Narrativizing the Unspeakable: Rape and Resistance in Select Works on the Sri Lankan Ethnic Conflict

Thesis submitted to the University of Calicut

For the award of the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in English

By

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Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis titled **"Narrativizing the Unspeakable: Rape and Resistance in Select Works on the Sri Lankan Ethnic Conflict"** submitted by **Swapna.N.R.** to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English is an original record of observations and bona fide research carried out by her under my supervision, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar titles.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the work presented in the thesis entitled "Narrativizing the Unspeakable: Rape and Resistance in Select Works on the Sri Lankan Ethnic Conflict" is based on the original work done by me under the guidance of Dr. Abida Farooqui and has not been included in any other thesis submitted previously for the award of any degree. The contents of the thesis have undergone a plagiarism check using iThenticate software at C.H.M.K. Library, University of Calicut, and the similarity index was found within the permissible limit. I also declare that the thesis is free from AI-generated content.

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Acknowledgement

Words fall short in expressing my gratitude, yet I humbly thank everyone who supported, encouraged, and believed in me during this journey.

First and foremost, I express my profound gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Abida Farooqui, Professor, Department of English, Government Arts and Science College, Kondotty. From the very beginning, she stood by me in identifying and refining the research topic, patiently guiding me through its intellectual foundations. She devoted her time to proofreading my work on numerous occasions, offering insightful corrections and thoughtful suggestions that greatly enhanced its quality. Beyond academic guidance, she graciously accompanied me during fieldwork and interviews, providing encouragement and moral support at every step. As a mentor, she has been a constant source of inspiration, extending her guidance not only in my academic pursuits but also in my personal and professional endeavours. Her unwavering support, compassion, and belief in my potential have been invaluable, and this work is deeply indebted to her mentorship.

I extend my sincere thanks to Dr. Umer Thasneem, Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Calicut**,** for his valuable advice and guidance during the course of this research.

I sincerely thank Dr. Afsal Jamal, Principal, for his support in creating a positive academic environment. I also thank Dr. Faisal P., Head of the Department of English, for his encouragement, and all the faculty members of the Department of English, P.T.M. Government College, Perinthalmanna, for their guidance and support throughout this research.

I sincerely acknowledge the guidance, encouragement, and support of Prof. Dr. Vinod Kumar K. P. and Mr. Shajid P. P., Principals of MES Keveeyam College, Valanchery, whose motivation and timely assistance were instrumental in the successful completion of my research.

I express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Sumathy Sivamohan, Mr. T. D. Ramakrishnan, Ms. Meena Kandasamy, and Mr. Daya Dissanayake for their invaluable interviews, insights, and encouragement, which profoundly enriched my research with academic depth, cultural perspective, and first-hand understanding.

I sincerely thank Ms. Mini Sukumar, Dr. Rachel Bari, Dr. Aparna Eswaran, Dr. Muralikrishnan, Dr Reshmi Ravindran, Dr. Anfal, Mr. Arun Ezhuthachan, Ms. Mona and Mr. A.T. Mansoor for their invaluable guidance, encouragement, and support, which greatly enriched this work.

I thank my friends and motivators for their support and fondly remember my late friend Adv. Avinash. I also thank my fellow researchers Farsana, Shenia Jose, and Jouhar K., and the present and former faculty of the Department of English, MES Keveeyam College, Valanchery, for their encouragement and support.

I express my deepest love and gratitude to my beloved parents—Acha, for instilling in me the value of knowledge, and Amma, for her boundless love, prayers, and sacrifices. I also lovingly thank my dear Gayathri for her constant support, encouragement, and joy.

I remain grateful to everyone who contributed to and supported me throughout this academic journey.

Abstract

This thesis critically examines the narrative representations of rape within the context of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict (1983–2009), focusing on three key literary texts: T. D. Ramakrishnan's *Sugandhi Enna Andal Devanayaki* (translated by Priya K. Nair as *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*), Nayomi Munaweera's *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, and Meena Kandasamy's *the orders were to rape you: tigresses in the tamil eelam struggle*. In the milieu of armed conflict, rape functions not merely as an expression of the perpetrator's sexual aggression but as a biopolitical instrument intended to degrade and dehumanise the ethnic Other by rendering women's bodies as 'abject'. As a woman's body, equated with the pride of the family and nation, invites shame to her man, family, and nation post-rape, the state, through its army, engages in a war against women to take control of the ethnic Other. The state, through its military apparatus, employs systemic sexual violence as a strategy to assert dominance over the ethnic Other. Masculinity is constructed around narratives of fearlessness and national protection, with military service framed as the pinnacle of male identity. This ideology fosters a social environment where men are compelled to perform militarised masculinity, while women are burdened with maintaining sexual purity, lest they be reduced to socially impure existences. The pervasive threat of sexual violence renders all women susceptible to a state of perpetual "pre-victimhood."

The Sinhalese Tamil conflict 'undeniably created a sexually risky environment for women,' especially during the last phase of the war (2007-2009),

where rape was used not only as a tool for punishing individuals belonging to the Tamils but also as a method of extracting information about the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). While the Sri Lankan state used the discourse of female sexuality to subjugate the Tamil populace, the LTTE also co-opted this narrative to further its own political agenda. The loss of belief in the judicial system, fear of social stigmatisation, fear for security, desire to recoup honour, and an unending thirst for revenge often drove rape survivors to align with the LTTE instead of seeking legal redress. Through an analysis of the selected texts, this study explores the varied coping strategies adopted by female characters—ranging from silence, suicide, and joining the LTTE to becoming suicide bombers and choosing exile. However, these strategies rarely offer lasting relief or protection from trauma and often result in further victimisation. Ultimately, the research highlights how both the Government and the LTTE exploit cultural constructs of female purity to advance their respective political objectives, leaving survivors trapped within cycles of violence and symbolic subjugation.

Key Words: Rape, Sri Lankan Ethnic Conflict, Biopolitics, Military Masculinity, Abject, Coping Mechanism

പ്രബന്ധ സംഗ്രഹം

വാഗതീതാനുഭവങ്ങളുടെ ആഖ്യാനം : ശ്രീലങ്കൻ വംശീയ സംഘർഷം വിഷയമായി തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത കൃതികളിലെ ലൈംഗികാതിക്രമവും പ്രതിരോധവും

ശ്രീലങ്കൻ വംശീയ സംഘർഷത്തിന്റെ (1983–2009) പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ, ലൈംഗികാതിക്രമത്തിന്റെ ആഖ്യാന പ്രതിനിധാനങ്ങളെ വിമർശനാത്മകമായി പരിശോധിക്കുകയാണ് ഈ പ്രബന്ധം. ടി. ഡി. രാമകൃഷ്ണന്റെ സുഗന്ധി എന്ന ആണ്ടാൾ ദേവനായകി (ഇംഗ്ലീഷ് വിവർത്തനം : പ്രിയ കെ. നായർ – സുഗന്ധി ഏലിയാസ് ആണ്ടാൾ ദേവനായകി), നയോമി മുനവീരയുടെ 'ഐലൻഡ് ഓഫ് എ തൗസൻഡ് മിറേജ്സ്', മീന കന്ദസാമിയുടെ ദി ഓർഡേഴ്സ് വേർ ടു റേപ്പ് യു: ടൈഗ്രസ്സസ് ഇൻ ദി തമിഴ് ഈഴം സ്റ്റഗിൾ' എന്നീ സാഹിത്യകൃതികളെ മുൻനിർത്തിയാണ് പഠനം നടത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നത്.

