

Trauma and Psychological Self-Destruction: An Overview of Emotional Dependence and Obsession Through the Lens of Psychoanalytic Feminism in K. R. Meera's Novel, *The Poison of Love*

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Abstract

The paper will examine the novel *The Poison of Love* by K R Meera. The novel depicts trauma and self-destruction by women as the psychic impact of deep-rooted patriarchy. This article explores psychoanalytic feminist theory- specifically the concept of repression used by Freud, the desire of the Other used by Lacan, and the model of emotional conditioning developed by Chodorow. The analysis reveals how patriarchal ideals of femininity are transformed into self-inflicted trauma in the case of Tulsi and her love towards Madhav. Meera reveals how love has been turned into self-destruction by revealing that essentialist conceptions of womanhood are challenged and that female subjectivity is being redefined as unwhole, performative and resistant within patriarchal culture.

Fitting Meera's story into the larger context of trauma and feminist psychoanalysis, this paper discusses the feminine unconscious patterns of cultural indoctrination and the influence of the

patriarchal ideology on the female unconscious. Tulsi exhibits the acculturation of the cumulative effects of interpersonal pain whereby the psychic damages accumulated over time thwart identity and force a renegotiation of womanhood. The analysis questions emotional dispositions, love, care, and vulnerability, which is usually naturalized as feminine, but created by patriarchal conditioning in the actual sense. In the Indian case, these gendered imperatives are considered psychic baggage, which drives women into depression, self-alienation, and self-destruction. Using the pathways of femininity that are strong and fragile to her emotional breakdown, the study brings out the critique of the patriarchal emotional economies and her redefinition of trauma as a symptom and resistance.

Keywords: trauma, self-destruction, femininity, patriarchy, psychoanalysis

Introduction

The Poison of Love is a novel published in Malayalam language and later translated into various languages such as English. It is a feminine based novel, which talks of the psychic breakdown of its lead character, Tulsi. Being narrated in a first person, the novel has placed female consciousness in the center of narration framework and provided the reader with first-hand access to the emotional and mental world of Tulsi. This mode of narration does not only promise a clearly female subjectivity but also reveals the differences in it, showing the way in which patriarchal conditioning and suppressed desire combine to create the feminine psyche. Meera creates a multi-layered image of womanhood that provokes trauma, guilt, and resistance by tracing the evolution of Tulsi as a woman who has lost all romanticism in her life and become a victim of psychological self-destruction. This makes the novel an ideal venue to a psychoanalytic feminist reading, where the inner conflict within Tulsi can be studied through the prism of repression, abjection, and search of selfhood within the symbolic order of a patriarchal society.

The old question of feminist essentialism has a direct influence on a psychoanalytic interpretation of *The Poison of Love* because K.R. Meera destroys the belief in a fixed female essence through her depiction of trauma and mental suicide. Feminist essentialism posits that all women share a common essence, often grounded in biology or shared experience (Stone 135). Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler have vehemently criticized this concept. Contrary to the

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view of an innate or natural femininity, De Beauvoir famously argued that “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman,” thereby rejecting the idea of an innate or natural femininity (de Beauvoir 283). Butler also challenges fixed ideas of gender by her theory of gender performativity, asserting that gender is constituted through repeated social acts rather than biological determinants (Butler 25).

In spite of these strong objections, gender essentialist assumptions still remain. Patriarchal structures persist in many societies including in India. For instance, India remains deeply patriarchal, with gender hierarchies shaping both public and private spheres (Kandiyoti 274–290) where women still remain psychologically conditioned to exhibit the qualities of love, nurturing, and hospitality. Patriarchy in India is sustained through social, religious, and familial institutions that legitimize male authority and control over women’s bodies and choices (Chakravarti 27) It is apparent that the patriarchal conditioning has a major influence and impact on the development of the female psyche and consciousness. Many women internalise and assimilate to these patterns of dominance and subjugation as routine features of the gender relations. According to India’s National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), nearly half of both women and men believe that a husband is justified in physically disciplining his wife under certain circumstances (IIPS & ICF 2021), which reflects the very strong belief in the submissiveness of the woman. Moreover, government time-use data shows that women perform over six hours of unpaid domestic labor daily, compared to just one hour for men (MOSPI 2020).

