

## Expectation to Despair: Analysis of Trauma Theory in Goat Days and Khadamma

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### Abstract

Literature influences human beings in different ways and also helps to give new perspectives regarding each and every matter. The language of literature has a power to get the attention of the readers. It has a room for memories, flashbacks and moments which are filled with discomfort, injury as well as trauma. Works like *Khadamma* and *Goat days* throw light into the inner skirts of the experiences that the characters go through and offer wide platform for the analysis of their mindscape. Trauma can be considered as an individual's sensitive reaction to a particular occasion that annoys former notions of a person's sense of life. The central feature of trauma novel is the change of the self-ignited due to an exterior frightening occurrence. Ashwathy of *Khadamma* and Najeeb of *Goat days* are victims of trauma that dissect their identity. They experience a sense of disillusionment and loss of identity which leads them to a traumatic situation. Both the characters reached gulf in the hope of earning money but their journey of hope soon turned to despair with the cruel treatment of their sponsors. Their misery forced them into trauma where they question their own identity. These characters from varied works of different genres, is connected by a bond of shared experience of trauma in a foreign land with horrible aftermath. This paper focuses on the concept of trauma and identity crisis faced by the characters Najeeb and Ashwathy who represent hope and desire of every keralits who dream about a secure future. Both the works are set in the background of gulf.

**Keywords:** trauma theory, Freudian theory, dissolution of self, diasporic migrants, temporal gap.

### Introduction

"There are wounds that never show on the body that are deeper and more hurtful than anything that bleeds" (Hamilton 17). The injuries that are caused to the psyche annihilate a person more than a physical injury and it may also take longer time to heal. Sometimes it might not get healed at all. Human mind is a complex phenomenon and every experience that a person encounters, leaves an impression there. In that context, trauma becomes really important as it can leave a lasting impression on the person and can influence his/her life and also the lives of the people around them. Trauma theory is a relatively new theory in the arena of literature and it analyses the effect of trauma on characters thereby bestowing greater insights into the depth of the characters. This paper aims to analyze and compare the Malayalam movie *Khadamma* and the novel *Goat Days* on the basis of trauma theory. The focus is on how trauma becomes the driving force for 'dissolution of self'.

"The word 'trauma' refers to a traumatic event which involves a single event or experience with feelings and emotions" (Heidarizedah 789). Trauma creates a lasting harmful results. Physical abuse, discrimination in work place, police cruelty, and experiences of childhood are the causes of trauma. This experience can haunt the victim throughout the life and is even potent to disrupt their cognitive balance. An analysis of trauma and the negative consequences that follow the event becomes the milestone for this paper as it fills many gaps in both the movie and the book that would otherwise remain unattended.

The concept of trauma took its origin from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis. Freud's *Studies in Hysteria* focused on the changing aspects of trauma, authoritarianism and development of its signs. "Freud held trauma an overpowering event, unacceptable to consciousness or compulsive, repetitive behaviors" (Berger). The chief theory of trauma and signs converted challenging for Freud because he decided that neurotic indications are the result of suppressed drives and needs than of traumatic occasions. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the traumatic event and its consequences became key idea of psychoanalysis. The traumatic incident and its product once more return into crucial to psychoanalysis. He attempted a theory of trauma in his work *Moses and Monotheism* it paves for the historical development of entire cultures. Trauma theory was conceptualized in 1900s by Cathy Caruth, Geoffrey Hartman, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub.

The oil age created exceptional scale of individual arrest as well as cruelty. During that period, individuals started to travel in larger groups as compared to the previous time. Huge relocation after the boom of oil industry in the 1970s is an example. And during the 1990's, the number of migratory workers increased by a huge margin. The Migrant Labourers from Kerala amounting to 25 Lakhs, transfers around fifteen percentage of their total income to their homes. Working with low salary, the workers from India spent years far away from their homeland, manage to survive in hard circumstances, most of their passports being kept by their sponsors due to lack of supporting laws in the region. The Novel *Goat Days* by Benyamin and the Movie *Khaddama* by Kamal is strong portrayal of their lives and we are yet to see more such life stories in literary form.

The relation between trauma and the place of trauma is also established in these works. Explanations of the geographical habitation of traumatic involvement and memory place the people in association to a wider cultural background which consists morals that effect the remembrance of an incident and reshaping of the self. Thus such trauma faced by an individual becomes collective trauma as it represents a group of people who are associated with the place. Trauma is one's expressive response to a devastating occasion which interrupts former thoughts of a person's wisdom of self and the ethics to assess the society. The popular trauma theory emphasizes the site that distressing familiarity creates a 'progressive difference' and breaking down of one's self.

## 2. Methodology

Clinical psychological explanation and the theoretical description that formulates trauma theory, is applied as a method to understand the social, personal and emotion respectively. The Freudian explanation on trauma along with the new updation in the theory is checked in the course of analysis. Empirical illustration of PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder) upon characters are summarized to analyze effects and condition in general.

## 3. Objectives

A psychological interpretation of hierarchy in the job sectors which can go to an extent of slavery. Through the filmic and book representations, these works underline the traumatic situation and domination of hierarchy on the slaves.

## 4. Hypothesis

The paper illustrates the shattered self of a person in an alien country which is caused by the traumatic experience the characters faced in reference with the text 'Goat days' and 'Khaddamma'.