സായുധ സംഘട്ടനത്തിന്റെ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ, ലൈംഗിക പീഡനം എന്നത് കുറ്റവാളിയുടെ ലൈംഗികാതിക്രമത്തിന്റെ പ്രകടനമായി മാത്രമല്ല, സ്ത്രീശരീരങ്ങളെ 'നികൃഷ്ട'മായി ചിത്രീകരിച്ച് വംശീയ അപരത്വം സൃഷ്ടിക്കാനും തരംതാഴ്ത്താനും മനുഷ്യത്വരഹിതമാക്കാനും ഉദ്ദേശിച്ചുള്ള ഒരു ജൈവരാഷ്ട്രീയ ഉപകരണമായിട്ടുകൂടിയാണ് പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നത്. ബലാത്സംഗത്തിന് ശേഷം കുടുംബത്തിന്റെയും രാജ്യത്തിന്റെയും അഭിമാനവുമായി തുല്യമാക്കപ്പെടുന്ന ഒരു സ്ത്രീശരീരം അവളുടെ പുരുഷനും കുടുംബത്തിനും രാഷ്ട്രത്തിനും നാണക്കേട് വരുത്തുമ്പോൾ, ഭരണകൂടം അതിന്റെ സൈന്യത്തിലൂടെ വംശീയ അപരത്വത്തിന്റെ നിയന്ത്രണം ഏറ്റെടുക്കുന്നതിനായി സ്ത്രീകൾക്കെതിരായ ആക്രമണത്തിൽ ഏർപ്പെടുന്നു. ഭരണകൂടം, അതിന്റെ സൈനിക ഉപകരണങ്ങളിലൂടെ, വംശീയമായ മറ്റ് വിഭാഗങ്ങളുടെ മേൽ ആധിപത്യം സ്ഥാപിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള ഒരു തന്ത്രമെന്ന നിലയിലും വ്യവസ്ഥാപിത ലൈംഗികാതിക്രമം നടത്തുന്നു. പുരുഷത്വം നിർഭയത്വത്തിന്റെയും ദേശീയ സംരക്ഷണത്തിന്റെയും വിവരണങ്ങളെ ചുറ്റിപ്പറ്റിയാണ് നിർമ്മിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത്. സൈനിക സേവനത്തെ പുരുഷസ്വത്വത്തിന്റെ പരകോടിയായിട്ടാണ് രൂപപ്പെടുത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നത്. പുരുഷന്മാർ, സൈനികവൽക്കരിക്കപ്പെട്ട പുരുഷത്വം പ്രകടിപ്പിക്കാൻ നിർബന്ധിതരാകുന്നു. സ്ത്രീകളാവട്ടെ, സാമൂഹം കൽപിച്ച അശ്രദ്ധമായ അസ്തിത്വത്തിലേക്ക് തരംതാഴ്ത്തപ്പെടാതിരിക്കാൻ ലൈംഗികവിശ്രദ്ധി നിലനിർത്തേണ്ട ബാധ്യത സ്വയം അനുഭവിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന ഒരു സാമൂഹിക അന്തരീക്ഷത്തെ ഈ പ്രത്യയശാസ്ത്രം വളർത്തിയെടുക്കുന്നു. ലൈംഗികാതിക്രമത്തിന്റെ വ്യാപകമായ ഭീഷണി, എല്ലാ സ്ത്രീകളെയും, ശാശ്വതമായ "ഇരയാക്കപ്പെടുന്നതിനു മുമ്പുള്ള അവസ്ഥ"യിലേക്ക് തള്ളിവിടുന്നു. ലൈംഗികാതിക്രമഭയം എല്ലാ സ്ത്രീകളെയും ഈയൊരു മാനസികാവസ്ഥയിലേക്ക് എത്തിച്ചു. ശ്രീലങ്കൻ സംഘർഷം സ്ത്രീകളെ സംബന്ധിച്ച് ലൈംഗികമായി അപകടകരമായ ഒരു

അന്തരീക്ഷം തന്നെ സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു. പ്രത്യേകിച്ച് യുദ്ധത്തിന്റെ അവസാന ഘട്ടത്തിൽ (2007–2009), തമിഴരെ ശിക്ഷിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള ഒരു ഉപകരണമായി മാത്രമല്ല, തമിഴ് ഈഴം വിമോചന പുലികളെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള (എൽ.ടി.ടി.ഇ) വിവരങ്ങൾ ശേഖരിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള ഒരു മാർഗമായും ബലാത്സംഗത്തെ ഉപയോഗിച്ചിരുന്നു. തമിഴ് ജനതയെ കീഴടക്കാൻ ശ്രീലങ്കൻ ഭരണകൂടം സ്ത്രീലൈംഗികവ്യവഹാരങ്ങളെ ഉപയോഗിച്ചപ്പോൾ, എൽ.ടി.ടി.ഇ.യും സ്വന്തം രാഷ്ട്രീയ താല്പര്യങ്ങൾ സംരക്ഷിക്കുന്നതിനും നടപ്പിലാക്കുന്നതിനും വേണ്ടി സ്ത്രീയുടെ ലൈംഗികവിശുദ്ധി എന്ന ആഖ്യാനത്തെ തങ്ങൾക്കനുഗുണമായി വ്യാഖ്യാനിച്ചു. നീതിന്യായ വ്യവസ്ഥയിലുള്ള വിശ്വാസം നഷ്ടപ്പെടൽ, സാമൂഹികമായ അപമാനഭയം, സുരക്ഷയെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള ഭയം, ബഹുമാനം വീണ്ടെടുക്കാനുള്ള ആഗ്രഹം, പ്രതികാരവാഞ്ഛ എന്നിവ പലപ്പോഴും ബലാത്സംഗത്തിന് ഇരയായവരെ നിയമപരമായ പരിഹാരം തേടുന്നതിനുപകരം എൽ.ടി.ടി.ഇ.യിൽ ചേരാൻ പ്രേരിപ്പിച്ചു. തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത ഗ്രന്ഥങ്ങളുടെ വിശദപഠനത്തിൽ, സ്ത്രീകഥാപാത്രങ്ങൾ സ്വീകരിക്കുന്ന വൈവിധ്യമാർന്ന പ്രതിരോധതന്ത്രങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ച് വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. മൗനം, ആത്മഹത്യ, എൽ.ടി.ടി.ഇ.യിൽ ചേരൽ എന്നിവ മുതൽ, ചാവേർ ബോംബർമാരാകൽ, പലായനം എന്നിവ വരെ അതിലുൾപ്പെടുന്നു. ഈ തന്ത്രങ്ങളാവട്ടെ, അപൂർവ്വമായി മാത്രമേ ശാശ്വതമായ ആശ്വാസമോ, ആഘാതത്തിൽ നിന്നുള്ള സംരക്ഷണമോ നൽകിയിരുന്നുള്ളൂ. മാത്രമല്ല, പലപ്പോഴും കൂടുതൽ ഇരകളാക്കപ്പെടുന്ന അവസ്ഥയിലേക്ക് നയിക്കപ്പെടുകയാണ് ചെയ്തത്. ആത്യന്തികമായി, ഗവൺമെന്റും എൽ.ടി.ടി.ഇ.യും സ്ത്രീവിശുദ്ധിയുടെ സാംസ്കാരിക നിർമ്മിതികളെ അവരുടെ രാഷ്ട്രീയലക്ഷ്യങ്ങൾക്കു വേണ്ടി ചൂഷണം ചെയ്തത് എങ്ങനെയെന്നും, അതിജീവിച്ചവരെ അക്രമത്തിലും പ്രതീകാത്മകമായ അടിമത്തത്തിലും തളച്ചിട്ടത് എങ്ങനെയെന്നും ഈ ഗവേഷണപ്രബന്ധം വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നു.