The systemic oppression and discrimination of women on the grounds of gender has deep roots. As evident in both written texts and widespread practices, conscious and unconscious biases associated with patriarchy have been and continue to be interlaced with power struggles, control, and conformity enforced by the male-dominant cultures of the time (Gupta et al. 2023). It is this kind of social conditioning that strengthens the view of women as caretakers who are inferior to men. These expectations lead to internalized pressures, whereby women can find themselves in a state of self-doubt and emotional exhaustion as they make an attempt to adjust to idealized expectations.

According to the feminist theorists, motherhood is conditioned by the emotionally binding and socially created expectations that place women in the role of endlessly nurturing, being emotionally available, and being morally self-sacrificing. Women's mothering, then, produces asymmetries in the relational experiences of girls and boys as they grow up, which account for crucial differences in feminine and masculine personality, and the relational capacities and modes which this entails (Chodorow 69). One of the most commonly expected positions of a mother is being overwhelmingly tender and emotionally supportive, and her role can define the relationship abilities of her children and strengthen the conventional gendered norms (Chodorow 169). Meanwhile, she is socially placed in such a way that she cannot do without the protection of her husband, thus power relations are deeply embedded in the framework of patriarchy. Although breastfeeding is a biological privilege of women, men can equally raise children. However, in the discourse of the society, this fact is often ignored, and it still adds to the existing societal gender roles, which recognize women as housewives and men as major breadwinners.

Further, outside of the home certain jobs are usually thought to be naturally female, according to the ideas of gender essentialism, depending on the idea that female is a unique group of traits that women are well-qualified to take part in occupations like hospitality. As an illustration, it is observed that women constitute about 90 percent of the workforce in the nursing field around the world (WHO 12). The gender division of work continues into the present-day service sectors where women still occupy caring and representational jobs. To give an example, 86% of the cabin crew in the aviation industry in India is women (Ladies Who Lead 12). This demonstrates the extent to which social conditioning and gender stereotypes cause the assumption that women should be better at hospitality. These are the roles which are influenced more by the social expectations, rather than the marketing strategies concerning the objectification.

A significant percentage of the world population have at one time gone through traumatic events in their lives whether or not the events were articulated, challenged or solved. An international meta-analysis reported that 70.4 percent of the respondents had faced one of the lifetime traumatic events (Benjet et al. 4). Cathy Caruth notices that the trauma is not felt as a simple form of repression or defense, but in all the cases as a temporal deferral which recreates the

person outside of the initial shock (Unclaimed Experience 11). The World Health Organization reports have estimated that about 3.9 percent of the entire world population have experienced post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) at one time in their life (World Mental Health Report" 45). The increasing trauma rates in the global society have heightened both the academic and practical interest in trauma research in the medical, psychological, and humanities fields. This has become a new issue of concern which is being recorded in literature and psychoanalytic theory as the concept of trauma serves as a key approach to studying memory, repetition, and resistance.

Psychoanalytic Feminism and Trauma

Psychoanalytic feminism is the result of the critical interactions between feminist theorists and Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis that unveils the reproduction of male-focused assumptions in the traditional concept of the psyche. Freudian theories about repression, desire and unconscious are used to learn more about the subject formation. The theory of repression is the basis where the entire manifestation of psycho-analysis lies (Freud 149). Lacan adds to the model of Freud with his theory of the symbolic order, in which language and subjectivity are structured around the phallus as the signifier of power; he writes: The phallus is the favored signifier of that sign in which the role of the logos is fused with the emergence of desire (Lacan 287).

This symbolic system is challenged by feminist critics including Luce Irigaray, Nancy Chodorow and Juliet Mitchell because it denies women agency and speech. Irigaray suggests that femininity is defined by the discourse of the West only using the terms of masculinity: "female sexuality has been organized, conceptualized, on the parameters of the masculine only" (Irigaray 23). Irigaray claims that the symbolic order of Lacan is phallogentric and it is arranged in terms of masculine expectations that make the feminine a state of absence or silence. According to Chodorow, gender and family reproduces itself through the psychology of the people in the social organization of the same (Chodorow 7). It is this theoretical stalemate that leads to a critical question that is central to the discussion of *The Poison of Love* and it is one that defines the psychic order of womanhood as lack.

Simone de Beauvoir disregarded the biological determinism of Freud, including his idea of penis envy and insisted that women are not formed by their anatomy but instead are influenced by social and cultural circumstances. She said in the famous quote, “*One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman*” (Beauvoir 283), noting that gender is constructed through the experience of life in the patriarchal society. Nancy Chodorow developed and updated the model of Freud and interpreted the family model as a means of reproducing the gender roles on a generational level through mothering. Chodorow asserts that as long as a girl is attached to the mother, she develops relational identities whereas boys establish independent identities as they become separated and thus continuation of gender asymmetry (Chodorow 93). Her theory of asymmetrical parenting is therefore a feminist response to the Oedipus complex of Freud by placing the emphasis not on the biological urges but on social reproduction and emotional growth.

