangerous situation due to the prevalence of many societal practices. Even after the abolition of child marriage by the Child Marriages Restraint Act which illegalized the marriage of girls before the age of 16 many such marriages are performed. A child marriage custom exists in some tribal areas of Punjab Province known as 'Vani' in which the young girls are married off to resolve disputes between different classes. Here, the male lords give no value for the dreams and individuality of these women.

Another tribal custom that is still in practice in some parts of Pakistan is 'Watta Satta'. This is more like the barter system existed in India where things were bought in exchange. In order to marry off a girl to a family that son's family should send someone from their family. When a girl is married off to the other family, another girl must reach here. Whether they are interested or not, it doesn't matter. Often women are forced to follow these customs. Whatever their parents decide they should obey. It is known that in some parts of Sindh there exists the practice of 'Shahzadi Ibadat', that is, the woman's marriage to Quran. These are all man made practices and are not there in the religious scriptures and texts. 'Honor killing' is another evil practice exists in Pakistan where a member in the family is killed by other family members, if the person refuses a proposal for a marriage arranged by the family or falls in love with somebody or having any illegal sexual affairs with outsiders. Even the practice of marriage seems to be more complicated in Pakistan Violence against women is high in Pakistan. Qaisra Shahraz voices against the oppression and certain evil treatments against women in a patriarchal society where they are deprived of their rights and place in the name of some brutal tribal customs and rituals. Qaisra Shahraz herself pointed at her concerns in her official website, "As a Muslim woman my novels tend to be mainly about Muslim women, living in western societies and explores the challenges and problems they face, based not necessarily on my own experiences, but the experiences of others that I have witnessed and shared" (Shahraz)

This is the major contribution of Qaisra Shahraz to Pakistan that she could manage to handle the problems of the deprived women around her. Customs and rituals seem to be created in favour of men and the position of women is still at stake and at the base level. Women are discouraged from pursuing higher education and other privileges and rights. Shahraz writes to explore and resolve women's issues. She speaks mainly for those Muslim women living in western societies. Qaisra Shahraz speaks for these down trodden women who are haunted by the games of the landlords and men.

The Holy Woman raises the question whether one should choose her father's legacy or listen to her heart. It is the story of Zarri Bano, a beautiful daughter of a wealthy land owner Habib Khan and granddaughter of Baba Siraj Din, who falls in love with a business tycoon and plans to marry him. Even though she was well educated and believed in feminist ideologies, she was forced to live a strict life of celibacy and abstinence where she was destined to be the Holy Woman for the fulfillment of her father's priorities in life. As her dreams remained as dreams alone, she lost a world of her own.

In Urdu, 'Holy Woman' or 'Shahzadi Ibadat' means a woman created by the land lord who marry off their daughters to Quran for not losing their wealth? When Habib khan's only son was killed in a bike accident the fate came upon Zari Bano. She was forced to marry the Holy Quran and become the Holy woman of the clan. It was her brother's death which sealed her future as a Shahzadi Ibadat. That is what always happened in their clan when lone sons die; the inheritance will be passed onto the next daughter in the family. Zarri Bano's words and the questions show the intensity of the inner desires and the suppressed state of mind. She was well educated, very bold and proud and she used to tell her sister Ruby that, "I am not a fish to be angled at, caught and trapped. I am a free Woman. I will decide if I want this Man or any other man" (8, Shahraz) She was aware of her rights and position in the society. Every individual mind longs for a free world where there are no shackles and bonds. Zarri Bano's words remind me of a similar quote from Charlotte Bronte's 'Jane Eyre'; "I am no bird, and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will" (Bronte). Here, Zarri Bano, being a Shahzadi Ibadat has to live a secluded life dedicating all her time to study the Qur'an and her religion. She says that this is a Muslim Puritanical acquittal of becoming a rare female heir of the family. She can never be her own self, which could be the biggest limitation for a woman who had enjoyed much freedom earlier. For the rest, this is simply a holy caged life, a sacred servitude and nothing else, but actually they give no concerns for her mental anguish of being in that cage. Zarri Bano's case reinstates the age-old belief that where 'man is a norm, woman is an aberration from it'. As Simon de Beauvoir says 'this has been a man's world' (Beauvoir, 61) and it is a far distant probability to change it all. A girl is never allowed to live up to her dreams and her likes. What constitutes a person is simply his/her likes and dislikes. Here, neither her likes are valued nor her dreams. In all the stages of her life she has been instructed and directed by the male members in her family. She was always scolded by her younger brother for 'not covering her head', 'not tying up her hair' and not behaving in a proper way for the sake of the family (5). Throughout history, especially since eighteenth-century, middle-class women have been taught a certain set of social decorum. If she displays any behavior against it she would be placed in the category of 'bad women'. She has been encouraged to think only for the sake of her family and her community.

Qaisra Shahrās represents the new age Muslim woman who investigates the theme of the "the suppressed half" in traditional villages. She laments that all Muslim women; whether they are veiled or unveiled, conventional or liberal, are subjected to the same brutal oppression. In an

interview she opines that, “In the present political and global contexts, Islamophobia is on the rise and a lot of negativity is aimed at Islam and Muslim at large including heavily against women” As Shahraz spent most of her life in UK, she knows the differences quite well. Her novels, “The Holy woman”, “Typhoon” and “Revolt” bring into light the issues of women from different perspectives, irrespective of class, caste or economic structure. Her education never liberated her souls and she could only pursue what the elders said. Women were not allowed to have any affairs with men and whatever their fathers do say, they have to obey. In this novel, when Shahzada reveals Zarri Bano’s affair with Sikander, Baba Siraj Din shouts at her, “Love! When did our women start falling in love before marriage? If you encourage my daughter to marry this man against my wishes I will divorce you on the spot, - not once, not twice, but thrice. Three divorces! Three Talaqs!” (67).

It was not acceptable for young women to join all male-set activities. It has been mentioned at the very beginning of the novel where Zarri Bano appears by participating in the mela showing her partially covered head. Zarri Bano is suffocated by those barbaric traditions that enslaved their women and forced them to certain alien rules. What would happen in a woman’s life when her entire life is cloaked in the burqa? Here, in this novel, Zarri Bano fails to fight against the wall of patriarchal tyranny. She asks how they could seal her fate to a barren life, with only ‘ibadat’ for comfort. Land represents fertility, but to keep the land in the family, she is destined to remain barren and childless and denied the joys of motherhood. It is a crime to make a woman a ‘nun’ without her permission who still likes to have a worldly life and pleasures. Zarri Bano begs her father to let her to live a life of a normal woman: “I want to be a ‘normal woman’ and live a normal life. I am not a very religious person. I am a twentieth century modern educated woman. I am not living in the Mughal Period- a pawn in a game of male-chess” (64). Many bizarre customs, practices and traditions consider Kerala as a mad house with its interventions of caste and class discriminations and, Swami Vivekananda, on his way to meditate on the sea rock of Cape Comorin, has pointed out that, ‘Kerala is a mad house’ because of its over interferences with class and caste inequalities and biases. Kerala, with its high literacy rate, is still in the clutches of some institutions and customs that subvert the individual self and the existence of female community. Religion has been used against women at all levels of the structures. This is not only the case of the so called lower classes such as Pulaya or Nadar who are already downtrodden by the mainstream community, but it is the awful state of the upper class, the more privileged Brahmins. Namboodiri women are called ‘Antharjanam’, ‘one who

live indoors'. They are supposed to spend their whole life inside their 'illam', serving their husbands. Teachings and practices were made in favour of the Brahmin men where the men are allowed to have many illicit relations and can have as many wives as they wish whereas women are restricted in all spheres of life and the widows could not even remarry. Marriages were performed in order to keep the desires of the male partners satisfied. The Namboodiri women often had to marry elder men just for the sake of family and prosperity. Many writers have bluntly spoken against these ridiculous practices inside the illam or mana in Kerala. Lalithambika Antharjanam and Madambu Kunhukkuttan have identified their problems being one among them, from the same community. Their works have received wide recognition for its depiction of some harsh and rude practices prevailing in the Namboodiri illams. Movies too portray the plights of Namboodiri women in umpteen numbers of ways. Sati was once practiced in India and still exists somewhere and can be cited as a typical example by critics for showing how Sati is used against women. Widows had to kill themselves in the funeral pyre of their husbands. Women all over the world, irrespective of the boundaries and distinctions are deprived of their rights to live.

By their name itself, the Namboodiri women were forced to lead a strange and secluded life. If they want to go outside, somewhere, to the temple or to the relative's houses, they will have to cover their face using palm leaf umbrella and there will be maids and servants to take care of all these things. They could not even enjoy a happy relationship or motherhood. The men wanted to get their women as virgin where the men can have many illicit relations. 'Gourisankaraam', a 2003 Malayalam film directed by Nemom Pushparaj and written by Madambu Kunhukkuttan, portrays the life of Gouri (Kavya Madhavan) and Sankaran (Munna) who are caught up in the traditional customs and rituals of their family. The film gets its theme from a unique custom that is still in practice in some Namboodiri families, in which in those families who worship serpents, the eldest family member, that is the eldest daughter in law should sacrifice her life as a priestess mother.