താക്കോൽവാക്കുകൾ: ലൈംഗികാതിക്രമം, ശ്രീലങ്കൻ വംശീയ സംഘർഷം, ജൈവരാഷ്ട്രീയം, സൈനികപുരുഷത്വം, അബ്ജെക്ട്, പ്രതിരോധതന്ത്രങ്ങൾ

Contents

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
AFSPA	Armed Forces Special Powers Act
BCE	Before the Common Era
CE	Common Era
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (as in *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki)*
CID	The Criminal Investigation Department
CTF	Consultation Task Force
EPRLF	Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front
EROS	The Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students
HIV	Human immunodeficiency viruses
HRCSL	The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka
ICTR	The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
IPKF	Indian Peace Keeping Force
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ITJP	International Truth and Justice Project
ITM	Island of a Thousand Mirrors
LLRC	Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MCI	Military Court of Inquiry
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Abbreviation	Definition
OMP	Office on Missing Persons
PLOTE	The People Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam
RAINN	The Rape and Abuse & Incest National Network
RAW	Research and Analysis Wing
SAAD	Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki
SLFP	Sri Lankan Freedom Party
SSF	Save Sri Lanka from Fascism (as in *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*)
TELO	The Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization
TLO	Tamil Liberation Organization
TRRC	Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission
TUF	Tamil United Front
TULF	Tamil United Liberation Front
UN	United Nations
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNP	United National Party
UTHR	University Teachers for Human Rights

Chapter I

Introduction

The use of rape as a tool of war has been a pervasive and devastating strategy used throughout history, particularly during conflicts, as a way to exert control, instil fear and to undermine the cultural structure of the targeted community. More than a means of physical domination that the victor's troops attain, the psychological warfare demoralises the victim and the community to which they belong. In the context of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict, which spanned from 1983 to 2009, this reality was obvious. As noted by Kishali Pinto Jayawardena and Jeannine Guthrie, the war "undeniably created a sexually risky environment for women" (xxv), highlighting how wartime conditions exacerbated vulnerabilities.

While the State, especially at the last phase of war (2007-2009), used rape not only as a tool of punishing individuals who belonged to the Tamils, but also as a method of extracting information about the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The article titled "State-sponsored Violence Against Eelam Tamil Women in North" that was submitted by the Association des étudiants tamouls de France to the United Nations Human Rights Council discusses the widespread use of sexualised violence as a weapon of war during the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict, emphasizing its role in exerting power, controlling communities, gathering information, and facilitating ethnic cleansing (State-sponsored Violence 1-4). The document highlights violence perpetrated by State powers against women as a tool of controlling a community. Jayawardena and Guthrie state how being a woman was a terrific experience in Sri Lanka, and how impunity aggravated sexual violence

during the conflict. “The State was not the only party to engage in gender-based abuse during the conflict, and not all victims were Tamil, though most were. Paramilitary groups allied with the Sri Lankan government were alleged to have committed horrific attacks on women with impunity for years” (Jayawardena and Guthrie xxvi). While the State powers used the narratives of female sexuality to control the Tamil population during the conflict, the LTTE used the same narrative in a different way to attain their political goals. The *unspeakability* of rape further intensifies the trauma experienced by victims and amplifies the power held by perpetrators.

Rape narratives often remain silent due to a combination of cultural, systematic and personal factors that discourage victims from speaking out. The silence, largely driven by the fear of secondary victimisation, perpetuates a cycle of underreporting and societal neglect, leaving many survivors to endure their traumatic experiences in isolation. The thesis is an attempt to speak about the *unspeakability* of rape, with a particular emphasis on the rape faced by women during the Sri Lankan Ethnic Conflict.

Rape

Rape, a traumatic and violent crime against an individual's bodily autonomy and dignity, assumes an additional dimension as a strategic tool of war in the context of warfare. This weaponisation of rape creates devastating psychological, social, and physical impacts, extending the harm not only to the victims but to the entire communities. McDougall’s report on Human Rights in the UN Commission defines war rape as “a deliberate and strategic decision on the part of combatants to

intimidate and destroy 'the enemy' as a whole by raping and enslaving women who are identified as members of the opposition group" (4-5). In the document, "UN Action Against Sexual Violence," the United Nations asserts that "Rape committed during war is often intended to terrorise the population, break up families, destroy communities, and, in some instances, change the ethnic makeup of the next generation. Sometimes it is also used to deliberately infect women with HIV or render women from the targeted community incapable of bearing children" (qtd. in Peltola 2). For centuries, rape has been used as a spoil of war and as a weapon—possibly the most brutal weapon of war—in order to exercise power and dominance over women and undermine the social fabric of society. It is a method of torture, both physical and psychological, and is a crime, just like murder, and in many cases, women may be raped to death (Peltola 1-2).

Rape, according to Mithu Sanyal is a *cultural sore spot*, which needs society's attention, but of which society is scared to address and "a veritable hall of mirrors of expectations and discourses and each sentence is followed by ten unspoken ones" (2). In the ancient times (c. 2000 BCE–5th Century CE), laws like The Code of Hammurabi, treated rape as a property against the father or husband of a raped woman as she was considered as the property of her father before her marriage and of her husband post marriage. As women's value was tied to her virginity, rape was considered as damage to her owner. During the Medieval Period (5th–15th Century CE), Feudal systems of Europe which treated women as extensions of their families observed rape as a crime against her family's honour (Brownmiller 19). Rape of a virgin daughter was viewed akin to the destruction of

family property and the idea of *marital rape* was strange to them as a wife was her husband's possession, with no autonomy over her body (Brownmiller 24).

The period that witnessed rape in armed conflicts, like the Viking Raids, The Crusades and The Hundred Years War also reflects and reasserts the patriarchal values, where women's bodies were viewed as extensions of family honour. The Early Modern Period (15th - 17th century) reasserted the laws of rape as a violation of family honour, rather than a personal violation (Brownmiller 25).

The laws in many parts of Europe, including Lombardy, Sicily, Southern Italy, Spain, and France, supported practices like rehabilitative marriage—such as *matrimonio riparatore* in Italy or provisions under the *Siete Partidas* (Seven Divisions, a comprehensive legal code in the 13th century) in Spain—where a rapist could marry their victim. This was seen as a means to prevent societal disgrace from falling upon the victim's family. Proving a woman's innocence relied heavily on her behaviour, clothing, and reputation, as well as evidence that she had actively resisted the assault. Legal systems were inherently biased, with judgments often influenced by the victim's class and social status. This created significant barriers for women, particularly those without access to societal power structures, preventing many from reporting rape during this period.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Age of Enlightenment and Victorian Era continued a historical legacy of framing rape within the societal structures that reinforced male superiority and power. Women were idealised as virtuous beings, where a *normal* woman was expected to be passive and modest,

without sexual desires of her own. This idealisation served to deny women autonomy and agency, reducing them to objects within a patriarchal narrative.

Literatures of diverse centuries that highlight the problematic notion of rape as a pleasurable experience for women, reinforced harmful narratives of gender, sexuality and consent. The Roman poet who lived during the late Roman Republic and early Roman Empire (43 BCE – 17/18 CE), Ovid, in his work Ars Amatoria, exemplifies this narrative through these lines.

