

Conclusion

Recently, I came across *Sardar Udham*, a motion picture directed by Shoojit Sarkar. Unrelated, of course, to this research area but an important digression to understand the representation of trauma, the movie is about the Indian revolutionary figure, Sardar Udham Singh, who assassinated Michael O'Dwyer, the man who gave commands to massacre innocent people in Jallianwala Bagh by openly firing on them. In the movie, after his death sentence is declared, Udham Singh is visited by the officer who was heading the inquiry against him. The man asks him for his reason for assassinating O'Dwyer. He asks him about "that day" (the day of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre). Udham takes the audience with him into his memories of the shooting and replies, "This incident would have gone unnoticed by you. It is just a footnote in your history. Written in fine print in some book" (Sarkar 1.59.43; English subtitle). The shooting of people and the later rescuing go on for roughly forty minutes; the entire third act of the movie is just Udham Singh and some young boys going in the field to find anyone who could be alive.

This is what we essentially miss in our reading of the conflicts: A call for understanding the magnitude. For anyone, these conflicts will be just what Udham Singh called a "footnote in history". Sarkar's depiction makes the viewer live the moments of long exhaustion with Udham Singh when he keeps on going to pick up the barely alive people. This is how trauma should really be understood: with empathy.

The inability to really see the victims in the numbers is the first defeat we face in our efforts to eradicate sexual violence. One should strive to come as close as possible to the lived trauma. The problem can only be resolved if what is now a footnote for us is realised to be the entire life of the affected victim. The problem lies in the distance that we create between us and them. Literature and art forms can help bridge this

distance. The one thing that can be really helpful is strengthening the backbone of trauma studies at educational level, both primary and the higher ones. A trauma study based curriculum will enable students to understand the lived experience of a survivor and help build a well-informed emotionally empathic community. The diarist from a *A Woman in Berlin* succinctly makes an observation about the world she is living in. She believes that people have lost the habit of pathos. This is how humans are living, without the poignancy.

The systematic nature of rape during war is diabolical. To be aware of the inevitability of multitudes of rapes that will occur in the next act of vast-scale conflict and still not do anything to break this cycle is beyond tragic. Ukraine and Russia are embroiled in a war as I write this. The news about the alleged rapes of Ukrainian women and young boys is being reported, though many officials have claimed that victims are mostly choosing silence, a problem that has been studied in the events that were chosen for this research. Silence is treated as both a tool for recuperation by the victim and as a patriarchal notion that is forced down women's throat all their lives and which they are made aware of its magnitude only in trauma.

The rapes of wartime are a result of those grey areas that we ignore during peacetime. Sexual violence builds as a continuum, which is aided by rape culture, and this culture does not have exceptions, it exists ubiquitously. Warring nations or riot-engulfed countries all share a sordid connection that is based on the acceptance and propagation of rape culture, which takes on the monstrous form of mass rape. What is this rape culture? Where does it exist? Can everyone see it for what it truly is? From a mere joke that hyper-sexualizes a woman to the idea of blaming rape victims, rape culture is, quite ironically, ignored in the bigger picture of studying war-related sexual violence. A quote from *Hex* by Jenni Fagan can aptly sum up this ideology: "Put those

heels away. That click, click, click, click is Morse code for rapists. It says their sentence will be lenient or non-existent. If only she didn't wear stilettos. If only she didn't walk through a park. If only she didn't go out at night" (Ch 6).

Such patriarchal concepts, where it is all the victim's error in judgement, are aided by sexism, which seeks to justify them. The amalgamation of both produces misogynistic currents in any society. The words in *Hex* are suitable for the current community setting, but more or less, these sentiments had been present even in the ancient societies that sought to find ways to seek the logic behind misogyny. The depth of the psychological harm rape culture can cause is evident in the increasing cases of sexual assaults, both in ordinary times and during wartime violence. Other incidents of sexual violence other than rape are treated trivially not only by society but by the victims too; many crimes of such nature are not even reported because they have become too common: inappropriate gestures, men masturbating in public, indecent touching of the body in public spaces, being stalked, cat-calling, and so on. Medea and Thompson, in their work *Against Rape*, have called such incidents "little rapes" (qtd. in Walklate 427).

There is an inherent problem in the way one perceives rape. For many, including the victims, it is sex. This can be a problem if one looks at the psychological impact such a definition might have on the victim. Believing it to be sex, many victims fear their own claims of sexual violence to be void; they believe their compliance and survival represent a moral wrongness in them. As for the perpetrators, or the bigoted and reactionary sets, it is easily transformed into the victim's flaw. The perpetrator, no matter what, will find an excuse or a justification for his action, and the onus of it will never be on himself. It will be an accident, a natural instinct, an appropriation, but rarely will a rapist (even a repentant one) understand the magnitude of what he has done. A case in point are the perpetrators in Bapsi Sidhwa and Gil Courtemanche's novels.