Madambu Sankaran Namboodiri, popularly known as Madambu Kunhukkuttan is a well-known Malayalam novelist and screenplay writer. Being a Namboodiri and a scholar of Vedas and its practitioner, he has strongly stood for the oppressed and the suffered; and he has portrayed the life of Gouri and Sankaran who were the victims of ritual ridden lives of the elite community. Every culture has some unique customs and practices. Serpent worship is observed not only in Kerala, but in many countries and cultures in different forms.

In the film 'Gourisankaram', Madambu Kunhukuttan depicts a custom existed in some families where the eldest is subjected to sacrifice her life as a priestess mother. The priestess mother would undergo strict celibacy and abstinence. They are deprived of all pleasures and worldly desires of life. The people would call her by the name, 'mother' irrespective of their age. The film portrays the danger that lies in the family as the women are forced to practice these age old traditions in the name of religion. Gouri and Sankaran were being in love with each other and were childhood friends. Sankaran's father belonged to a prominent family in Kerala called Sreelakathu family and the present priestess' mother was Sankaran's biological mother. She had to sacrifice her life when her son was just two years old. After the death of the present priestess mother, Sankaran's wife will have to sacrifice her life for the serpents. As Gouri is his wife now, she will be the next priestess mother who performs poojas and mantras. Sankaran's father tells him that, "Everything is essential, both love and faith. If these are absent, the nature will be dried and wearied and the environment will be in darkness". It seems that these words have repeatedly echoed in their life. Love and faith moved her life to a dark corner somewhere and she was suffocated in that environment. The dilemma and agony of sacrificing their beloved daughter to the serpents haunted the entire family. Gouri's marriage knot was broken away and she was compelled to do fasting. And then she would be sent to live in seclusion doing all the poojas and mantras for one year and it is known as 'samvalsaradeeksha'. Even though Gouri cried madly, her voice was not heard anywhere. No male member in the family exercised such things as it seems that the God is interested only in female blood. Who actually made all these customs? Man or God? Men are really intelligent that they have written everything accordingly. India is known to be the melting pot of various traditions. We invoke various goddesses to get away from evil and to bestow us with wealth, wisdom and so on. But it is a fact that it is always women who are sacrificed for the deity for their wish fulfillment. Even though women are moving from shadow to excellence in today's world, a large number of the section are not privileged and are still suppressed in the hands of patriarchy. Freedom in the real sense is not given and even their dignified existence is at stake. Female feticide is still there in many parts of India and even if anyone is born will have to face a harsh face of life.

There is a myth behind the practice of sacrificing women to Nagas. It was Prashurama, who first worshipped and taught the method of doing so to the priests. The snakes were considered as the true guardians of the land and thus it was advocated that every home in Kerala should reserve southeast or southwest corner of their compound for these Nagas. After many

years of it a crisis emerged that they faced extinction in the family of the priests since they had no male heir to carry on the trust for the worship of the Nagas. Another disaster happened when a forest fire ruined the land except Mannarassala Temple where the Nagas were worshipped. All the snakes took refuge at the feet of Nagaraja and many of them were burnt and wounded. The family tried to sort it out through mantras and Vedas and also, they created little abodes for them and they were allowed to live there peacefully. It is believed that Nagaraja was pleased by their act; he appeared before the lady known as Sri Devi and told her that he would be born as her son in two forms- in the form of a five hooded snake and as a human child. This prophecy came true and in the Malayalam month of Kumbhom , the day when the star Ayilyam falls in, she gave birth to two boys. The elder one was a snake and the younger one a human child. After the birth of these children the couple gave up the worldly conjugal life and embraced Pujas and prayers. From then onwards, the day on which the star Ayilyam falls they would continue special poojas to satisfy the Nagas. One year due to some reasons the husband was unable to complete the pooja and it was taken as a serious crime and they thought that it would bring some serious curse on them. Sri Devi was in a dilemma when she heard that there was no other male member to continue the pooja on that day and she then decides to do it herself. She purifies herself in the holy water and begun meditation and eventually it came on her shoulders since it is believed that Nagaraja advised her to continue with it. Thus, she had to complete that day's pooja and the next day's all-important pooja also. From that day onwards she has been destined to live in the temple as a priestess dedicating all her time to poojas and mantras. She can no longer perform her duties in the family and will have to concentrate only on worship of Nagas. From this onward a new chapter was opened in the history of Kerala as the highest female member of the family will have to remain as a priestess. They will have to go through complete celibacy and strict and rigid discipline of poojas and prayers. The snake son is named as Ananta and the human son live as a human being. Even now, the practice is there which has been passed onto generations in such families who still embrace these rituals.

The famous Malayalam writer, Devaki Nilayamkode is a living example of a lady who lived inside the four walls of that elite community. Her work, "Memoirs of a Namboodiri Woman" reflects the family life of a ritual ridden Namboodiri illam. When writers from the same community write about the evils inside of it, we can sense the seriousness and significance of the subjects in all contexts. Women are controlled by the whole universe, they are in boundaries everywhere, inside and outside and often their being is not marked like the other counterpart.

The yogini, the consecrated virgin, holy woman whatever name they get, they are considered to be outside the system, removed from family ties and is outside the society and its structures. Womanhood, when cited as an object of adoration, has never been free from the stains of exploitation. The struggle for women's emancipation from the tyranny of oppression is therefore a struggle against exploitation, tyranny and indignity. Even though tradition is invented in some sense, it was never questioned. The scars are there in history since it was accepted, practiced and institutionalized.

Oppressive and exploitative nature of patriarchy is operated through superstitions in the course of wrath and curse of the society. Most often, women are dedicated to the deities through involuntary modes. Almost all the dedications are done at pre-puberty age and parents or guardians and indirectly the landlords are responsible for this. The girl children are dedicated to Yellamma, Maisamma, pochamma in Telangaanaa district; Mathmma in coastal Andhra; and Yellama, China Obulesu and Sunkalamma in Rayalaseema. Devadasi system existed before centuries and in Kalidasa's Meghadoot, there are references to dancing girls in the 'Mahakala temple' of Ujjain. Bhavishya Purana suggests that the sure way of going to Suryaloka is by dedicating girls to temples, especially to a 'sun temple'. The custom of temple dancing was an integral part of the ritual service to gods and goddesses. Service to gods may be of different forms. It might be by building a new temple, renovating old ones, sweeping, washing, weaving of garlands, lighting the temple lamps, singing and dancing for entertainment. In addition to this, women could be dedicated to gods to become their consorts. These women called 'Nitya Sumangali's were and are invited to all function as 'sacred women'.

Both Zarri Bano and Gouri sacrifice their love and dreams in order to satisfy the desires of some male lords who are afraid of these girls raising up to their levels and voicing their priorities in life. And it is this cunning and callous attempt from their part to make them mute by attributing a holy veil on their mouth. Zarri Bano at last realizes her place and when began to rebel it was too late as years were lapsed from her life. Gouri also placed herself in that priestly status rejecting Sankaran, she breaks the bounds and runs to fetch her life. According to Nietzsche, those who breaks the ways of tradition and follows a life of their own choice are said to be immoral and in this light Zarri Bano and Gouri can be immoral. In their case fate played a very crucial role as death of their family members brought this burden on their shoulder. No male member in the family had to sacrifice for it, but these two girls at their prime age. The love match between Gouri and Sankaran was broken when his mother, the present priestess mother,

died one month after their marriage. They loved each other, decided to live together and then married but it ended up in a dreadful destiny. Their life was trapped in between barren walls leaving the best of their moments and now she embraces celibacy and strict abstinence from the outer world as her only companion. God can be an abode of solace and peace when we are indulged to do the offerings but when we are succumbed to do it in the name of man-made customs the situation will be truly terrific. In the case of Zarri Bano who was very educated, she could neither rebel nor object. She too became a victim in the male power play of certain barbaric customs. She too loses her love, Sikandar, as no Muslim women in that community was allowed to find matches in their own terms. Even though they marry, they will only be allowed to marry the person who are suiting to their family status and whom her parents choose. If someone disobey it, they are labelled as immoral and outcaste.

Zarri Bano tries well to make them understand that their religion never encourages such a practice as there are no such nuns, no such thing as women married to Holy Qur'an. Even though she realizes that her father has created a holy woman in her, her education and self will go in vain before her father's voice. In her words, the Holy Woman, a woman that her father created by killing her because men are the true creators in their culture and they mould their lives and destinies according to their whims and desires. Then, she comes to the realization that her life itself now revolves around ironies that these things are happened to Zarri Bano who was a feminist and defender of women's rights. This is not just the case of Zarri Bano but millions of women in the world who are suffering and being oppressed under man made laws. In most of the practices women are deemed to be inferior to men and there are still many traditionalists who believe that women's role is to merely take care of their children and men are born to control them. The world oppresses women's sexuality and in some religion being celibate is considered to be the most graceful deed and thus they are abstained from all such roles. Man-made institutions restricts women' entry to the society as they are afraid of their power to find a place in this world. Women have to be liberated from the patriarchal interpretation of the world which subjugates and men denigrate them in order to maintain their position of power and authority over them. It is not religion which demands all these things but men's mind is working behind it whether women are wedded to their faith or not they are always a puppet in those hands. They are enslaved both physically and psychologically and their freedom is curtailed under their feet. In order to fit into this idealized symbolic image, individual women must fulfill often 'traditional; often exaggerated 'feminine' behavioural requirements and they have to put aside

any personal aspirations and wishes for showing loyalty, selflessness, sacrifice and decorum.