> Though you call it force: its force that pleases girls: What delights is often to have given what they wanted, against their will. She who is taken in love's sudden onslaught is pleased, and finds wickedness is a tribute. And she who might have been forced, and escapes unscathed, will be saddened, though her face pretends delight. (151)

These words romanticise coercion by suggesting that women secretly desire sexual encounters, while they outwardly resist conforming to societal expectations of modesty. This notion reinforces male dominance and represents a trope that has trivialised rape throughout history. The cultural definition of rape as an affirmation of a man's chivalry and a woman's resistance as a marker of her femininity led to a misapprehension that perpetuated male dominance and justified coercive behaviour as natural or even desirable. In contrast to these androcentric assumptions, feminist discussions of the 20th century made a significant shift in the discourse of rape by observing it as a tool of patriarchal oppression. The book *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (1975) redefined rape as a political tool to impose power over the victim rather than a way to fulfil sexual desires, and she reinstates that rape couldn't

even be sex as real sex is based on mutual consent (Miller). The work also questioned society's attitude of blaming individuals for rape rather than addressing systemic accountability, thereby challenging cultural myths that trivialised sexual violence and perpetuated victim-blaming (Miller). The conditioned consciousness of the society placed the rape victim in a stigmatised state, in spite of the advancements in female discourses and representations. The victim's thoughts were manipulated and controlled by the State power as an effective strategy to enforce their laws and attain their ends, whereby her bodily autonomy is denied (Miller).

In addition to its personal and societal impacts, rape has historically been weaponised as a political tool during wars and ethnic conflicts, dehumanising the female body into an object, emasculating *her man,* and asserting dominance by sowing the seeds of the oppressor in her womb, symbolically *purifying* the bloodline of the next generation. As the raped woman becomes a ceremonial battlefield for the victor's group, the loss of his woman's chastity emasculates the man of the defeated side. As Susan Brown Miller postulates in her work *Against Our Will:*

> Men of conquered nation traditionally view the rape of "their women" as the ultimate humiliation, a sexual coup de grace. Rape is considered by the people of a defeated nation to be part of the enemy's conscious effort to destroy them... Apart from genuine, human concern for wives and daughters near and dear to them, rape by a conqueror is compelling evidence of the conquered's status of masculine impotence. (38)

It is more catastrophic than shells or propaganda, as it blemishes even the cultural purity of the group in question. Compared to other crimes, rape is the only crime

where the victim is sidelined to the status of a criminal whereas the perpetrator's accountability is downplayed. As Sohaila Abdulali highlights in her work *What We Talk About When We Talk About Rape*:

> Rape drains the light, like J.K. Rowling fantastically terrifying Dementors, it sucks joy. And along with draining the light from victims' lives, it tends to drain the light from sensible conversation. Discussions about rape are so often irrational, and sometimes outright bizarre. It's the only crime to which people respond by wanting to lock up the victims. It is the only crime that is so bad that victims are supposed to be destroyed beyond repair by it, but simultaneously not so bad that the men who do it should be treated like other criminals. (1)

A raped woman is being revictimized as she will be estranged from society due to her status of a criminal for inviting male gaze and became a victim of rape thereby; the male who is involved in the crime will be venerated as a *superhero*. Her juxtaposed identity of a victim and that of a criminal, intimidates her in the state of constant fear of rape, which succoured perpetrator's inclinations to overpower their foe through terror. Like Susan Griffin posits rape was a "part of natural environment-something to be feared and prayed against like fire and lightening" (142). It was understood as a condition of women's existence, which is all-pervasive and continuous. As historian Joanna Bourke posits, "Rape varies between countries; it changes over time. There is nothing timeless or random about it. . .. On the contrary, rape and sexual violence are deeply rooted in specific political, economic and cultural environments" (qtd. in Bourke 2-4).

Although there are various definitions of rape, most of them are limited as it defines rape as an act where a man penetrates a woman's vagina with his penis without her consent. These definitions often fail to address other forms of violence such as genital mutilation, rape with objects, oral or anal rape, and male-on-male rape, often categorising them under the broader and sometimes lighter term of sexual violence. This study adopts its definition of rape from the Akayesu case trial, which provides a more comprehensive understanding of the crime. The Trial Chamber of ICTR (The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda), in the Akayesu case trial, defined rape as a "physical invasion of a sexual nature, committed on a person under circumstances which are coercive" (qtd. in MacKinnon 238). Characterising rape as torture, the trial chamber further stated that rape, like torture, "is a violation of personal dignity, and rape in fact constitutes torture when it is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity" (qtd. in Fulton 20).

Rape as a Strategic Tool in Warfare

The use of rape as a war strategy evolved over centuries, serving as a deliberate tool to achieve specific political and military objectives. In Early Warfare, rape was considered as an inevitable consequence of war. In ancient and medieval societies, raping women of the defeated side by the victor's troop was common and the practice was considered as a reward for soldiers. As Kelly Dawn Askin states in his book, *War Crimes Against Women: Prosecution in International War Crimes Tribunals*, "opportunities to rape and loot were among the few advantages open to. . . soldiers, who were paid with great irregularity by their leaders. . . triumph over

women by rape became a way to measure victory, part of a soldier's proof of masculinity and success, a tangible reward for services rendered. . . an actual reward of war" (26-27). The concept of considering rape as a reward for the victor's troop made a shift to systemic use of rape as a war strategy during the period of World Wars. These acts were not incidental but deliberate components of broader military strategies aimed at asserting dominance over the defeated and were often justified by military leaders as essential for maintaining morale or subjugating enemy populations. In the late 20th century, significant progress was made in acknowledging rape as a weapon of war, notably during the conflicts in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

In the Yugoslavic war, the systematic rape of Bosniak women by Serbian forces was used to humiliate, dehumanize, and assert control, bringing global attention to the issue. The Serbian forces used rape as a war strategy as it served their purpose of ethnic cleansing through planting the seeds of Serbs in Bosnia. The rape strategy became a way of inflicting fear within the Bosnian population through which the Serbian goal of making Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) flee from the country became easily achievable. Establishing detention centres and rape camps, women were forcefully impregnated and were held captive till the termination of pregnancies was impossible. Siobhan Fisher, an expert in international law, characterized this forced impregnation as "a military invasion of the womb" (qtd. in Brashear 7). Beyond being mere victims, women were dehumanized and relegated to the status of sexual slaves by the Serbian army, which treated them as chattel, empowering themselves with the authority to barter these women as commodities.

World War I and World War II witnessed tragic occurrences of rape in the occupied territories by the invaders. During World War I, the notorious instances were the mass rapes committed by German soldiers during the invasion of Belgium and France. During Sino-Japanese war that preceded World War II, Japanese soldiers engaged in mass rapes, especially during the invasion of Nanking. Comfort stations were set up in 1932 by the Japanese army, in which comfort women were forced to work as sexual slaves for the Japanese soldiers. Women were raped, and their bodies were mutilated. The Nazi occupation of Eastern Europe witnessed rape in high scale during World War II, while the German army raped women in the terrorities under their control, particularly in areas like Poland and Soviet Union. As it is stated by Brownmiller, “concentration camp rape and institutionalized camp brothels in which women were held against their will for the pleasure of the soldiery were a most sinister aspect of the abuse of women in World War II” (63).

Exploiting the stigma and shame associated with sexual violence, the perpetrator uses the tool of rape to suppress and defame the community in opposition. In Gautemala, rape was used as a tool by the military and paramilitary to terrorise and suppress the minority, Mayan population. By targeting the family members of guerrillas and raping them infront of the community, the perpetrators aimed to instill fear within the opposition and to deter women from joining and supporting the guerrilla groups. This strategy was also effective in silencing politically active women who speak against the atrocities of State-sponsored violence.