Modeste and the Ice-Candy Man are two sides of a coin. Modeste believes himself to be a virile saviour and Ice-Candy Man, a tragic lover. Upon Valcourt's confrontation with Modeste, he denies seeing Gentille but claims that "[w]omen, beautiful women, [had come to him] looking for protection or pleasure" (Courtemanche 253). His words are arrogant, for he believes that he was indeed doing something heroic, never realising that the women had not come to him for either of those things. Contrastingly, Ice-Candy Man's words and deeds are representative of a tragic lover, which is made believable by his wailing, pleading, and poetry. Only Ayah understands the capacity for harm that he inflicts with his sweet murmurings. It becomes another kind of torture for a woman who has seen him at his worst. Upon the questions raised by the grandmother, he tells her, "I s-saved her [...] They would've... killed her... I married her!" (Sidhwa 249). Both of these men are diverse, as is the violence that they inflict on the women; nonetheless, unaware, ignorant, blind, or in denial of their own exploitations, they both believe that they have saved the women.

Modeste or Ice-Candy men are both confronted for their crimes against certain women, and they both have their minds set on defending themselves based on societal beliefs. Both characters are unable to see their deeds as wrong. Modeste sees his treatment of Gentille as protection, not rape. The rapes that he performs are a mere payment for his lack of cruelty, which was commonplace. Gentille writes in her diary after she is raped by militiamen at Modeste's home, "Modeste [...] said he was sorry [...] If he hadn't given me, worse things could have happened to me. He saved my life and he wants me to be grateful. Worse things? Yes, for example, having my breasts cut off with machete..." (246).

The heroic-rapist, saviour-rapist or lover rapist are quite common in such situations. Modeste emphasises his kindness in front of Gentille without even realising

that she sees him for what he truly is. These perpetrators ignore or are generally ignorant of the visceral disgust and revulsion their actions produce in the victim.

The belief system of our world, no matter where we live, is biased towards women in general. Every culture creates a conducive environment where women can become easy victims. This is prevented to a certain extent during peacetime with the help of the law, but in the absence of it, rapes become rampant. For these men, the villains, it becomes easy to justify their acts with the aid of social beliefs.

Throughout this research, an effort has been made to analyse and answer the concept of the inevitability of sexual violence during war — so ubiquitously accepted by society— and its unchanging nature no matter how many conflict-ridden areas one tries to explore. Wherever there is lawlessness, a situation of autocratic control, a lag or paralysis in social order, belligerent occupation, coups, invasions, wrongful governance, or a dystopia of sorts, the threat of loss of human rights disproportionately affects women. Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* tells the story of women suffering under the Republic of Gilead. A nightmare for women, the world of Gilead follows a tight law under theocratic rule. In a world where reproduction is near to impossible due to low fertility rates, young women are being turned into handmaids to the wives of high-ranking officials called commanders. These handmaids are used as surrogates for the production of future progeny through rape, which is devoid of lust, desire, or even aggression; it is a mere transaction of semen where the wives, as third-party observers, hold them, the handmaids, between their knees during the act, replicating the biblical tale of Bilhah, Rachel, and Jacob, word for word. This might seem familiar to many women. This kind of repression and sexual torture are common features of war arenas. Think of the Japanese comfort stations and the handmaid system and compare the two. The idea behind both institutions is the creation of an idealistic

world through a warped sense that begets patriarchy and misogyny. Or is it the other way around, where misogyny and patriarchy give birth to what is considered an ideal world for a man? Japanese comfort stations are a nightmare for women, but for men, they are powerful, virile spaces of action, a harem of desire away from the social contracts of monogamy and consensual sex. The losses that a soldier suffers at war are embalmed by the sexual presence of women. A man's invulnerabilities, a crisis in their manhood, are cured by misogynistic actions.