Trauma can be viewed as a psychological and emotional reaction to events that one perceives to be threatening, life changing, or highly distressing. Such experiences may have long sheltering effects on the mental, physical, and emotional comfort of an individual. *The Poison of Love* by K. R. Meera presents the audience with a series of tragic events that shatter the protagonist Tulsi and her identity and sense of stability. The cumulative effects of her betrayal and emotional neglect slowly build up in to a deep psychic wound that turns her love for Madhav into a corrosive kind of suffering. As Meera writes, “Love is like milk. With the passage of time, it sours, splits, and becomes poison” (Meera 3).

According to the Freudian perspective, trauma occurs when experiences that are difficult to process are instead buried in the unconscious as opposed to being taken through conscious processing. The mind cannot accommodate painful memories and therefore it entombs them as a defense instinct; they remain undetected and influence behavior, emotion and perception. It is this psychic residue that characterizes the state of Tulsi-- the apparent calm facade of her personal state of being masks the unhealed inner divides of her emotional being.

Trauma is a common human situation that transcends class, culture and gender. However, women often face traumatic experiences in the particular forms of social and cultural workings: patriarchal dominance, emotional abuse, and institutional inferiority. Specifically, the issue of

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female trauma is the subject of the current discussion as female subjectivity is usually characterized by social norms, which require endurance, sacrifice, and emotional restraint - the conditions, which predetermine the psychological rupture near inevitability.

Essentialist feminism argues that differences between men and women are based on biological or inherent identity that influences emotional and social experiences of women. Conversely, constructivist and post structuralist feminists like Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler maintain that gender identity is a product of culture as opposed to biology. This contradiction of these roles helps us see the depth of the agony Tulsi is going through: the feminine experience of the body is burdened by the patriarchal regimes of feeling, enduring and breaking female love.

The psychological differences relating to female bodies, especially those that are related to reproduction and emotive expressiveness, are usually redefined by the patriarchal system as feeble characteristics. Not only does this ideological framing marginalize women, but it also serves as a source of their trauma of taking normal emotional abilities and turning them into stigmatized vulnerabilities. As the character of Tulsi portrayed by Meera can demonstrate, this dynamic is also evidenced by a single cultural system that assumes femininity to be a manifestation of fragility: it is not only personal betrayal but also a touch of feminine nature that causes the trauma that Meera experiences.

The intersection of trauma studies and feminist theory is based on their focus on the realities of women who experience both visible and invisible violence- physical attack, emotional domination, sexual coercion, and the biopolitical regulation of female bodies. These types of violence are in the form of psychic scars that are being carried over generations. In literature, therefore, trauma is both a means of resistance and remembrance and it portrays the means through which the female subject returns voice in the narration of her injuries.

The Poison of Love: A Psychoanalytic Feminist Reading

In *The Poison of love* the wishes and decisions of the heroine, Tulsi, become the designers of her future, as she is made to suffer mental torture that surpasses the boundaries and capabilities

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of the human mind. After meeting Madhav, Tulsi becomes emotionally attached to him, and she falls in love and becomes more and more dependent. During this, she becomes emotionally unstable, her life starts going out of her control, and she is controlled by an overwhelming and destabilizing desire to the point of being willing to sacrifice her own life to that of her beloved.

Giving up her professional dreams is one of the biggest sacrifices that Tulsi has to face. Being a graduate of the engineering degree at the renowned Indian Institute of Technology, she passed her exams brilliantly and proved to have a superior intellectual potential. Her teachers proclaimed her as the most promising student and she was the person who would make India proud even a Nobel Prize winner. In her personal memory, Tulsi tells: “at that time I was an IIT student. Madhav was a correspondent to an English magazine in Chennai. He had arrived at the campus to give a report about the psychological pressure that the students of the IIT were getting. I passed my engineering examinations and took my degree” (Meera 15)

The move by Tulsi to abandon her family and elope with Madhav is the start of a path that is influenced by grief and the regrets. This inner break is caused by the illness of her mother who had advanced uterine cancer that was in her third stage. She wanted to have her three daughters get married before her death. Tulsi remembers the stress of such a situation with ice-cold clarity: “Marriage was inevitable, after all. My mother’s uterine cancer had progressed to the third stage. She was hurrying to offer her three daughters” (Meera 15) This alienation highlights the clash between her duty as a family member and her own wishes.