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DISCOVERING THE INNER SELF: ACID VICTIMS AS PROGRESSIVE IDENTITIES IN *UYARE* AND *CHHAPAAK*

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ABSTRACT

Acid attack on women is a major issue which is commonly occurring in the current scenario. It is one of the forms of gender-based violence caused against the women by the male dominating society. There are plenty of reasons observed for the acid attack, like the easy availability of acid, rejection of love, disdained relationships etc. This chapter aims a study based on men's desire to disfigure women; analyzing acid attacks portrayed in the select movies. Focus is also given to the legal perspective of acid attack, the relation between society and acid victim and the atrocities faced by an acid victim. Moreover, the chapter looks at the ways through that, these acid victims emerge out of the dreadful situations and pursue their dreams, with special reference to the movies *Uyare*, a Malayalam movie directed by Manu Ashokan and *Chhapaak*, a Hindi movie directed by Meghana Gulzar.

Keywords:

Acid attack, gender- based violence, acid victim, male-chauvinist, double marginalization

Acid attack is a deep-rooted social evil and a burning issue in this era. Over the last decade it has been witnessing an alarming increase in the acid attack especially on women and many of the victims are in their young age too. It is considered as a gender-based crime against women. In addition to causing psychological trauma, acid attacks result in severe pain, permanent disfigurement, subsequent infections and often blindness in one or both eyes. Recent media report says of a Delhi woman who was attacked by a man by throwing acid and the reason for that is said to be the rejection of marriage and she had to give up her life too. Acid attack is used as a weapon to silence and control women by destroying her figure, what is contributed as the primary

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constituent of her identity and the impact is physical, psychological, and social in most of the cases. Archana Arul says: "According to India Today Data Intelligence Unit (DIU) the statistics released by National Crime Records Bureau shows between 2014 and 2018, states that there have been 1,483 victims of acid attack happened in the country" (Arul 1).

This chapter undertakes a study based on representation of women acid victims in films. It is based on two movies titled *Uyare* and *Chhapaak* that attempt to make people understand why is it unrealistic and illogical to relate a woman's self-esteem with her perpetual beauty. The acid attack not only gives the characters, Malti and Pallavi, grievous bruises on the face and neck, but also a savage blow to their self-reliance and ambition to become a singer and pianist respectively. However, the courage they exhibit in the face of the adversities in their lives is inspiring. The acid couldn't wear down their spirit and they seem to try their best to go on fighting for their justice and ambition by regaining their confidence.

Though women constitute a major share of the society, they are often looked down. Whenever a woman decides to raise her voice against her unacceptable position in the patriarchal society, she is evaded by different means: either by acid or physical abuse or by burning her to death. Some of the brutalities remain unreported because of the fear and stigma of women and their family in the society. It has been generally said that from her cradle to grave, she is subjugated to everlasting and ceaseless amount of violences. The truth is that even though India has got independence, the women are still dependent on male chauvinist society, which affect the independence of women often.

Both the movies select for the study, portray the reason for acid crime as the love which turned later to revenge. In most of the acid attacks the motives behind the attack are rejection, patriarchy, misogyny and unrequited love and ending of romantic relationship by females. The root causes of this crime are embedded in our social culture where men feel the need to react when they are denied the things they want from women. Social norms tolerate and perpetuate patriarchal values where the sense of 'male privilege' and 'male entitlement' bear a strong

foothold in our daily interactions, where women have no agency in the matters of love, sex, relationship, marriage and money. It can be said that acid attacks are used by man as a medium to establish their superiority and control over woman and to keep them always in a state of fear that they have no any role in society and social fabric except to accept the reality.

The movie *Uyare* is a tale of women empowerment, women determination, courage and will. When Pallavi, the protagonist was affected by the acid attack by her boyfriend, she decides to approach life fiercely and boldly. The survival journey wasn't easy for her. Here no one but Pallavi saves herself. She rises again on her feet after the acid attack. The people around her especially her friend and father focused on rebuilding her will power and self, right through the very same ambition that drove her from early ages.

Vishal changed the idea of beauty in society and said to the media that Pallavi who is an acid victim will be the airhostess. At first, she refused it but soon accepted as she should come out from the four walls and face the world. When Govind was there as a passenger in the airplane she travelled, he started to get irritated and she pours water on him too. He filed a complaint against her. Vishal asked her to publicly apologize on this issue if she wants to remain in her job in the company but she refuses to do and quit. This shows that she is now able to face any obstacle in her life.

During her last journey as airhostess there happened an incident. The pilot of the flight went out of consciousness and the flight went out of control. During that situation Pallavi took over the pilot's seat even though she had only a rejected license. The air traffic controllers were concerned about her ability and asked her to get out of the cockpit. After many breath-taking minutes, Pallavi was able to make the flight land safely and save the lives of all passengers. Even though she lost one of her eyes, because of her courage she was able to do this.

If Pallavi, an acid attack victim can be approved by her customers in a job that emphasize beauty, there should be nothing that stops other acid attack victims from achieving anything they dream. So, *Uyare* is a powerful story about determination, about kicking oneself back to life, looking at the brighter side and continuing a dignified living, despite hardships. This film is a tribute to the indomitable spirit of every acid attack survivor who fight against all odds to hold their heads high.

In *Chhapaak* the protagonist Malti not only rebuilds own life but also fights for the needs of fellow acid victims. She is not able to find a better job and joins the NGO, from there she realized the miserable conditions of other similar victims and decided to fight for the whole victims. Malti's fight is punctuated with her determined smiles, the pain in her eyes and her indomitable spirit. As support from her family dwindles owing to her brother's illness and father's death, it is Malti's lawyer Archana who stands by her in her arduous journey.

She fights for the justice and issue a PIL to reduce the sale of acid. After a long day of fight she gets the success as the court issue the ban on sale of acid. Malti had to face a lot of obstacles as her father died and her brother fell ill, and thus she needed to get a better job. Even in this condition she doesn't lose her hope, instead she fought for her justice and attained it as the PIL was considered and her perpetrators got the maximum punishment too. Then she joined as an anchor in a program and she made the fact that beauty is not the matter, and what matters is the willpower. After becoming an anchor her life got positively changed and the society also started to accept her. Malti's story is truly heroic, that she lends her voice to protect others from this heinous crime. Malti is a survivor not a victim. Her post acid attack journey is a survivor's journey from victimization to a role model. Thus, both the movies portray the acid attacked women victims as powerful selves who are not victims any more but survivors.

Lakshmi Agarwal (the victim of acid attack) mentioned in one of her interviews that pain is not only internal but also external imposed by the comments and the ridicules of the society. Society does not accept this victim as a normal human being. These victims continue to face discrimination from society for years even though they themselves are in no way the reason for their disfigurement. They are not able to leave their homes thinking they would be made fun of. They fear the inimical attitude of the general public towards them. Same thing happens to Malti and Pallavi in the movies. They need to come out but the society's attitudes put them back to the four walls. The confidence of these victims is put out by the attitude of the society around them.

The appearance of the person becomes so dreadful and frightening that victims become socially outcast, either by the society or by themselves. Often, they hide themselves covering their face even though they wish to uncover it. In the movie *Uyare*, though Pallavi removes her scarf unfortunately one of the passengers ask her to wear it back because they are afraid. Greater number of acid attack victims are forced to give up their education, occupation and carry out normal activities of life due to their physical disabilities. In *Uyare*, Pallavi's dream to become a

piolet has been lost due to acid attack. The most appalling part is that, they are made to hide their faces and the affected parts of their body and have to bear the brunt of the society. There is always a sense of trepidation, scorning and scoffing of the people around them, by which they are not able to forget the disgusting looks of the society at large. All these things build so much of inferiority complex among the victims that they themselves shun away from the society.

The society is also hesitant to accept such people and evades their company and shun them, sometimes due to strange and nauseated feelings and also due to blotch attached to such people. People also associate their melancholies and desolations to the misdeeds of the victims and consider them wretched and unfortunate. These attacks usually leave victims handicapped in some way, rendering them dependent on either their spouse or family for everyday activities, such as eating and running errands. This is truly portrayed in the movies where these women are dependent on their family for their basic necessities. These dependencies are increased by the fact that many acid survivors are not able to find suitable work, due to impaired vision and physical handicap. Moreover, acid survivors who are single, when attacked almost certainly become ostracized from society, effectively ruining marriage prospects. They are embarrassed that people may stare or laugh at them and may hesitate to leave their homes fearing an adverse reaction from the outside world. This is so pathetic that even though the state is developing gender justice, the people are less inclusive and social exclusion still continues as a threat.