War related sexual violence is widespread and so is sexual violence during peacetime. For this very reason, the study uses works from different countries to understand how these different writers project, communicate and reflect such atrocities. Through the representation of war rapes in the fictional and semi-autobiographical works, the individuality of these multitudes of women comes to the forefront. They are diverse; their lives before the tragedy struck them were different; their reactions were different; and so were their coping mechanisms. The women in these novels—Hana and Akiko from Korea, Anonyma from Germany, Ayah, Lajwanti, and Sakina from India and Pakistan, and Gentile from Rwanda—are not just statistical numbers. They had substance before the trauma, lives that they were content with: Hana was a sea diver; Akiko was a small village girl; Anonyma was a journalist; Lajawanti was a conventional wife; Ayah was a self-made beautiful woman; Sakina was a girl deeply loved by a father; Gentile was a Hutu woman who belonged to a peaceful nation. The lives of these women are disrupted by the conflicts in their countries. Women were the most distraught victims of the war because the social structure of all these societies provided the arsenal for it. No matter the state of these women before the war, the inherent strength of their characters, their educations, or their sexual outlook, nothing helped them secure themselves in the face of the brute physical forces.

The image of war, at least for a woman, appears gendered. Many characters from these different narratives voice this opinion. Very acutely, many among them present to us, not only through their lives but also with words, the gendered image of war, where men are generally the arm-wielders and women are either victims or pacifists. Following are some quotes from the narratives that were selected for the study that aptly expound on this view. Hana's mother explains to her what raping means to Japanese soldiers:

[They] believe it will aid them in battle. Help them be victorious in war. They think it is their right to release their energy and receive pleasure, even when they are so far from home, because they risk their lives for the emperor [...] They believe this so much that they take our girls and ship them all over the world.
(Bracht 34)

There are two power figures in her explanation: the soldiers and the Emperor, both male. And the war, according to the soldiers, could only be won with a reward system in place for the young girls who were brought in as sexual slaves. On the other hand, are the words by Courtemanche in *A Sunday at a Pool in Kigali*:

The men were killed skilfully and accurately with a single shot or machete stroke, but women didn't have the right to a quick, clean death. They were mutilated, tortured, raped, but not finished off. They were allowed to bleed to death, to feel death coming rattle by rattle... to punish them for having brought so many Tutsis into the world, but also to punish them for their arrogance, for the young killers had been told that Tutsi women considered themselves too good for Hutus. (218)

The women are not individuals but mothers who reproduce and give birth to the enemies. Maybe this is the reason why many soldiers who were to get their hands on

the women not only raped them but mutilated their vaginas and cut off their breasts. Another one comes from Nora Okja Keller's novel, Beccah's search for her mother's history leads her to the definition of *Chongshindae*: "Battalion slave". Her mother's voice on tape tells her what being a *Chogshindae* meant:

Our brothers and fathers conscripted. The women left to be picked over like fruit to be tasted, consumed, the pits spit out as *Chogshindae*, where we rotted under the body of orders from the Emperor of Japan... Under Emperor's orders, holes of our bodies were used to bury their excrement. (193)

What is common in all these quotations is a male figure threatening the sexual autonomy or determination of a woman over her own body. Reading Hana, Akiko, and Marta Hiller, we dive deep into our understanding of the idea of autonomous female consciousness.

Many researchers have tried to understand the violence at a particular geographical location in a vacuum; especially literature-related studies are limited in their scope, and many choose to only take one event at a time. The aim of this research was to discuss all these subjects individually and then analyse them as a chain of events to reflect the way sexual violence had escalated and changed with the passage of time. At the same time, this method helps study the victims' representation and helps build the discourse on trauma studies. To understand sexual violence in conflicts on a global scale, there is a need for multiple levels of scrutiny. To this effect, it also becomes imperative to study not only rape as the violence that is perpetrated but other forms of sexual violence that remain understated.

In the case of sexual violence during conflicts, only rape is regarded with some seriousness; all the other kinds of sexual crimes are seen as mere collateral, which ends up creating a hierarchy of harm. It was the aim of this research to close some gaps that

remain in reading wartime sexual crimes as a complete whole by acknowledging not only the rapes but other crimes that fall under the broader range of gendered experiences of war. Akiko's marriage is also a result of her war experience; the same happens to Hana's sister, Emi. Forced rehabilitation during partition, or forced abortions, or mutilation during Rwandan femicide were all a results or consequences of the conflicts.

The focus of this research does not mean to create a severe distinction between violence outside of conflicts and violence in conflicts. Rather, the effective study of the narratives points to a link between the two. The main problem arises when the outlook on sexual violence during war is simplified to mean "one victim = one violation = one perpetrator" (qtd. in Swaine 760). A situation of disorder must not excuse the varying levels of sexual violence during conflict.