Tulsi feels Madhav has an almost insurmountable power, an entity that keeps her lured to him even when she knows of his betrayals. She cannot resist his influence; each kiss, each moment they spend together intimate is able to leave her enthralled. Meera expresses the level of this emotional and physical attachment: “*I was yearning to see him. I wanted to talk to him when I was alone. My heart brimmed over whenever I met him and felt drained when he went away*” (Meera 18). The devotion of Tulsi is rather obsession with his experience because she enjoys it to a certain spell enchantment: “*His touch was magical, spellbinding. It was as if I was in a trance. Like a gopika enchanted with Krishna’s divine flute music, I lost awareness of the world around me. My body was under some sort of black magic. I was thrown off balance*” (Meera 22).

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Tulsi falls in love with Madhav and is in a lot of emotional pain. Her affection towards him is mingled with hate and jealousy – especially towards his past relations that added to her sufferings and drove her towards psychological instability. Some several months after they got married, one of the old girlfriends of Madhav appeared at their flat. The woman kissed and hugged Madhav in front of Tulsi, and this left Tulsi inconsolable. Madhav also talks a lot about his twenty-seven former girlfriends in an intimate way and describes love as a female weakness. By expressing his love with such a degree of openness, he only increases the feelings of attachment and the feelings of enmity that Tulsi feels towards him. Tulsi in her first-person narration says “Madhav wrote openly and uninhibitedly about the twenty-seven lovers who had been part of his life. I was left totally shocked” (Meera 14). The oscillating moods of love, hatred, and jealousy of Madhav by Tulsi demonstrate the depressed stance of Klein when guilt and inner conflict can be experienced due to the understanding of the presence of aggressive impulses along with attachment (Klein 145-150).

Tulsi is obsessively involved in an affair with Madhav as well as the collective trauma of other women who are played around by the man. This mirrors the idea of Lacan of being in the desire of the Other, that the subject lacks and are influenced by the symbolic power of a superior being (Lacan 64-66). Madhav defends himself by saying, “I never went seeking anyone. All of them came to me” (Meera 14), and makes his emotional state of mind even more difficult: “Tulsi, I shall never refuse a woman’s love. It would devastate her. If my love can make a woman happy, why would I want to deny her?” (Meera 17). The story exposes that Tulsi is not the only woman who has been the victim of the manipulative nature of Madhav, other women too get utilized and exploited, and this is a common experience between them and they bond together. The manipulation of Madhav is a good example of patriarchal objectification since women are viewed as objects of male desire, which supports structural gendered power dynamics and is reflective of collective trauma (Fredrickson and Roberts 175-178).

Madhav’s betrayal is slowly revealed under the guise of love. “As I was cleaning, I discovered a black brassiere underneath the cot in the second bedroom. When I asked him about it, he hugged me close and kissed me, feigning hurt. ‘You are the mother of my child... yet you

doubt me...” (Meera 70). Madhav plays on the emotional weakness of Tulsi and the concept of motherhood that she is tied to in a patriarchally stimulated society. Through appealing to her maternal identity, he is attempting to demote her agency, playing with her guilt and love to impose on her that the role of a mother is also one that requires trust and blind obedience. However, the fact that Madhav wanted to hide the fact of his betrayal is not an expression of guilt, but the need to save his social reputation and not to disrupt his relationship at home. Tulsi notes, “He always stopped my questions with kisses. He trounced me with sweetened words” (Meera 71).

People are constantly neglected, and an emotional discontinuity happens in Tulsi’s marriage. Meera depicts the marriage to be a source of constant disengagement and emotional disconnection where Madhav’s indifference becomes an everyday wound. “I remembered the time when I had been pregnant with Kanna. Madhav had stopped coming to the flat. Money was running low” (Meera 82). He returned to work in the evening, and got out in the morning. She waited and he disregarded her completely. Gradually, their intimacy is also performative, a gesture that disables only affection rather than tends to nourish it. Their marriage is further shaken by the encroachment of Madhav’s unresolved past attachments, showing how the emotional reciprocity of the relationship is weak because of the patriarchal structure. Madhav’s narcissism is hidden in his confident belief that the women around him rely on him. He informs Tulsi with unnerving casualty, “I am in trouble ‘tell me’ Bhama wants me to marry her”(Meera 88) which reveals that he needs to be desired and he has a habit of justifying infidelity by proclaiming it to be a necessity of emotion.