In the context of Democratic Republic of Congo's war against Congolese women, Dr. Denis Mukwege, director of Panzi Hospital draws a parallel between rape and terrorism and he states, "It is a method of torture. It is a way to terrorise the population. When I see some of the injuries on the women and children, I realize this type of violence has nothing to do with sex and much more with power through a sort of terrorism" (qtd. in Peltola 14). The motives of rape in Congo are multi faceted like ethnic cleansing, terrorising the population and satisfying soldier's sexual desires. The fear of being raped prevented women from working the fields that exacerbated extreme poverty and food insecurity. The physical and psychological scars post-rape that was compounded by the inability to access abortion, led them to the traumatic state of living with their rapist's child.

Gang rape served as a calculated tactic to harm Tutsi blood line through rendering them infertile and to promote comradery among Hutu soldiers in the Rwandan civil war. Women of child bearing age were targeted for rape and pregnant women became victims of violence, forced abortions and killings. Hutu Interahamwe soldiers deliberately transmitted HIV to Tutsi women with the intention of ethnically cleansing the Tutsi population. Furthermore, Tutsi men were coerced into sexual activity with women already infected with HIV by the Interahamwe soldiers.

Ethnic cleansing was the central directive principle of most of the war rapes including the invasion of Burmese security forces upon Rohingya population and the sexual enslavement of Yazidi women by ISIL or ISIS. Under the pretext of hunting terrorists, Burmese security forces conducted raids that targeted the female members

of the *suspected terrorists* and they were subjected to rape during interrogation. Rape was further used as a weapon by the Burmese security forces to instill fear within the Rohingyan population which lessened their burden of clearing the Rakhine region. Meanwhile in the case of Yazidis, women were exchanged as commodities: as wives, gifts and sexual slaves to brave soldiers. The reproductive capability of Yazidi women was attacked by ISIS or ISIL as part of ethnic cleansing. Being sexual slaves to ISIS or ISIL, Yazidi women were either forced to consume contraceptives to prevent themselves from giving birth to Yazidi children or were forced to marry and give birth to non-Yazidi children.

South Asian countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka also witnessed massive human right violations like rape during the period of conflict. During the Partition of India in 1947, women on both sides of the border (India and Pakistan), irrespective of being Hindu, Sikh, or Muslim, suffered brutalities. They were abducted, raped, maimed and sometimes killed by the members of other religious groups. The abducted women either became domestic servants and sexual slaves or were sold into prostitution. In some cases, they married their abductors. Even the efforts of Indian and Pakistani governments through signing the Inter Dominion Agreement in November 1947 never saved those women, as many of the families “refused to take their daughters and wives back by claiming that the rescued women had been polluted by the religious other” (Dey 112).

Raped women were unacceptable in most of the South Asian societies (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh) that equated female honour with the honour of the family and community. Despite Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s declaration of raped

women as *Biranganas* (brave women) following the Liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971, they were never saved from social ostracisation and familial abandonment. During the war, East Pakistani women (Bangladesh) were raped both by the West Pakistani army and by the Razakars (local Bengali and non-Bengali collaborators) "purportedly in their mission to improve the genes of the Bengali people and thus populate Bangladesh with pure Muslims" (Das 55).

In South Asian countries (like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka) that equalise female honour with the honour of the community and nation, "sexual assault is often considered as a fate worse than death" (Manoranjan 141). The cherished images of Tamil women as *bearers of culture*, as *sacred bearers of family and community*, and as *symbolic markers to measure purity and respect* (Manoranjan 141) were shattered by the high rate of sexual assaults against them during the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict. "A Question of Honour: Women, Ethnicity and Armed Conflict," the lecture delivered by the UN special reporter of Violence Against Women on the Third Minority Rights Lecture at Geneva states:

> To rape or mutilate women in ethnic conflict is to raid the inner sanctum, the spiritual core of ethnic identity and to defile it. It is not unusual that men after they rape the women often tattoo their breasts or genitalia with insignia of the other community. This accentuates the fact that the female body is a symbol of a community's honour and its inner sanctum. To rape women with impunity and to mark their bodies with the symbols of the other side is to assert domination and to symbolically assault ethnic identity in its most protected space. (Coomaraswamy)

Exploiting the traditional notions of female purity and honour, Sinhalese state security forces employed rape as a war tactic to oppress the Tamil minority, especially during the last phase of the Eelam War. UN Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, during the session of the U.N. Security Council in 2009, highlighted the role of impunity that the perpetrators enjoy in worsening the plight of Sri Lankan women during war. She states: “We’ve seen rape used as a tactic of war before in Bosnia, Burma, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere. In too many countries and in too many cases, the perpetrators of this violence are not punished, and so this impunity encourages further attacks” (Clinton). Further reinforcing the argument, Chulani Kodikara and Sarala Emmanuel observe that “impunity and lack of accountability for sexual violence have been entrenched features of the war in Sri Lanka” (7).

The seeds of ethnic rivalry and war between Tamils and Sri Lankans have roots in ancient history, even though their growing expressions were found since the island’s independence from colonisers in 1948. The ethnic clashes in Sri Lanka became more severe in Sri Lanka than in other South Asian countries because of its wide geographical, economic, social, and religious diversities. Sri Lanka is a multi ethnic society with 73 percent (as per 1978 estimates) of its population believed to be the descendants of Aryans of North India, who speak Sinhalese and follow Theravada Buddhism. The largest minority is Ceylon Tamils, who represent 11 percent of the total population, concentrated chiefly in the northern and eastern parts of the island. They speak Tamil and are Hindus. The other two groups are the Moors and the Burghers. Moors are of Arab descent and represent five percent of the total population, and their language varies according to the area of their residence.

Burghers are descendants of children of Portuguese, Dutch, and British marriages with Ceylonese, and they compose less than one percent of the total population. They were active in constitutional reform movements, once played significant roles in government and cultural life, and have accepted English as their mother tongue, even though they can speak Sinhalese. The other communities include Malayas, descendants of soldiers serving in Ceylon during Dutch and British times, and Indian Moors, who came from various parts of India in search of trade.

Contextualising Sri Lankan Ethnic Conflict

The roots of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict go back more than 2000 years. The conflicting historical perceptions of the Tamil and Sinhala communities have deeply influenced their views on contemporary issues, making constructive dialogue between them appear almost impossible. According to historical accounts, the Sinhalese are Aryans by race, Buddhists by religion, and are believed to have immigrated from Northern India to Sri Lanka 2500 years ago; they are also regarded as the island's original inhabitants, ordained by the Buddha to protect their race and religion. This racial myth is further reinforced by a legend that depicts the Sinhala King Vijaya's forefathers as descendants of a lion ('Sinha' in Sanskrit) and a princess, and asserts that the sons and daughters of Sinha are the true owners of the island. To bolster their argument, the Sinhalese highlight the story of Aryan King Dulthagamani, who waged war against the Tamil King Elara to protect Buddhism from nonbelievers. The narratives stem from the fear of the Sinhalese towards the Tamil community. Despite their minority status in Sri Lanka, their connection and proximity to Indian Tamils fuelled their hatred of Tamils. Tamils were looked down

upon as invaders from South India, and their language, Tamil, aggravated the racial divide. But the Tamils held an entirely different perspective that reaffirmed their claim to be the true inhabitants of the land. They eschewed Sinhalese perspectives by stating that it is extremely difficult for North Indians to reach the island as it is too far away from Sri Lanka, and it is easily accessible for South Indians as the island is only 20 miles away. They further stated that the Tamil name for Sri Lanka, *Eelam,* is mentioned even in the pre-Christian era Tamil classics.