These victims do not get a job notwithstanding being qualified, as they cannot meet up to the expectation of their employees perhaps, since acid attack acts as a blow on the personality of victims. It happened to Malti. When she went to an interview the interviewer asked her, why didn't she mention about the attack in the bio-data, she replied that there is no such column to acid victim if it was there, she would have written. This happens to every victim. Often, they are not able to find a better job. Discrimination from other people, or disabilities such as blindness, make it very difficult for victims to find suitable job opportunities for themselves and they become dependent on others for food and money. The acid attack survivors witness discrimination at every single stage of their life.

No one can deny the fact that, the established norms in the society especially; towards women; are prejudiced. These norms always expect more obedience from women in comparison to men. Shalini Mittal et. al in their study on trauma caused by acid attack says: "Social dominance in the form of the superiority of masculine gender over the feminine gender in terms

of influence, physical strength, and authority also emerged as a significant source of trauma. Often the culture by design leads to the oppression of women and the experience of sexism” (Mittal et al 1). One should always keep this thing in mind that before a survivor accepts herself, it is the society that needs to accept her first. Instead of helping the victim, the people make their life more annoying, as the people don't like to look to their face. However, this approach needs to be changed as they are suffering not for their wrong deeds, but due to the fault of some savage acts of some men, roaming around the society freely. In the movies it is evident that the victims have to suffer while the victimizer is living a peaceful life. Thus, it is seen that women acid victims have to face double marginalization in the society; being women on one ground and as being acid victims on the other ground.

The government, social media and private agencies can play positive role to eradicate the acid attack. It is the electronic era, so the media such as Facebook, Instagram, twitter etc., could help these victims in many ways. Our society is lacking the sense of belongingness which results in insecurity and instability of the people- especially women. Social support is vital for the proper and complete rehabilitation of acid burn victims. Acid attack can be eliminated from the society by imposing strict punishment to the perpetrators. The enhancement of punishment and compensation to the victim and ban on sale of acid are extremely important development needed in the case of acid violence. The compensation is very vital as the victim had to undergo several surgeries and various medical treatments. This compensation helps many victims for their treatment. The minimum punishment is ten years of imprisonment and it can be extended up to life imprisonment with a fine. Now, the acid victim can claim reservation in the government jobs and other institutions and it should be made mandatory for the state to create equality life measures. Justice can never be delivered to the victim unless the law is properly implemented.

In an interview with India New England News in September 2017, Qureshi, an acid survivor, was asked if she had heard from her attacker. She stated, “I haven't spoken to the attacker or his family as such, but I met him two months back in the court. I instinctively wanted to rip his throat out. When he saw me, he told his lawyer and people, she has become so big and a model, she is a good position so please release me”. This is how all the attackers should feel ashamed for their evil work.

Currently there are changes in the reception of many acid survivors by the society as one sees them working in various fields like High Court, hospital, railway etc. Sultana, one of the

acid survivors, who began training as beautician in 2006, says that she lives life on her own terms and support other survivors too. Haseena, a survivor works as a stenographer in a government office. Now reports say that a supermarket in Mumbai is run by acid attack survivors.

Several acid victims come from very weaker section of the society and they may not have enough education too. Providing educational support would open new opportunities for these victims and also make their chances of rehabilitation better. It is important to understand and make the perpetrators realize that one cannot get away with committing such a heinous crime. Therefore, the survivors should fight for the justice. As Malti, as exhibited in the movie *Chhaapak* the deceiver could only destroy her face not her inner soul and dreams. The survivors can still breathe, they can do many things. They just need to be brave and keep moving forward. It is amazing that how strongly they transformed themselves and their lives with pride and hard work showing the society that success is not about beautiful face but beautiful heart and hard work. So, it is important to an acid victim to change into a survivor. These women are not just survivors, they are the warriors of their own stories. These survivors are great inspiration for women who do not rise their voice against such gendered violences like rape, domestic violence etc.

This chapter is discussing the heinous crime called acid attack, the act of survival, case study of survivors and the social gaze in the light of the movies *Chhapaak* and *Uyare*. It is not something like a by birth condition, instead it is something that is human made. The acid throwing is the most vicious form of crime. Acid attacks have become common everywhere. The modern revenge strategy of acid attacks, scars the lives of many teenagers and young women and sentenced them to a plight worse than death just for the reasons of rejection of love and marriage proposals, marital disputes, domestic violence and dowry demands etc. These movies, select for the study, challenge the conventional and regressive idea of beauty that are based entirely on looks. These films emphasize that a person is not made of physical attributes only, it is the power of the soul, the confidence and self-respect that build a person and that is the beauty of the personality which lasts and cannot be destroyed. These films are a tribute to all acid survivors.

The best example for this is the survivor Lakshmi Agarwal, who fought for the rights of acid victims and she has filed a PIL (Public Interest Litigation) for the ban of acid and because of

her hard work and determination it has been accepted. Now there is a hope that like Lakshmi, the other victims too would come out and fight for their justice. Many NGOs are working to help these victims but government interventions are needed more. In an attempt to rehabilitate acid survivors and provide them an opportunity to reclaim their lives, Rai Sharma launched Make Love Not Scars (MLNS) , a non-profit organization.

The government should be able to ban the sale of acid, and it will help to avoid the acid attacks to certain extent. The government should provide proper compensation to victims because the victims had to go several surgeries and various medical treatments, so the compensation should be enough for their proper treatments. Although commencement of law reforms in acid attack legislation is a positive sign, there is a long way to go, to effectively implement these provisions. Another important aspect that requires immediate consideration is the formation of new rehabilitation schemes and better job opportunities. Better education should be imparted to the victims of such crime, enabling them to at least cope up with their day-to-day needs. The media could also make a good impact on these victims through portrayal of victims in a positive way.

It is observed that, the government should impose a severe punishment and the trial procedure should be minimized as most of the people take advantage of this long trial process. In the film *Chhapaak*, one could see that how the judiciary system works for the victims. It is observed that even though the acid attack is an attempt to murder, the maximum punishment given is ten years' imprisonment only. Through strict law and order, the acid crimes can be minimized or wiped out.

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REPRESENTATION OF MIDDLE EAST BY IMMIGRANT WRITERS: A STUDY ON SELECTED

Ms. Huda

NOVELS

“Once away from residence, the expatriates start to question themselves: Where is my homeland? Where do I belong? Where do I stand politically? Such questions build the foundation of a diaspora’s cultural background”. (Benyamin 9)

This project aims to conduct a careful examination of the realities in Middle Eastern countries by analysing Diasporic fictions such as *Al Arabian Novel Factory*, *Jasmine Days*, and *Temporary People*. By utilizing socio-cultural and political critical narrative discourses, this study seeks to gain insights into the actual affairs of the Middle East. Diaspora Literature is commonly known as a fusion of nostalgic sentiments, memories, yearning for home, trauma, displacement, solitude, and prejudiced treatment of immigrants. This research endeavours to uncover how these elements are intertwined to develop the narratives and analyse the narrative techniques and methods used by the writers. Migrant literature, which either chronicles the stories of migrants or is written by migrants themselves, has gained significant interest within literary studies since the 1980s.

Migration literature offers a unique perspective on migration that complements sociological approaches by focusing on the characteristics of migrants, the nature of place, and the underlying political, economic, and social forces and structures that drive migration. While the field of migration studies has expanded greatly with many ethnographic and anthropological works exploring the experiences of migrants, there is still significant potential for contributions from literature. It's worth noting that migration literature need not be written by an author from a particular ethnic background. Instead, Frank suggests that migration literature encompasses all literary works written in the age of migration, or those that reflect upon migration.

Scholars often differentiate between literature that explores the figure of the migrant or the process of immigration and literature that discusses immigration as a topic. Migration literature is known for its recurring themes of borders, citizenship, belonging, change, biopolitics, identity, stereotypes, gender, struggle, otherness, exile, separation, generational differences,

inhabitability, dislocation, bureaucracy, abandonment, and return. Additionally, the use of language in migration literature sheds light on how migrants utilize non-native languages and integrate into new societies.

According to critic R. Cheran, diaspora and diasporic communities are increasingly being used as metaphors for expatriates, refugees, displaced communities, and ethnic minorities. Diaspora represents a type of displacement where there is still a faint hope or desire for future return to the homeland. In cases where the homeland remains inaccessible, diaspora can evoke a sense of nostalgia as individuals attempt to maintain their attachment to their culture, religion, and traditions.

Migration from one place to another has become a powerful force shaping families in the twentieth century. Economic gain is a common reason for migration, leading individuals to migrate within a state or country, or even across international borders. The effects of migration on families are profound, with significant changes and challenges to family structures often resulting from relocation.