Tulsi remembers with bitterness “I signed the joint petition for divorce with vengeance” (Meera 92). The fact that Madhav slowly turns into a stranger to Tulsi is one of her greatest emotional traumas. His words are a pretence of intimacy and dependency “He said, ‘I have no life without you or my children. You are my strength’” (Meera 84). However, his actions reflect the opposite, and he performs a scheme of neglect and abandonment. The discrepancy between words and actions exacerbates the feeling of betrayal in Tulsi and underlines the emotional abuse that was a part of the marriage.

The saddest part of Tulsi's married life happens when Lily, Madhav's ex-lover, visits him. The incident takes place while Tulsi is present and proves to be a scene of betrayal and emotional abuse compelling Tulsi to deal with the frailty of her own marriage and her displacement in it. Meera makes the incidence too horrible to fathom: "*Lily pushed me aside, and rushed in, her eyes anguished. Madhav stood like a statue... Lily pounced on him. She embraced him tightly and burst into tears... 'How could you, how could you?' she muttered hysterically. I will not give you up, Madhav! I will never ever give you up to anyone!*" (Meera 48). Although the visit of Lily was incidental, it turns out to be an eye opener moment of truth. Tulsi remembers "When I met Lily again... she sympathized with me... She told me Madhav had made love to her, then called me from her phone. 'I threw him out of my life that day'" (Meera 51). This fight is what makes Tulsi realize that Madhav is two-faced and this is where the irreversible break in their relationship happens as she is betrayed and her agency is highlighted. All these add to Tulsi's fear of loss and being jilted.

The self-harming behavior of Tulsi serves as an outburst of her interior world. Faced with the perceived failure of her love life and personal ambitions, she transfers responsibility of her emotional pain and suffers it physically as an actual expression of psychic pain. Meera depicts this suicidal drive very well: "*I fought with monkeys for the fruits thrown by visitors. Hitting them and throwing stones at them, I made those monkeys my foes. The wounds I sustained during these scuffles became badly infected and hurt grievously. The pain delighted me*" (Meera 5). Tulsi's compulsion becomes even more intense because she willingly wants to be hurt, trying to highlight how much she needs to relieve herself of inner pain: "I needed wounds. To hurt myself more grievously, I needed more wounds" (Meera 77). These lines indicate that her self-harm is not only physical damage but a complicated system of coping with the excessive emotional and relational crisis.

Such self-punishment is symptomatic of her despairing nature and demonstrates the psychological impact of her relationship with Madhav. According to Freud, the urge to reenact pain, particularly during a romantic relationship, is a neurotic bid to conquer loss (Beyond the pleasure principle 23). The novel shows that she carries her trauma with her, and she thinks that

inflicting harm upon herself is one way of forgiving herself over what she considers as failures. The fact that Tulsi is a self-destroyer indicates that she is not an associate of the people in her world. The sense of alienation and emotional emptiness of Tulsi not only by her family but also by Madhav also leads her to self-harm as a symbolic scream of help. When she realizes that she is in a state of desperation, she writes to her father, “Your daughter Tulsi seeks forgiveness, falling at your feet” (Meera 83). This shows that she has internalized guilt and she wishes to receive acceptance.

This action not only highlights her emotional suffering but also stresses the absence of tools and resources that women with mental health problems have in a patriarchal world. This wretched state of mind makes Tulsi find solace in Vrindavan where the woman spends the rest of her life devoted to Krishna as a widow to Krishna- a devotion that she undertakes till she dies. Her choice indicates her profound emotional and spiritual confusion, the need to find a remedy in the religious surrender in order to deal with trauma. Such change is explainable in terms of reaction formation, a type of defense mechanism, whereby bypassed or unacceptable urges are substituted with their counterparts (Freud 122-123). The repressed erotic desire and disappointment in Tulsi is thereby transferred to the extreme piety and self-sacrifice to enable her to transfer the emotional pain into the spiritual worship. Her flight to Vrindavan is also regressive which is also one of the defense mechanisms as explained by Freud where the ego reverts to some earlier phase in the psychological growth in a bid to avoid the intolerable conflict (Freud 128-130).

The fact that Tulsi also has a problem with identity contributes to her desperation. She is more lost as she struggles with her desires, expectations of the society and her relationship that ended. Her self-destroying acts characterize this identity crisis and they act as a physical expression of her inner turmoil. The actions of Tulsi are an extension of the larger theme of how social pressures can cause people to resort to dysfunctional coping strategies when they are trapped and helpless. The story explores the psychological reasons as to why Tulsi has been self-harming and this creates complexities to her emotional needs. It brings up significant issues concerning mental health and the stigma that surrounds this issue and the failure of the society to deal with them,

especially in women. The story of Tulsi is a heart-rending experience of how empathy and understanding are needed by persons who grapple with mental problems.