>How trauma events results in the division of self

>Analysing relationship between trauma and the place of trauma

>Whether there will be a serious long term negative consequence due to catastrophe, betrayal or sexual abuse

## 5. Scope and limitations

The paper could refer to real life situation which illustrates the hardships of migrant workers. The representation of their trauma could be better understood in the light of trauma theory. This paper makes way to a further study of diasporic migrant labours.

This could be analyzed only upon the intensity of reaction that reciprocates on such events and the actual intensity cannot be measured as such, it would only be understood as a response of

collective consciousness from the society involved, hence it is subjective in nature. A general conclusion cannot be drawn from the reading as every case would be different in its situations.

## 6. Chapter 1

Both the works portray the agonies and trauma faced by the people in an alien land. The work place trauma which includes physical and mental abuse can have a deep devastating impact on the victims. In both the works, Saudi Arabia is the place of action. This country has a large number of migrant labourers working in different sectors. In this country the migrants face a great deal of problems. To add to the personal agonies are the discrimination that they face elsewhere. They struggle to gain access to the lawyers and translators in case they are arrested. The arrested people are prevented from contacting their embassies. Basic human rights are violated in case of these workers. They become the traumatized victims in the alien country

The movie *Khaddam* mirrors the reality and shows us the existence of Indian immigrants who struggle with their life in an alien land. This is a moving story which carries the light of optimism and human hard work for their existence in a foreign place. Ashwathy, the protagonist had a hard life after her husband died. She works in a house as a servant in Saudi for very low wage.

The protagonist is a victim of feminist trauma. Considerably, trauma will not have a harmful sense always. Margaret Atwood, a Canadian writer gave a novel approach to this origin.

It is a movement which illustrates an episode of changing which begins from trauma, suffering and pain to knowledge and understanding; it is this female psychoanalysis development that makes the novels receptive to feminist psychoanalysis reading. (Heidarizadeh, 788)

The protagonist loses her identity and self in the journey from her homeland to the country which she thought could bring her fortune. The physical torment inflicted on her became the reason for the mental and psychological changes we could witness in her character. She was the victim of employment discrimination and sexual abuse. This resulted in the fragmentation of her character or 'self.

The repressed memory of her homeland and family is what made her to attempt this escapade. This is the only thing that helped her to overcome such a drastic condition. Being a normal village woman she could have never survived in such harsh conditions. But her circumstances and the hope to return to her homeland were the dreams to which she adhered and that gave her the strength to move forward in life.

*Goat Days* is a novel based on the same theme that narrates the story of a Gulf escapee. Najeeb the protagonist of the novel went to Gulf with the dream of better times just like Ashwathy. Najeeb underwent the torments of his Arab. He spent all day in the middle of the goats. He had no other companions and so he names the goats and talks to them. His mental trauma changed his psychological state where he identifies himself with the goats.

The disruptions between self and others have a connection with the place of trauma as well. In this case the place or setting of the trauma is similar. Saudi Arabia was the land of hope for many migrant workers. The image of the Gulf they have in mind is of a paradise where they can achieve their dreams of making wealth and better living conditions. But what they experienced was entirely conflicting to the idea they had in mind. This is the major cause for the shattering of their individuality and self.

Arab acts as the force of supreme power and the labours become the representative of the powerless. Attribution of power by powerful over a powerless subject is well illustrated in the novel as well as in movies too. The Gulf war which resulted in the relocation of the workers affected the South Asian migrant labourers. The inefficient socioeconomic structures of their homelands forced them to spend most of their life span far from their home and working as slaves for minimum salaries. Often they have to survive in hard and unhygienic environments. Despite the valuable role that migrant laborers play in developing and sustaining the economies of the Gulf States, they face inequality, exploitation, exclusion, forced labor slavery, abuse, human enslavement, brutality, and dehumanization.

OWNER	SLAVE
Dominating	Suppressed
Power	powerless

Kamal's *Khaddama* is a movie based on true life events. . The title is an idiomatic version of the Arabic word 'Khadima' which means a servant. While the term meant housemaid, it means more than that when the turmoil that Ashwathy suffered is analysed. In 'Goat days' the Arbab throw his power over Najeeb with the use of his field glasses and gun. Using his binocular for surveillance of labours who run away from his sight, and shoot and oppress them using the gun. These two materials terrified Najeeb to a point and that he surrendered in front of Arbab. His punishment of starvation for two days for not eating the meat of the goat which got killed, forced him to eat raw wheat with some salt and he finally become a goat. The redemption of Najeeb from the Arabab's supervision to prison becomes a journey from the bondage of captivity to independence. Even though the migratory workers have a huge place in maintaining the gulf economy, these people have to overcome discrimination, manipulation, elimination, mandatory work captivity, exploitation, ruthlessness, and dehumanization.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Literature has given voice to the voiceless. Likewise, the experiences of the diasporic migrant workers are echoed through literary works. They stayed many years without the presence of one's own family, they were underpaid and survived in unhygienic and maintained low standard of life. Even though it is said that slavery is wiped off from the world, this is another form of slavery. The movie *Khaddama* and the novel *Goat Days* represent the life of such migrant workers. Both these works successfully portrayed the plights of migrant laborers in an unknown country. Many blacks faced the same cruelty during the western trade of slaves and it is mirrored in both works. The analysis of this movie and the novel gives significant ideas about their struggle and dilemma. It can be concluded that the protagonists underwent a transformation of self during the traumatic conditions. The repressed memory of the homeland is what compelled them to survive. The fragmented self they both experienced is evident in both movie and novel.

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