When people migrate, they often form new relationships in their new location. Economic problems have significantly impacted family units due to rural-to-urban or other migrations. Diasporic communities experience a sense of displacement, nostalgia, and a longing for acceptance and establishment in a foreign land. Immigration has been a common phenomenon throughout history, driven by economic necessities, geographical hardships, or socio-political persecution. Diaspora refers to individuals and communities who live away from their country of origin, often with a distinct minority identity in the host society or country. Today, debates centre around issues of homeland, identity, and race for immigrated communities. Diaspora fiction explores themes of alienation, displacement, assimilation, and the search for identity, while addressing issues of existential rootlessness and cultural disintegration. Migration requires individuals to readjust, adapt, and participate in new communities, and can result in hybridity, exile, nostalgia, selective adaptation, or cultural invention, as John Hartley notes. Hartley defines diasporic communities as groups of individuals who have left their homeland for political or economic reasons, such as seeking work or escaping war. The experience of exile can be accompanied by a longing for the former homeland and a continued attachment to its culture, even while living in a new country. However, immigrants may also feel alienated, fragmented,

and unfamiliar with their new environment. They may even feel indifferent towards the language, culture, and people of the new place.

Today's diaspora is a complex phenomenon, composed of voluntary and victim migrations, as well as labor diasporas of transnational professionals. The oil-producing countries in particular have attracted skilled and unskilled workers from South Asia, initially dominated by Indian and Pakistani laborers, but later joined by people from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. According to Brown, this is not a settled diaspora because obtaining citizenship in Gulf countries has been a challenging process.

The migrants of the past had a strong sense of belonging to their adopted land, with the certainty that their subsequent generations would continue to live there. However, the present generation of migrants cannot foresee a stable future in their adopted country, and they feel like aliens there. The plight of these laborers has been barely explored in Indian fiction until recent times, when a number of novels in the 2000s have encapsulated the ordeals of the migrant community.

Deepak Unnikrishnan, a writer from Abu Dhabi and a resident of the United States, has lived in various places and presently teaches at New York University Abu Dhabi. His first book, *Temporary People*, was the inaugural winner of the Restless Books Prize for New Immigrant Writing. The book highlights the temporariness of Gulf migration, which is central to the daily life in Kerala. The Malayali migrant is portrayed as an alien in their adopted land as well as in their homeland. The book raises questions about the stability of words to capture the eventual nature of individual migrant lives in a structurally ensured temporariness. "During my teenage years, I could see myself growing an attachment to the Gulf layered over my parents' nostalgic narrative of home in Kerala. After I left Abu Dhabi for my studies in the USA, I realized that a lot of my conversations hung around the city," says Deepak about how the idea of three generations, including his grandmother's Persia, his parents' immigrant destination, and his own childhood memories, helped shape his novel over a 13-year period after the publication of his collection *Coffee Stains in a Camel's Teacup*. Deepak Unnikrishnan's debut novel, which rejects nostalgia and instead captures the diasporic experience on its own terms, employs a unique language, a Pidgin English with Malayalam and Arabic words, to highlight the unequal relations between the largely working-class diaspora and the Arab ruling class. Through a series of stories, his novel-in-stories portrays the frenetic, fantastical, and fragmented lives of the South Asian

diaspora in the United Arab Emirates and examines the experience of immigration, emigration, identity, and exile in the Gulf and India from a distinctly South Asian perspective.

Benyamin, an Indian novelist and short story writer in Malayalam, lived in the Kingdom of Bahrain from 1992 to 2013 before returning to Kerala. His works regularly appear in Malayalam publications in Kerala. Benyamin's recent novels, based on the Arab Spring, *Mullappoo Niramulla Pakalukal* (translated as *Jasmine Days* by Shahnaz Habib) and its sequel *Al Arabian Novel Factory*, explore the cost of migrant labor to population groups in the Gulf countries. By bringing forth the question of discrimination and repression in the Gulf, Benyamin highlights the invisibility in the narrative itself. These twin novels are a worthy attempt to traverse the sensitive terrain of politics and explore the tremors of the Arab Spring, with a cosmopolitan cast at the heart of a trans-regional political churn. Both novels keep pace with contemporary history and discuss the role of diasporic communities in the politics of nation-states. Contemporary Malayali writers have also explored the lives of unprivileged laborers who sailed to the Middle East in search of the Gulf dream, only to erode slowly under the weight of hard labor.

Malayalam literature features numerous novels, movies, and travelogues that focus on the experiences of migrant laborers. One such example is Benyamin's *Goat Days*, which tells the story of the Malayali diaspora in the Gulf. The novel transcends its Malayaliness to become a searing account of migration, exile, and exploitation. It offers a window into the lives of working-class individuals who have financed Kerala's growth story since the 1980s. The novel's realistic and heart-wrenching prose gained it a wide readership. It follows the protagonist Najeeb on his journey through the desert land and the trials and hardships he undergoes. More importantly, it paints a vivid picture of the life of an immigrant worker forced into labor in Saudi Arabia.

Marubhoomiyude Atmakatha is a travelogue by V Musafar Ahammed that won the Sahithya Akademi award in 2010. The work acquaints the reader with the slave narratives that contrast with the celebrated narratives of the Gulf dream. The Salim Ahamed movie *Pathemari* pays tribute to every expatriate who sacrificed their happiness for their families. The central character, Pallikkal Narayanan (played by Mammooty), migrates to a Gulf country during his teenage years in search of a job. He faces many struggles while working there but endures them for the sake of his family's happiness. Through these fictional works, readers can understand the

social, mental, political, and physical sufferings that immigrants endure in Gulf countries. These works contrast with our ideas and assumptions of the expat life in the Gulf.

It is a fact that people who migrate to different locations in search of a better life often refuse to merge with the host nation's culture and practices. Expats often experience a sense of emptiness and existential crisis, yet they endure the hardships of living in foreign lands for the betterment of their loved ones. Despite their tireless efforts, they are rarely acknowledged or recognized in their host countries, and many never get the chance to fulfill their own aspirations. As Himadri Lahiri suggests, diasporic individuals find themselves suspended between two worlds, belonging to neither but existing in both. The oil boom of the 1960s in the Middle East drew many unskilled laborers from Kerala, India, and by the 1970s, migration to the Gulf region peaked, sustaining Kerala's welfare system through remittances. The resulting changes in Kerala's society, economy, landscape, and culture were significant, with new cuisines and consumer choices introduced. Though early Malayali migrants faced hardships, their contributions to Kerala's improved standard of living are still celebrated. Today, Gulf cities remain both a land of opportunity and a source of misery for many Malayali expats. While skilled and semi-skilled workers still flock to the region, the majority are unskilled and from the lower middle class, often working without citizenship rights and enduring deplorable living conditions.

The "long dream of home" is ever present in every migrant who leaves their homeland, whether as a job seeker, refugee, or traveler. In the past, migrant workers could easily obtain citizenship in their destination countries, but now, nations treat them as contract workers and send them back once their tenure is up, reflecting the new global capitalist formula of "use and throw." This has led to a great deal of insecurity among migrant workers, who realize that they will eventually return home without any support from their employers. The concept of the welfare state has been ejected by neo-capitalism, exacerbating the uncertainty faced by migrant workers.

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SOCIETY AS A SAVIOUR AND DESTROYER: SOCIOCULTURAL ANALYSIS ON THE LIGHT OF “CAST AWAY” (2000) AND “JOKER” (2019)

Mr. Zana b

ABSTRACT

Does society maintain a single standard? In a broader context, society is the crucial agent to impart positivity and healthy sustainability to its occupants. Despite this, our society sets double standards in providing a positive atmosphere and a better societal influence equally. Culture, heritage, status, traditions- helps to nourish societal relationships. Moreover, social status gives out a sense of belongingness and emotional support in a person. Similarly, these same ideologies can alienate or exclude a person from their society. Hence, societal background and status influence immensely in the emotional progression of a person. Therefore, a man who is socially accepted nourishes with the support of society and develops a positive emotional progression towards the harsh reality of life. Whereas, a man who doesn't fit into the social expectations and roles is excluded and even remains as unnoticed in the society. Physical and psychological illnesses like depression, anxiety due to lack of security and other psychotic disorders are the problems faced by people deprived of social contact. Humans as a social being, with the highest dependency rate, need both physical and mental support from the society for survival. Thus, societal influence can create both positive and negative emotion in their personal development. Ultimately, psychopath in the movie and the socially accepted survivor in the movie “Cast Away” are both the products of society. Sociocultural analysis of the movies “Cast Away” (2000) and “Joker” (2019) with theoretical support of literary psychology and psychoanalysis to explore the concept of human belongingness and the role of society to provide a healthy societal background and experience for the wellbeing of humans.

Keywords :Psychopath, Survivor, Social - exclusion, Optimism, Emotion.

Society as a Saviour and Destroyer: Sociocultural Analysis on the Light of “Cast Away” (2000) and “Joker” (2019)

“Man is by nature a social animal; an individual who is unsocial naturally and not accidentally is either beneath our notice or more than human. Society is something that precedes the individual.” (Aristotle, *Politics* .1253a)

Humans are dependent by birth and not born alone into nature with a self-reliant entity. But rather are born into a family, community, biodiversity, heritage, language and culture which are indispensable requisites for life. Being a part of nature, humans have a set of natural selections to sustain. Relying on the nature of humans makes them defenceless. Man by birth had tied the knot with reliable social and natural volunteers. Establishing a mutual relationship between a man and society contributes to the progress of individuals. For instance, Todd Phillips' movie named Joker depicts the problem faced by a man deprived of social relationships for his emotional progress. Moreover, humans were born in connection with humans. Human companionship or connectedness is the one factor that keeps us going. Compared with other mammals, homosapiens are the most vulnerable mammals on the planet. They survive based on other living organisms surrounding them. Human infants connect to others the very second after birth unlike animals. Animals can fly or run by birth in contrast to humans gradually becoming capable of walking. Or else they may die without the connection because of the dependency nature of new-born infants. They need a protector not only physically but also to feel psychologically safe. Nonetheless, the lost sense of belongingness evokes the sense of threats in an agitated one.