The ethnic clashes between the two communities intensified during the four-and-a-half centuries of Portuguese, Dutch, and British rule. The racial tensions between the communities were exploited by colonisers to further their economic interests, while the proselytising fervour of British colonisers was advantageous for Tamils and low-caste Sinhalese who converted to Christianity. The converted Christians were granted advantages such as access to education, improved social status, enhanced economic opportunities, cultural integration, and support from religious communities. Postcolonial Sri Lanka witnessed the worsening of the rift as the Sinhalese felt threatened by the Tamils' superiority in business and profession, while the Tamils were afraid of their minority status. At the time of independence of the island, a political settlement was signed, in which section 29 (2) of the constitution highlighted the protection of minorities against discrimination, ensured equal rights for all religions and replaced the status of English with Sinhalese and Tamil as official languages. An official language commission was formed after independence to decide on the procedures for this matter.

The fear towards the Tamil population forced the Sinhalese government to come up with three acts that include The Ceylon Citizenship Act of 1948, the Indian and Pakistani Resident (Citizenship) Act of 1949, and the Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Act of 1940 to reduce Indian Tamil participation in deciding the politics of Sri Lanka. In 1944, J R Jayawardene proposed in the State Council that Sinhala should be made the official language, which was supported by Dudley Senanayake and the Buddhist Sangh. Tamils, interpreting this stand of the Sinhalese as betrayal, came out with the slogan *Tamil Only* under the leadership of the Federal Party, in retaliation to the *Sinhala Only* resolution perpetuated by the SLFP (Sri Lankan Freedom Party) in 1955 and the UNP (United National Party) in 1956. The Official Language Bill, presented in the House of Representatives on 5 June 1956, became law as the Official Language Act No. 33 on 7 July 1956, under the administration of the SWRD Bandaranaike government. The implementation of the *Sinhala Only Act,* which necessitated elementary knowledge of the Sinhala language as a prerequisite for government and semi-government jobs, created fear within Tamils regarding the stability of their jobs. The policy of the Sinhala government that abolished English medium schools and restricted admission in Teachers Training institutes for Sinhalese, fuelled Tamil insecurity. This insecurity was intensified when the peaceful civil disobedience movement of Tamils against the *Sinhala Only Act* was disrupted by the counter-demonstration of pro-Sinhala nationalists in Colombo.

The ensuing riots across the nation that led to the murder of hundreds of Tamils resulted in the signing of the Bhandarnaike-Chelvanayakam Pact (between

Prime Minister Bhandarnaike and Federal Party leader Mr Cheivanayakam) on 26th July 1956. The pact promised to recognise the status of Tamil as the language of the national minority and as the official language of administration in the north and eastern provinces, and assured that the issue of Tamil citizenship would be taken into consideration. But opposition to the pact stemmed from diverse sides encompassing various Buddhist factions and from UNP leader S.R. Jayewardene, who conducted a march from Kandy to Colombo, forcing the Prime Minister Bhandaranaike to revoke the pact. This led to ethnic conflict between the two communities and to the Declaration of Emergency by the state in 1959. The discrimination against Tamils during the Sirimavo Bandaranaike government intensified the feelings of insecurity within Tamils. Exploiting the situation, UNP under J S Senanayake came to power with the support of Chelvanayakam's Federal Party and special status for the Tamils was granted on 11 January 1966, as per the earlier agreement between Dudley Senanayake and Chelvanayakam. The resurgence of the SLFP to power in the 1970 elections once more disturbed the peaceful environment, leading to the implementation of a constitution that ignored the demands of Tamils. In opposition to the constitution, all Tamil parties, including the Federal Party, the Tamil Congress, the Ceylon Workers Congress, and the United Front of Tamil Elam, came together and formed TUF (Tamil United Front) in 1972.

The Tamils were of the fear that the new constitution might relegate them to second-class citizens of their own country, prompting the TUF to challenge the constitution in its entirety. As a result of this collective effort, in 1976 the TUF evolved into the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), incorporating the term

'liberation' to emphasise its commitment to seeking a separate state for Tamils, known as Tamil Eelam. When the concerns of TULF (Tamil United Liberation Front) were rejected by the government, they contested the 1977 elections seeking a mandate from the Tamil people of the North and the Eastern provinces to establish an independent Tamil Eelam, and won the Tamil-majority areas in northern Sri Lanka. The Tamil hopes upon the UNP government under J.R. Jayewardene were shattered one month after the elections, while the Sinhalese policemen in the Jaffna Peninsula began anti-Tamil riots that gradually spread to other parts of the country. Even though the adoption of a new constitution in September 1978 recognised Tamil as an official language, the harsh measures of the Sinhala government towards Tamils continued, and this led to growing militancy among young Tamils. This resulted in the implementation of the Prevention of Terrorism Act No. 48, which gave unlimited powers to security forces in their operations against Tamil militants. The Sinhalese army carried out politically motivated crimes against Tamils, like arbitrary arrests and torture, while Tamil separatists, in retaliation for this, attacked Police stations, army units, government establishments, and government informers. The conflict between both the groups led to the rise of half a dozen guerilla organisations like the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) led by V. Prabhakaran - The People Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) led by Uma Maheswara, The Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) led by Thangadoral and Kutti Mani, The Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students (EROS) led by Eliathamba Ratnasabhapathi.

LTTE became an insurgent group in Sri Lanka in 1972, even though they started working as an organisation, Tamil New Tigers, in 1974 under the leadership of Chetti Thanabalasingham. Velupillai Prabhakaran, who was drawn to politics at a young age, founded the military organisation TNT, which later became the LTTE. The rise of Prabhakaran begins with the assassination of the Mayor of Jaffna, Alfred Duraiappah, who was the representative of the then United Front government, on 27 July 1975, at Ponnalai. In the mid 1970's LTTE received support from TULF leaders like Appapillai Amrithalingam, Uma Maheswaran, Urmila Kandiah, V N Navaratnam, EROS, and TLO, which made their international collaborations easy. Following the events of *Black July* in 1983, a state-sponsored attack against Tamils in Sri Lanka between 23rd July and 30th July, which resulted in widespread atrocities like murder, rape, displacement and burning of Tamil houses, the LTTE network expanded overseas and established connections with various terrorist organisations.

From August 1983, the LTTE gained official support from India under the leadership of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and military training to them was imparted in India by RAW. With the India-Lanka Accord of July 1987, Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, withdrew its support to the LTTE and ordered the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to disarm the LTTE and to maintain peace in Sri Lanka. The war between India and the LTTE never affected Tamil Nadu's LTTE support, and it remained as one of the LTTE's major sources of supplies. In 1989, Ranasighe Premadasa and the United National Party (UNP) came to power in Sri Lanka, and he used widespread opposition to the IPKF to his

advantage, publicly demanding the withdrawal of Indian forces from Sri Lanka by the end of July. The then elected government under V. P. Singh in India withdrew the IPKF in 1990.