The woman's situation is already under a pervasive threat with all the sexual violence that happens during 'ordinary' times, and it worsens with wars and conflicts. The warped concepts of nationalism that emerge from patriarchal discourse and colonial experience put women in a more disadvantageous position in comparison to males of the same social and political status. The male colonial subjects under the Japanese imperial army were conscripted and taken to the front during the Second World War; on the other hand, the female subjects were turned into sexual slaves who died not from bullets but from sexual assaults and diseases. The colonial subjugation of Korean women was a fundamental cause of their suffering. It cannot be denied that the system of prostitution was anything but a sexual slavery camp. The mobilisation of Korean women was made easier because of their slave status. The narratives can be readily changed where the state is in complete control, and this is how Akiko and Hana and many more other women were transformed into 'comfort women' and were simply seen for a very long time as paid sexual workers, whereas the reality was the complete

opposite. Some researchers “have even argued that the Japanese government's mobilization of many unmarried young Korean women for sexual slavery was a part of its policy to annihilate the Korean nation” (Min 954).

Similarly, the partition of India and the Rwandan Civil War were direct results of colonial experience. Both of these events marked severe sexually atrocious behaviour towards the women of the other community. There are many instances in *A Sunday at a Pool in Kigali* where the Tutsi women are abused not only by the Hutus but also by the Belgians.

Nationalism further complicates a woman's position. The colonial subjugation or warfare fills people with the notion of national identity. The colonial subjects became aware of their collective feeling of animosity towards the foreigner on their soil. Similarly, soldiers are made aware of their fraternal ties and their debt to the nation. The role of males in a society as nationalist agents is proactive; contrastingly, women are passive subjects and only in some cases appear as active agents as participants in national struggle. The usual role a woman plays in the nationalist scheme is that of a biological reproducer and as the transmitter of a rigid, unchangeable national message to the next generation. This role as mother and nurturer is projected onto the nation's image as a whole. A woman representing the personification of a nation is a powerful image for the men, who are at the centre of this struggle for national identity. The ‘motherland’ is shown in tatters, in chains, and being looted and raped. Such nationalist discourse that are affected through rape metaphors often substantiates the need for violence and revenge—one kind of rape for another. The reading of Ayah's character from *Ice-Candy Man* as a national figure, who everyone wants to lay hands on, is a perfect example of this.

Traditional readings of the selected narratives might result in an assumption that some women characters from them dissolve under the weight of patriarchal setup and infringements: Hamida from *Ice candy Man* who has become a social pariah after her husband's rejection, or for that matter Gentile from *A Sunday at a Pool in Kigali* who after having faced the atrocities tells her husband that she is no longer a woman, it can be assumed that even Lajwanti from Bedi's story will stay silenced. There are some who clearly emerge victorious, the mother from "Khuda ki Kasam" who in her mad search for her daughter remains unperturbed by the male gaze towards her nakedness, Akiko, who survives the sexual slavery by Japanese and the psychological violence from her husband by carrying on with her unique identity as a shaman, Ayah, changed from her earlier carefree nature to a mere shell of it takes the decision in her hands and leaves her rapist-pimp-husband, the writer of *A Woman in Berlin* who uses the soldiers for her own survival. All of them whether they succumb or not, are uniquely portrayed. It is important to scrutinize them not based on their ends but how they lived through the trauma and how that trauma impacted them.

Fictional and non-fictional works alike are able to project and highlight the complex structures of rape and violence during wartime. A study of these events with the aid of literary work can help build new insights into trauma theory and put focus on the individual victims. The research aimed to give meaning and to comparatively read the contests based on some similar connections or signifiers like patriarchy, survival pattern, reactions, self-abjection, rape culture and so on. The research demonstrates how different agents interact and invest in these, and has tried to provide multiple levels of interpretation. The stories that are scrutinized in the research are not merely political or personal but an amalgamation of both and such conflict related works must be read with the same mindset.

All the different arenas that have been researched in this work correspond to the undercurrents of misogynistic ideologies that keep on flowing and gain magnitude during chaotic events. There seems a gap in understanding of how insidious these ideologies are and how deeply rooted they have become, that some times we cannot even see them for their true nature.

There were several limitations that made this research a difficult endeavour at times. One being the lack of knowledge about cultural nuances. There is a possibility of missing out certain details that are culturally exclusive and can only be known to a native. Another one, and a severely surprising one, is lack of testimonies and literary works that may reflect the mindset of a perpetrator of conflict based sexual violence. There are many fictional and non fictional works that talk about such perpetrators in 'ordinary' times but there is rarity of those in the case related to study like this one. This limits the study of the characteristics of the perpetrators in detail. With almost no to little focus on the perpetrators, it becomes especially difficult to get a full reading behind the motivations. Another aspect that limited the scope of this study was the lack of readily available translated material especially in case of Korean and Rwandan works.

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