Negative emotions are generally associated with the feelings that are related to self-human dignity, low self-esteem and from negative life events. Consequently, people with larger social networks have more social support and high quality of relationships. The unforeseen life of a well-organised FedEx supervisor is pictured in the movie “Cast Away” directed by Robert Zemeckis. The storyline depicts a story of a Federal Express executive named Chuck Noland who survives a plane crash and is stranded on an uninhabited island in the Pacific for four years. The movie portrayed the unexpected turn in a man’s life drifting away from his safe home place into a deserted island and his lonely struggle for survival. This movie is a preview which stands as strong evidence for man’s need for companionship and social environment. Life is for sure uneasy alone to live. In the island there is no one for him to help or to encourage him. Evidently

it is hard and excruciating for a human being, a social animal, to sustain alone on an island. Chuck solves his companionship problem by initiating a friendship with a volleyball he calls "Wilson," which comes from one of those stranded packages. When the social contact is denied and they get deprived of a companionship they find their way out to feel the company. It is evident in the movie that a normal person can only see volleyball as a ball stained with blood. The extreme frustration and depression caused by the loneliness of Chuck Noland give birth to the character Wilson. The volleyball in the movie is an instance for anthropomorphism agents to act as a companion to escape from this alienation. He even attributed emotions for the inanimate volleyball named Wilson. Wilson is not just a volleyball for him. Moreover, it helps to provide companionship to rely on for comfort. In the movie in his alienated life only Wilson offered him the basic psychological need for human survival.

Emotional support from companionship can make any weak desperate person into a strong courageous human. Wilson was capable of providing ailment to the pressure of life and comforting Chuck. The presence of Wilson averted Chuck from committing suicide. On the whole, Wilson was the single reason for Chuck to be alive and made him spirited. The need for the companion is so deep for humans is justifiably depicted by Robert Zemeckis in the movie. The movie portrays positive emotional progression in the character during alienation.

Alienation is not only the situation of isolating from human surroundings. Moreover, it is experienced inside society in which people are alienated from each other due to social exclusion. On the whole it is the situation of being alienated from human physical and mental needs. The psychological thriller movie "Joker" (2019) directed by Todd Phillips pictures the evolution of a mass murderer within a society. The entire movie gives out the hidden dark image of the society and the dirty political plays. This movie too reflects the struggles faced by a marginalized individual subdued in a capitalist society. The main protagonist is one of the many victims of consumerist society. Arthur Fleck is an ambitious guy who lives with his single mother. He drags everyday with his poor earnings to lead his lower standard of living. He was born with chronic- psychiatric disorder characterized by marked unpredictable, manipulative, and unstable behaviour. The movie showcases the pathetic life of a clown struggling to sustain and pursue his dream. He was a sad loner but never hesitated to make others happy. But ironically, when he tried to make others happy in return, he received immense ignorance and humiliation. Hence, he drastically became an anti-socialist.

“I used to think that my life was a tragedy. But now I realise, it’s a comedy.” (Phillips, *Joker*, 01:30:33 -01:30:48)

The movie “Joker” is the story of Arthur, who was once a kind man forcibly turned into a beast by the inhumane society. On the one hand, society is an all-embracing home for a man which meets the psychological need for brotherhood and sustainability. Whereas the same common house of society with its adverse nature completely pulls down the blocks of humanity and kindness in the character. Arthur Fleck as a marginalised individual is not an acceptable person in the society. Therefore, his life experiences were worse as hell. He dreamt of becoming a celebrated passionate comedian but ended as a remorseless murderer. He lived in a social world which constantly hesitated even to consider his existence. Society closed every door in front of him that obstructed his path to fulfil his dream. His self-kindness is evident in the movie when he wanted to save a woman harassed by city elites on the train. Public people treated him as a trashcan to throw in their dirty attitude. No one was there for him to help sincerely. Throughout the movie, Arthur is showcased as a pale faced and underweighted man. Evidently, it indicates the extreme poverty and lack of nutrition in his body. The ruling party neglected the lower-class people due to their consumeristic nature. In short, without proper wage and welfare from society and moreover, social exclusion resulted in imbalance in his life. Indeed, a man who cannot find a way even for his food for sure is deprived of basic infrastructure. Thus, he extremely struggled with his mental and health illness without treatment. Subsequently, he suffered from schizoaffective disorder and psychosis. And he is deprived of affection, identity and social relationships. He began to hallucinate his needs to heal this lack of affection and intimacy. As a social animal he needs to be loved and give love in return. Undoubtedly his paranoid delusion is the adverse impact of society. Hence without proper medication and treatment he remained mentally disturbed. Thus, his mental unrest had immense potential to engage in troubles such as attempting suicide and for mass killings. Arthur Flecks as a troubled loner finds discomfort and only receives negative impacts from the surrounding turned into a violent psychopath. The increased dismissal of this sort of unhelpful prejudice and lack of strength to bring out a new set of positivity in society evoked pity over self. The self-pity and harsh ignorance along with repressed emotions boosted the aggression in Arthur. Undoubtedly, he is the complete social product of capitalist society. The society transformed him into a fully grown beast that can even harm its mother owing to the extreme humiliation he faced because of his mother. Newborn sociopath within him, his extreme hatred to the societal attitude

provoked him to kill. On the contrary, society celebrated his violent nature and accepted Joker as their rebellious leader. Now he is the complete grown supervillain who finds passion in killing. In short, Joker was born in Arthur Fleck for liberating his repulsive emotions.

Todd Phillips' movie "Joker" can be considered as a backlash against capitalist society as a creator of extremists. More importantly, it portrays the chauvinism of American masculinity on the basis of an ideal of white supremacy that excludes the poor. Capitalists were merciless violent creatures with narrow minded vision. In the narrow sense who enroute paths for profit rather than equal beneficiary progress for the human race. Thus, the movie perpetuates how society views and treats a person regarding their social status and excludes them. Society prompted a person with schizoaffective and bipolar disorder to channelize his energy in the most unpredictable and brutal way. Arthur was struggling hard to escape from the gruelling psychological impact of late capitalism. No matter how far he runs but the societal attitude towards his life washed off his human nature of kindness. He too was a normal person with ambition and hope. However, society keeps denying. The extreme psychological issues of lack of security and low esteem haunted him like shadow. He had to endure immense social humiliation, abuse and exclusion that chased him. Society abandoned the suffering sad loner and let him suffer alone. This inhuman self-centred attitude of society paved a significant role for his anti-social attitudes. It was a contradictory scenario for Arthur where the ignorant people treated him as a superhero who saves from the black hands of capitalism for justice. In an ironic manner their society encourages him to be a supervillain rather than being a passionate mankind. It evokes sarcasm even though the society who ignored the kindness devoted the villainy to Arthur. Indeed the new born Joker finds worth in violence. Thus, the importance of psychoanalytic study of the character is crucial to erase the misconceptions spread in the public to treat psychiatrically suffered people as psychopaths and supervillains. The unconscious mind of Arthur filled with negative impacts of society came out in an uglier way as anti-socialist behaviour. Moreover, this movie bring out the unfounded reality and to spread the hidden cause of mental illness can result in a negative course of actions in one which is incidentally injected from the habitual surroundings. Arthur Fleck's deconstructed the misinformed society's perception and stereotypical view towards the violent nature.

It is evident in the movie "Cast Away" in which the character depends on his imaginary companion for survival. Thus, the dependent journey of life where one belongs stays constant

because humans need something to thrive. They are social animals. Being born to a society reduces our extent of existence into question. According to their basic instinct of dependency, one can't survive alone. For a good life we have to feel loved, needy and successful by the people around us. Indeed, human emotional affairs cannot be handled alone which is unabated and uncontrollable in nature. It can even turn a man into a supervillain like Arthur turned into a Joker in the movie who had to face physical and mental issues all alone without somebody's aid. Arthur wouldn't turn into a beast if he had someone to accept his reality and to console him. Thus, the need for social relationships and a healthy social background is apparent in the movie. Social isolation can risk one from the overall cognitive performance in a more negative and depressive way. In spite of that it heightens the sensitivity to social threats in the weaker mind. Social togetherness acts as a social service for people to feel humanity and emotional comfort mutually. Incidentally it is great to have a social friend to listen to our worries and make us feel refreshed. People underprivileged of experiencing such a social relationship cannot help to relieve their burden for a short while. Those deprived of the social support and acceptance risk their life for the desire to experience the shared social togetherness. In other words, nature left us two options, either to connect or to die.