The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi on 21 May 1991 by the LTTE suicide bomber Kalaivani Rajaratnam (popularly known as Thenmozhi Rajaratnam and Dhanu) led to a decrease in support for the LTTE in India. In 1993, the two assassinations of Lalith Athulathmudali, who had founded the opposition Democratic United Liberation Front in 1991, and President Premadasa, who was assassinated by a suicide bomber who allegedly was a member of the LTTE, startled the government. In August 1994, Chandrika Bhandaranaike Kumaratunga and her party People's Alliance, came to power with three main agendas: (1) to end the ethnic conflict, (2) to replace the presidential system with the parliamentary system, and (3) to eliminate the abuse of political power by the government. But her initiatives to resolve ethnic conflict did not produce positive results, and the government announced the legal text of the proposals on devolution of power in January 1996. This legal text, which empowered the central government to remove or assume direct rule over any regional government that tried to secede from the republic, created fear among the Tamils. The failure to find a political solution to ethnic conflict resulted in the policy of *war for peace* by the government. The peace process during the UNP government under Ranil Wickremasinghe (which came to power in December 2001), in the mediatorship of Norway, on 16 September 2002, and the ceasefire agreement failed miserably as the country witnessed numerous human rights violations and political assassinations. In 2005, violating the ceasefire

agreement LTTE launched attacks on multiple government forces, and in 2008, the Government of Sri Lanka formally terminated the ceasefire agreement.

In the six phases of war between the LTTE and the Sinhala army, Eelam War I (1976-1987), Indian Involvement (1980-1990), Eelam War II (1990-1993), Eelam War III (1994-2005). Eelam War IV (2006-2008), the last phase of war (2008-2009), witnessed the recapturing of LTTE areas like Parappakandal in Mannar District, the town of Mallavi, and Kilinochchi, which was the administrative capital of the rebel groups. On 14 January 2009, the Jaffna peninsula and on 5 February 2009, the Sea Tiger base in Chalai were also captured by the Sri Lankan army. The war ended on 16 May 2009, with the official declaration of the Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa on Sri Lankan war victory, and on the following day, 17 May 2009, the government officially declared the death of Vellupillai Prabhakaran.

The last phase of war witnessed a large number of human rights violations, including rape, compared to other phases of war in Sri Lanka. Most of the rapes were conducted by government security and paramilitary forces. The period of the IPKF also witnessed rapes. As it is stated by Sumathy Sivamohan, “Both the Sri Lankan forces and the IPKF during its stint in the country engaged in the massacres of communities in villages from 1983 onwards, following ambushes by the LTTE or other militant movements. Rape, massacre, violation and conquest” (382). As an organisation that banned sexual intimacy between its cadres and punished those who transgressed the rule with death, the absence of rape was a strategic decision taken by LTTE leaders to gain public support. As Elisabeth Jean Wood states “when an armed group is strongly dependent on civilians for logistical support, such as

supplies, recruits, and, especially, intelligence (which is difficult to coerce over a long period of time), and when leaders anticipate relations continuing over some sustained time period, they are likely not to tolerate sexual violence against those civilians for fear of eroding their base of support" (140-41). The LTTE did not employ rape as a war strategy because they wanted to recruit raped women by manipulating the concept of purity. They asserted their role as the protectors of female chastity in Tamil society, through which they made them believe that being an LTTE cadre is the only solution for raped women to protect their honour in the family and in the community and to take revenge on their oppressors. The loss of belief in the judicial system, fear of social stigmatisation, fear of security, desire to recoup honour, and an unending thirst for revenge impelled the victims of rape to choose the LTTE over judicial support.

The state of those who choose judicial support was even worse. As it is, Jayawardena and Guthrie state:

> Pursuing justice for sexual violence in Sri Lanka is far from a sure thing. The justice system is rife with corruption, and interactions with law enforcement can expose victims of violence to further abuse. The evidence-gathering process itself can become a source of trauma, forcing victims to recount painful experiences in the attempt to prove that the sexual encounter was not consensual, to defend themselves against insinuations about their private lives and sexual histories, or to submit to inept, negligent, antiquated or invasive physical examinations- practices that Priya Thangarajah calls a 'continuum of violence' (xlii)

As Rosemary Hunter states “rape complainants, indeed seem to be continually placed into the kind of double bind that Lyotard has labelled an ‘ethnical tort’- an extreme form of injustice whereby a person’s injury is accompanied by the precise deprivation of the means to prove it” (37). She further states that “this might alternatively be analysed as a form of emotional abuse” (37). Jayawardena and Guthrie observe “harassment and intimidation of women attempting to bring cases against their attackers, particularly if the alleged perpetrators are state agents or otherwise influential” (xliii) as a persistent problem that draws the victims back from registering a complaint against their perpetrators. Another reason is the delays in court procedures that can ultimately *thwart justice* altogether (Jayawardena and Anantharajah 86), “as witnesses forget details, succumb to intimidation, age, ill health, or simply give up. As those injustices pile up, faith in the system inevitably diminishes” (Jayawardena and Guthrie Xliv).

T D Ramakrishnan’s *Sugandhi Enna Andal Devanayaki*, Nayomi Munaweera’s *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* and Meena Kandasamy’s *the orders were to rape you: tigresses in the tamil eelam struggle* (stylised in lowercase in the original) in their works narrate the struggles of women and their fight for justice on the backdrop of Sri Lankan ethnic conflict. The ethnic conflict that spanned from 1983 to 2009 startled the world due to its longevity, complexity and humanitarian impact. The present study initiates a reading of the psychology of the rapists, revictimisation of the survivors and the coping mechanisms of the survivors and how it is depicted in select works of T D Ramakrishnan’s *Sugandhi Enna Andal*

Devanayaki, Nayomi Munaweera's *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* and Meena Kandasamy's *the orders were to rape you (*stylised in lowercase in the original).

T D Ramakrishnan (Thathamangalam Damodaran Ramakrishnan), an acclaimed writer in Malayalam, recipient of Kerala Sahitya Academy Award and Vayalar Award, has penned five novels, including *Alpha, Franscis Itty Cora, Sugandhi Enna Andal Devanayaki, Mama Africa and Andhar, Badhirar, Mookar* and has translated two Tamil novels into English, including Shobasakthi's *Hmm* and *Thappu Thalangal* by Charu Nivedita. His novel *Alpha* tried to reconstruct the existing notions of society, family and honour through the portrayal of its protagonist Upalendhu Chatterjee, an Anthropology Professor of JNU, who, with twelve members, reaches an island to conduct an experiment to go back to the roots of human origin.

His second novel *Franscis Itty Cora*, unravels a world of concentration camps in Falluja, the strange rituals of the Peruvian Inka tribes, and the 'Thupak' guerrilla operations through the protagonist Junior Ittycora, or Francis Xavior Ittycora, who is in search of his roots. The novel travels through the world of cannibal clubs, secret societies and strange rituals, which were strange to Malayalam readers. The plight of women during the reign of Idi Amen is narrated through the eyes of Tara Viswanath, the narrator of the novel *Mama Africa*. Through the letters of Tara Viswanath, a writer from Uganda, to his pen friend during college days, the reader is introduced to a world of reality that encompasses African politics and culture, and to a world of myth: African Mama, a God-like figure depicted as the creation of the narrator's conscience. *Andhar, Badirar, Mookar*, his fifth novel also

stands along side with his other novels in the depiction of human sufferings as it narrates the other side of Kashmir through the life of Fathima Nilofar and the hardships that she faced as a Kashmiri and as a woman.