The novel shows that Tulsi fights against a patriarchal society that tries to suppress her wishes and wants. The trauma and oppression are developed by being raised in such a repressive world. This constant stress due to the imposed cultural norms and moral policing has a strong toll on her mental stability. Tulsi lives in a patriarchal society with a tendency to emphasize the dominance of men and discredit the desires of females. This social setting deprives her of chances and suffocates her aspirations, driving her into the fixed roles. This is manifested in the fact that she is bound to an arranged marriage to Vinay which she cannot help but say no to due to her passionate but toxic relations with Madhav. The novel presents the way women are controlled by societal norms, thus making them to do sacrifices in the name of love that in the end hurts them.

The action of the story reaches its climax when Tulsi does the tragic act of the story, in desperation and in a state of despair, Tulsi decides to poison her two children to kill them. This gesture marks the completion of her interior obliteration and a tragedy of denial of the older female role. It also underscores her understanding of love as something that is destructive and corrosive which can be associated with her own experiences of betrayal and abandonment. The infanticide deprives the subject of desiring; she turns even motherhood into abjection. Her poisoning of her children is a violent rejection of the maternal image that is sacred and is reminiscent of what Kristeva said – that maternity is an ordeal where the body undergoes its own limitations and fragmentation (Kristeva 178). The act may be considered as the final way of showing her emotional suffering when she is convinced that, in any case, if she cannot be happy, her children should not be happy either. The actions of Tulsi are more self-destructive after the poisoning of their children. Her readiness to undergo physical suffering like letting monkeys bite her is an indication of the fact that she sought a way out of her misery. This is an internal struggle of wanting to join Madhav even in death, a symbol of her dying that she loves him more than she loves her life.

Conclusion

The novel presents Tulsi, a woman born in the patriarchal paradigm of the Indian culture, who is conditioned since birth to internalise its meaning structures. The fact that she is called a girl introduces her into the symbolic order and a process of psychological programming begins in her life which continues all her life where she unknowingly carries the gendered meanings and expectations in which she was told to be. Every social responsibility and duty of Tulsi in a society dominated by men is internalized as a part of her own being, engrained within her own unconsciousness through generations of cultural indoctrination and her own mentalistic brainwash, which reinforces patriarchal values. The sacrifices that Tulsi makes and how much she longs after Madhav create a strong feeling of guilt which in turn leads her to a state of self-punishment.

Although Tulsi knows that Madhav has had many lovers, and she does not like his personality, particularly his past involving many women, she slowly gets attracted to his physical and behavioural qualities. This attraction is an expression of how Meera views the force of emotions taking over rational intellect as Tulsi is beset by feelings towards Madhav. This also portrays the idea of the Other as the source of desire by Lacan, who states that desire is constructed by the Other; Tulsi wants to be recognized and validated by the symbolic structure of authority that Madhav holds over her emotional life (Lacan 164-66). This scenario brings out the fact that the women who are usually depicted as in search of love and being validated by others are considered as vulnerable or weak. It highlights how society will view emotional needs of a woman as a sign of weakness, making her powerless and dependent. As the story unfolds later we get to know that love is actually a curse to Tulsi. Thus, she is stuck in emotional torture and does not bring her happiness as she wanted to begin with at the beginning.

Women have been bound long within social structures which hail motherhood and ignore the psychological burden of motherhood. The figure of the self-sacrificing mother tends to cover over the internal crisis that comes along with it such as postpartum depression. Finally, Tulsi tries to overcome her long-term suffering and mental unrest by trying to find a new identity, an attempt to forget herself as a person that she identifies with abjection. This urge to destruction becomes so overwhelming that even the thought of destroying her own children comes to her as a way of cutting off all the links to her old life. The gesture of cruelty in Tulsi is turned into a desperate

protest against the unbearable life. Her logic of her children being better off out of their tribulations puts death into a paradoxical cave and inversion of the survival instinct that defines human and animal life. Storey (2004) explores how Tulsi's love is a place of passion and persecution as this devotion is now transformed into a sort of internalized violence. In *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, Julia Kristeva defines melancholy as a breakdown of meaning, which leaves the subject with the dead body of the abandoned object in him/her (Kristeva 13-15).

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