“A sense of belonging is a sine qua non of healthy psychological functioning everywhere. Such a sense beginning in infancy and continuing throughout life, comes about by experiencing mutual empathy by sensing oneself as part of a whole, which recognizes and accepts that one is a member.” (Maureen O'Hara)

Emotional processing in humans can differ from person to person based on their psychological and living experiences. In general, it is unpredictable to foresee the emotions processed in a person and how they can be reacted to certain issues. It is the responsibility of the social fabric to create the right atmosphere for every individual to grow together towards for everybody. Obviously, everyone acts according to societal influence that can be either positive and negative respectively. In general, societal influence pushes the people away from their responsibilities to the society for a cordial society. People react differently to the adversities of life that differ from person to person. It is entirely dependable according to the mental strength and the mind state. Experiences and feelings in life drastically influence human behaviour. In the movie “Cast Away”, the survival story of Chuck Noland approached alienation in an inspirational way. He positively reacted and overcame the situation he faced on the island. Thus,

society plays a vital role in the physical and mental well-being of humans to evoke positive sensation for the meaning of life.

Society is the decisive factor for the healthy sustainability of humans. The highly dependent nature of humans for their survival seeks their security, belongingness, status and moreover for their individual development. In fact, societal relationships help to nourish human life with healthy relationships, heritage and sense of belonging along with security. Deprived of these societal influences in life can result in the destruction of personal development in one's life. Society is notable for its role played in a person for their personal development. Chuck Noland was once immersed in a well settled comfortable life. In his homeland, he led a successful employable life and even success in his love life. In the eyes of society, he is living a lifestyle that meets societal prejudice. Thus, he was respected and moreover accepted personality in the society. For them he is confident and a knowledgeable man with immense responsibility as a FedEx executive. A complete fit person for the social expectations. According to Chuck he leads a perfect life in his society that nourishes his personal development. Whereas the main character of Todd Philipp's named Arthur Fleck's life in society was dreadful. None of the people in his society accepted him nor even considered him as a human being. A sad loner deprived of the support and security from the society. Society in which he lives is perishable and neither helps to cherish his soul. In short, the negative societal background gives birth to Joker in Arthur to destroy the biased society. Whereas the positive societal influence helps Chuck Noland to give birth to Wilson for his companionship. On the whole societal influence leads to the positive and negative emotional progression in human beings.

Society as a creator of both positive and negative emotions and behaviour with its societal influence. Hence the psychopath in the movie "Joker" and the socially accepted individuality of Chuck in "Cast Away" are both the products of society. In general, societal influence and experience is the decisive factor that contributes to the emotional and behavioural progression in one. It can prevent a person from the schizophrenic spectrum and lead a healthy life. The extreme need for a society as an agent to impart positivity and healthy sustainability for humans. Moreover, recommends enriching our society as a platform that embraces everyone equally and encourages positive personal development attitude towards our society. Human need for companionship in life is to be ensured as a positive sustainable measure in society as a collective responsibility.

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'THE WEAVE OF MY LIFE' : THE KALEIDOSCOPIIC PORTRAYAL OF

Ms. Disna

HUMILIATION

History asserts the existence of social cleavages in Indian society, in terms of caste, class, gender etc. Such cleavages has changed the entire social texture of Indian society, whereby the exploited section, be it the Dalits, adivasis or women, have been systematically pushed to the rim by the traditional Brahmanical structure of oppression. Dalits are the people who are economically, socially, politically exploited from centuries. Unable to live in the society of human beings, they have been living outside the village depending on lower level of occupation, and lived as —untouchable|| .This exploitation or ill treatment is due to the discrimination followed by age old caste hierarchical tradition in the Hindu society. This hierarchy has been the cause for oppression of Dalits in each and every sphere of society since centuries. It has subjected them to a life of poverty and humiliation.

According to Dr. Ambedkar, “I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress women have achieved.” Men oriented societies have always considered women lower or underneath. They were treated as second to men in developing countries like India. Although women achieved many milestones in India however their condition is not much enhanced . In the case of Dalit women, they face deprivation and humiliation as a woman and as a Dalit. They are victimised on the basis of caste and gender even by their own family. There are some courageous stories of Dalit women who have struggled against the flow of the wind. They have tried hard to achieve their current status which made the society to revise their thought process. Many Dalit women leaders or heroes are working in these manners. The most prominent names are Krantijyoti Savitri Bai Phule, Rama Bai Ambedkar, Baby Kamble, Urmila Pawar, Meria Kumar and Mayawati. They have worked in different fields and have become motivational spirit for others.

“My mother used to weave aaydans, the Marathi generic term for all things made from bamboo. I finds her act of weaving and my act of writing is originally linked. The weave is similar. It is the weave of pain, suffering and agony that links us”(Pawar preface x).

Activist and one of the foremost literary figures in Marathi, Urmila Pawar through the frank and bosom description of her family life skillfully takes the reader through a rich annals of Dalit history. 'Dalits' or 'Untouchables' is the name given to the lowest and poorest caste of people in Indian society. From the time immemorial Dalits were believed to be subservient and inferior section of the society. Even the upper class people considered them as polluted by nature and were there for forbidden from performing anything, but the most nasty and undesirable toil. Dalits were often forced to live in the secluded groups or communities.

Urmila Pawar is an acclaimed Maharashtrian writer, who has discussed Dalit culture and gender issues in Maharashtra, since the past two decades. Weaving is the metaphor of Urmila Pawar's subtle and authentic memoir 'Aaydan', which was published in the year 2003. Aaydan her autobiography originally written in Marathi, has been translated into English and titled as 'The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs' is much commemorated and celebrated throughout Marathi literature.

Aaydan is the name for the cane baskets that Pawar's mother wove to sell for the supplementary income for the family. It was the main economic activity of the Mahar community whom she belongs. As Pawar writes, "My mother used to weave Aaydan and I was writing this book both were activities of creation of thought and practical reality of life"(1).

The subtitle of the life narrative 'A Dalit Women's Memoirs' signifies Dalit women as the centre subject. Like her mother, who weaved bamboo baskets for the survival of her family, Urmila Pawar weaves her life's experiences and memories into her life narrative. The quill dipped in the ink is the same as the needle used for weaving because both writing and weaving are the means of expression. It is often said that text and textiles are same thing. Similarly in 'The Weave of My Life', both the activities articulate the unexpressed pain.

Wandana Sonalkar while giving her forward writes that the title of the book 'The Weave' is a metaphor of the writing technique employed by Pawar, "The lives of different members of her family, her husband's family, her neighbours and classmates, are woven together in a narrative that gradually reveals different aspects of the everyday life of Dalits, the manifold ways in which caste asserts itself and grinds them down"(7).

Pawar hand out fine points of what daily village life was like in the time of her grandmother, mother and in her childhood. The first half of the book is full of common stories about her

relatives and her childhood gives them reader a brief glance into their village, where men and women lived a life of diligence struggles. Pawar's family was somehow particular for a dalit family. Her father executed priestly duties of their caste, which were typically performed by Brahmins. Both of her parents strongly believed in the importance of education to mobilize their children into a better life.

Pawar was much sensitive about her caste as well as her poverty. So during school days onwards her conscious mind was aware of the limitation of being a lower caste and a woman. She writes about her empiricism with caste discrimination in a clearcut manner, that evokes readers to burst into tears. As she writes,

The upper caste girls always used words like 'Ladu', 'Modak', 'Karanjya', 'Ruranpolya'. They brought such novel items in their tiffin boxes as well as at times we went on excursions. However, I never asked myself the stupid question, why we do not prepare such dishes at home? We were aware, without anybody telling us, that we were born in a particular caste and in poverty, and that we had to live accordingly(13)

Pawar as a feminist and as a dalit woman has highlighted an issue through her memoir. It is about the women in their food preparations at home. It is very distinct from the memoir that separate food preparations were made for men and women and daughter-in-law is exploited upto maximum level. Pawar has given very minute details of oppression and exploitation of girl child and woman. Sometimes the abasement is so much that it is penetrating with his/her sensibility. Pawar describes the following implications both the insult and hunger of the girl child. Whenever they get good dish or complete food it is difficult for them to control. Pawar weaves the incident very sorrowfully. Once she went to attend a wedding at her sister-in-law's place along with her nieces, seeing three girls eating hurriedly, the man enquired about them and said loudly that they are eating like 'monsters'. This humiliating incident was not easy for them to digest.

Pawar recollects heart wrenching school days memories revolving around food. One day her classmates at school had decided to cook a meal. They had discussed what everyone should bring. Pawar remembers the incident, "What should I bring? Nothing, they said. You must bring some money"(107). They decided to cook from Tarlatan Savant's house, though her parents were away. Girls like Sushila Dhumak, Kamal Chavan and Sunanda Bhosale cooked a simple

but tasty meal of rice and vegetables. Pawar writes this heart breaking incident, “They did not allow me to touch anything . However, we all ate together. I really enjoyed the meal. The next day I was horrified to hear that my eating had become the hottest topic for juicy gossip. Girls were whispering in groups about how much I had eaten!”(110)

It was really a mortifying incident to Urmila and felt thousands death that day. This incident also throws light to relevant issues in the cultural inheritance of the country. Firstly children show signs of caste discrimination and untouchability. Secondly, the situation in which poor people is being humiliated and illtreated for their hunger. When Pawar refers to her school life and sharing of lunch boxes experiences, she has pointedly sited the items attracted her but considering her economic condition at home,she never imagined to talk about them at home. She felt humiliated in her English language class where teacher used to outrage her for her poor command over the subject. He used to taunt and rebuke her, “this is English the milk of tigris; it is not easy like acting in plays”(160). Urmila narrated her experience of sexual exploitation at her early adulthood and about her schoolmates. This narration and incidents of sexual exploitation are evident in her memoir, “My meternal uncle plays dolls with me and pretends to be my husband and drags me into an alcove and presses me hard”(125).

In this frank and cozy memoir Pawar not only shares her vigorous attempt to surpass gruesome personal tragedy but also transmit the excitement of rousing consciousness during a time of discerning political and social change. The conversion to Buddhism following Babasaheb Ambedhkar’s call to renounce the caste-based Hindu religion laid the support of Urmila’s personal growth. The transformation was harmoniously and unconditionally accepted by the villagers and they decided to discard all Gods and Goddesses and replace them by Dr. Ambedkar’s photo and Lord Buddha’s photo. As Urmila narrates,

We put all of them in a basket. Infact,the silver and the brass would have fetched a tidy amount if we had sold the stuff. However we have family resolved to discard the gods with all the accompanying paraphamalia. Therefore we went to the river with the other people, the young children in raw. On the way, people chanted the same traditional invocation but with a completely different set words(116).

Urmila writes frankly about the ‘private’ and ‘public’ aspects of her life of facing in love with Harishchandran as a young teenager, whose family is somewhat below her social

status and who is less educated than her. Even after knowing the aftermath she decided to marry him in the teeth of family opposition.

Like Kamala Das, who is well known for her open autobiography, Pawar has described her first night experience so openly without omitting anything. That night was an unforgettable night which cannot forget as she has obtained an imprint as 'fridged'. Urmila felt little bit-chaotic and upset but again the second thought came to mind that it might be the wish of her husband itself, a sign of being virgin. If she had taken any eagerness to do something, he would have suspected her virginity. She thought that she was aware of every move but she remained arrestive.

In a male dominated society Dalit women suffered unimaginable oppression through caste but gender too, which there was no escape. Urmila memorize her first salary she has received after her marriage and it illustrate her ecstasy at one point but at the same time she was aware she has to give it to Harishchandra, her husband. Still the dependence has remained the same. Urmila remembers the day she got her first salary, she could not believe that all money was her and she thought that she can spend it the way she liked. Before her marriage, she used to handover her salary to her mother, now she started handling it over to her husband. According to her this was an act of offering head for the butcher's knife. Through this Urmila throws light to the truth that Dalit women narraters are quite frank about the patriarchal social order that exists in Dalit communities and how they are the direct victims of such a trivial order.

Pawar sensed strongly that self-respect received by man is very natural which is difficult for the woman to achieve without tireless endeavour. Her inner conversion started with participation in drama at the school \college days, and her strong faith in reading books about Babasaheb Ambedhkar and other Dalit writers, never gets faded. Pawar got enough oppurtities for developing her writing skills while doing job at Mumbai office. She got enough sweat time of her own to do her writing of short stories, formulating articles, prospering women friends and creating awareness about their problems.

Urmila commemorates the episode of her admission to MA course where her husband Harishchandra took strong rejection and objections. He was a classical husband and he was exactly expecting a 'wife' mentioned in Judy Brady's *'Why I Want A Wife'*. According to Brady, a woman is shown as someone who has to give birth, look after, support, suffer, prepare

the menu,cook food,clean the house, wash the dishes, entertain the guests and do a lot of other things wordlessly and tirelessly.

Likewise, Harishchandran wanted Urmila to do things like the other community women do in their locality. Pawar writes candidly about her husband's non stop criticism and impassionate abuse as she continued to do her 'social work' and her writings gained acclaim in the form of awards and published works. Later Pawar realized her husband's ego working and he could not seem to abide to her qualified wife. His traditional patriarchal dictum ruled him and he denied Pawar not to go ahead for MA course. Amidst all these struggles Urmila stand solid. With the help of her friend Hira Bansode, Pawar came to know about women's organization named 'Maitrim' where she was luckly enough to meet notable women dignitaries like Chhaya Datar, Vidya Bal and Usha Mehla.

Pawar recollects her first proposal to read a shot story at Shahitya Sammelana at Vikroli. Whereby luckly she could witness the publication of padmashree Daya Pawar's 'Baluta'. An important scrutiny was held about to form an autobiography. Prominent speakers like Daya Pawar, Bhaushaeb Adsul, and Appa Ranpise were on the stage including Pawar herself. As Pawar writes, "Adsul said in this book, Daya Pawar has torn to shreds the dignity of our mother's and sisters! Had Babasaheb Ambedhkar live today he would have kicked this book out"(229).

Pawar exhibits the contrast of male/female positions and titles bestowed to them. She says when any man is promoted he would become a 'Bhaushaeb' or 'Raosaheb' but a women officer remained only a 'Bai' without the title of Sahib. As a Dalit writer, she felt much as it an abuse to her position and caste.

Pawar's fame marked up with her publication of various works however, at home her position was not so pleasant and satisfying as Harishchandra constantly felt be little himself compared to Urmila's achievements and progress. Urmila narrates her woes and pains like this, "His attitude towards me was full of contradictions. On the one hand, he was proud of my writings, he admitted to his friends and relatives. However on the other, he immensely resented my being recognized as a writer, my speaking in public programs and my emerging as a figure on the public domain"(246).

When Urmila point out to her autobiographical writing, she invariably recall her mother and links her mother's act of weaving baskets, aaydans to her own 'act of weavig'. Urmila looked upon her writing as a rescue to neglect her pain and discomfort. Once she asked her mother about 'motherhood' and she answered in one word 'sacrifice' with intense pain on her face. "I just wanted to know how she would express the feeling behind the word 'Mother'. My question made her wince with pain. She said, to be a mother is to commit sati, to immolate oneself: nothing less!" (298).

Pawar has also depicted a very deplorable and heart lending incident of her life when she lost her son in young age. Pawar also admitted the truth of household work done by her husband in the presence of the guests, whether with understanding or just for the sake of presentation it was difficult for her to judge her husband's intentions.

At the end of her memoir she wind up with miserable ritual of death ceremony in Maharashtra, where widow has to break her 'Mangalsutra' (marital necklace of black beads) and her bangles and with the left toe of the husband she has to remove her wifhood that is, Kumkum tilak. Urmila opposed this ritual completely without thinking of someone accepts or not. But she has grown sufficiently hardend and mature to face her life stoically.

Sharmila Rege advocate that the weave should be not read as a feminist or dalit autobiography rather as 'historical narrative of experience'. Sharmila in her afterward writes,

Memoirs of humiliation and resistance delineate the reproduction of caste as a form of modern inequality both in the village and the city. People would first purify the Aaydan, the basket woven by dalits by sprinkling water on it. At school, teachers would pick on dalit girls to clean the dung on the school verandah when it was the turn of their class to undertake cleaning (330).

Pawar's autobiography has been much acclaimed in Marathi literary spheres. Her use of mundane dalit and articulation is no longer a new stylistic device. Maya Pandit's translation succeeds, for a great extent in transferring the essence of speech and explicit humor of Pawar's writing style. She never forget to retain the Marathi kinship terms that are integral part of family relationship and also gives us a glossary to their meaning.

Pawar has been criticized for her society with upper-class women's group and open exposition of Dalit patriarchy. The main focus of her autobiography however is on the self.

She talks about her personal life and her life experiences. Nevertheless the community always stand out large in her autobiography as well as in her fiction. She admits, “What the writer writes about is social reality, and not his/her individual life”(342).

By the edge of the memoir Pawar has experienced much hard times and adversities. Besides she was being damned by some in the community for her misadventure and for not being a traditional wife and mother. In the closing passage of her memoir, Urmila drops out a not like this:

Life has taught me many things, showed me so much. It has also lashed it me till. I bleed, I don't know how much longer I am going to leave, nor do I know in what form life is going to confront me let it came in any form, I am ready to face it stoically. This is what my life has taught me. This is my life and that is me(320).

To conclude , ‘The Weave of My Life’, is the voice of the distressed and sufferings of Dalit women. Memories and experiences of victimization are articulated to tear down the shadows of oppression. Written in a realistic fictional mode, it characterized by honest, frank and bold articulation of a dalit women's experiences and may easily be compared with Afro American women's narratives. Although Urmila Pawar has traced the evolution of her personality in her Memoirs, she has also inevitably offered a detailed picture of many people .In spite of simply being portraying the story of herself, the Memoirs remains an invaluable cultural record of dalits in Maharashtra as it offers a rich description of the ethnic specificities like their dress codes, eating habits, joint family code of conduct, rituals, entertainments and distinctive dialect etc. which provide a sharp contrast to those of Hindu Brahmanical ones. She is quite right when she concludes her Memoirs by saying, “I expect nothing from the reader's. I want them to see that each and every person's life is a social document”(339).

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