Sugandhi Enna Andal Devanayaki, a postmodern novel, translated by Priya K Nair as *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki* is a narrative of year old ethnic conflict between Sinhalese and Tamils of Sri Lanka. The novel won the 2016 Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award, the 2016 Malayattoor Award, and the 2017 Vayalar Award. It is addressed to Dr Rajani Thiranagama, a prominent Sri Lankan human rights activist of UTHR (University Teachers for Human Rights), who was brutally gunned down, reportedly by rebel Tigers. He calls her *a crusader for justice* and states that it was her assassination in 1989 that inspired him to write the novel. In an interview with K.A. Shaji, he states:

> It was Rajani's assassination that forced me to look into the complexities of the ethnic divide in Sri Lanka. Inspired by her elder sister Nirmala, an LTTE member, Rajani also got involved with the ultra nationalist group mainly by administering the care to those wounded in action. In 1983, Rajani travelled to England under commonwealth scholarship for postgraduate studies in anatomy at Liverpool medical school. Even that shifting from the troubled nation to a far better living atmosphere had not deterred her from raising her voice against injustice. (Ramakrishnan)

Her transformation from an LTTE supporter to an expositor of LTTE barbarity resulted in her murder. He further states, "What really moved me was her return to war-torn Jaffna to rebuild the university and work there for her own people. . . it was

her sincerity to the cause and boldness to say the truth that resulted in her murder, and that inspired my novel" (Ramakrishnan). The novel, which is a mixture of reality, fiction and myth, interweaves its three women characters- the real character Dr Rajani Thiranagama, the mythical character Devanayaki and the fictional character Sugandhi- who are in rebellion with the patriarchal notion of female objectification. The novel that is narrated through the eyes of Peter Jeevanandam, a failed director who tries to make a successful film with the support of a Hollywood film company, depicts the plight of Sri Lankan citizens, especially Tamil women, during the period of political unrest in Sri Lanka. More than being the director of a successful movie, he intended to find his lover Sugandhi, a former LTTE cadre and the one who helped him to escape from the hands of the Tigers when he reached Sri Lanka, years before, to create a movie under the financial assistance of the LTTE.

During the research for the movie that is assisted by the Sinhala government, he comes across diverse characters and the stories that they narrate widens his perspective on Sri Lankan ethnic conflict and the struggles of common people who dream of a peaceful land, in between "the state sponsored violence on one side, and the extremely violent Tamil movement on the other" (*SAAD* 250). Amidst his search for Sugandhi, he meets an archeologist Juliet, who later becomes his partner. His collaboration with Juliet opens the windows of knowledge on the history of violence in Sri Lanka from ancient times, which continues to this day. Through her, the story of Andal Devanayaki, who burned the city of Sinhasailam as a revenge for the rape and murder of her daughter Kooveni by King Mahinda, unfolds. After his meeting with Sugandhi, who is the leader of an organisation Sri

Lankan War Widows, with which Juliet's organisation Save Sri Lanka from Fascism (SSF) is in collaboration with, he realises the mission of assassinating the President in which Sugandhi and Juliet is engaged in. The end of the novel portrays Sugandhi as a reincarnation of Devanayaki, where she blasts CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting), in retaliation for the sufferings of women in war.

Nayomi Munaweera is a Sri Lankan-born writer who grew up in Nigeria and in Oakland, California. Through her debut novel *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* (2012), which won the Commonwealth Book Prize for the Asian Region in 2013, she narrates the straddling opposite sides of the long and brutal civil war in Sri Lanka. The predicament of human beings in the war-torn area as immigrants in their own land and the plight of people who immigrated to other countries in hope of a better future, but end up in trauma due to their treatment in the target country as second-class citizens, create the nexus of the novel. Her second novel, *What Lies Between Us* (2016), which won the Sri Lankan National Book Award for best English novel and the Godage Award, unfolds the story of a young girl who is torn between her past life in Sri Lanka and her present life in the free world of America. The baggage of memories that she carries from her old world dominates her thoughts and precludes her from assimilating into the new culture. Even her love for Daniel, which she assumes will heal her inner scars, never helps her remould her life in the new world.

Island of a Thousand Mirrors, the novel narrated through the eyes of two women protagonists, Yasodhara, a Sinhalese woman, and Saraswathi, a Tamil, delineates the suffering of peace-loving commoners on both sides of the ethnic

conflict. One of the protagonists, Yasodhara Rajasinghe, a Sinhalese, immigrated to the US with her family due to the unfortunate instances of 1983 Black July in Sri Lanka, including the murder of her aunt's husband, Anuradha Munasinha. The novelist draws the reader's attention to the immigrant dilemmas that they face through the novel. The second protagonist of the novel, Saraswathi, who is a victim of rape by the Sinhalese soldiers, is a Tamil. Through her life, the novelist portrays the life of Tamil women in Sri Lanka during ethnic conflict and the secondary victimisation from society that compels them to find alternative methods to recoup their honour from the status of a spoilt object. Saraswathi, the victim of violence, turns out to be the perpetrator of violence at the end of the novel by being a suicide bomber of the LTTE. The two protagonists who are not connected with one another at the beginning of the story are connected at the end of the novel, as Lanka, Yasodhara's sister, is killed in the suicide attack committed by Saraswathi. By portraying a victim-survivor turned perpetrator, Saraswathi, the novelist asserts the perpetuation of victimhood in a country like Sri Lanka.

The sufferings of women in the post-war period, especially LTTE women who were adored by Tamils during the war period, form the crux of Meena Kandasamy's book *the orders were to rape you* published in 2020. Born in 1984 in Tamil Nadu, Meena Kandasamy is a poet, novelist, translator and an anti-caste activist. Her writings are a protest against caste, gender and ethnic discrimination faced by human beings and deconstruct trauma and violence. In her poetry collection *Touch* (2006), she expresses her anger against the humiliation and oppression faced by Dalits in India. Drawing episodes from myth and history, she lashes out against

the history of exploitation that lower caste people in India were forced to face in incidents like the massacre of Karamchedu, Andhra Pradesh, in 1985. The multi-layered oppression faced by lower-caste women, both by upper-caste brahmins and men, forms the crux of her poetry collection *Ms. Militancy* (2010). Reconstructing the image of a woman cherished by upper-caste male literature, she creates an idol of a new woman, a representative of lower-caste women who fight for their rights in society. *The Gypsy Goddess* (2014), the novel that is set against the backdrop of the massacre in Kilvenmani on Christmas Day of 1968, portrays the plight of lower caste agricultural labourers who were murdered by the upper caste landlords. Her second novel *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Wife* (2017), shortlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction in 2018, portrays the story of a newly wed writer who suffers from social isolation and domestic violence. *Exquisite Cadavers* (2019), her third novel, narrates the lives of Karim, a filmmaker and his partner, Maya, who lives in London against the backdrop of political events, including Brexit.

the orders were to rape you (2020), written by Meena Kandasamy, contains three narratives: the narrative of the writer and her interaction with the character S, the narrative of the LTTE cadre's wife and the narrative of a former female LTTE cadre, along with some poems written by female guerrillas and resistance fighters. The work that is written as first-person accounts highlights the sexual torture that women in and connected to the LTTE face in the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict. The first narrative, "My Story," explains in detail the history of the Tamil Eelam struggle through the eyes of the writer. This section establishes a firm link between the writer

and the Tamil Eelam struggle, in which she, along with her friends, united all student movements in the state under the common platform Stop the Slaughter of Tamils. The second section, “The Story of Gathering Stories”, is about the writer’s struggle to collect the stories of women survivors who have migrated to countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia after the end of the Sri Lankan civil war. During the process of making a documentary about women survivors of war, she meets a character called S, and the section narrates the sufferings that she faced during and after the war as a former LTTE cadre. “The Story of the Militant’s Wife in Her Own Words”, the third section of the book, exposes the plight of the wife of an LTTE cadre. She, along with her family, becomes a victim of rape and oppression due to her husband’s connection to the organisation. “The Story of the Female Tiger in Her Own Words”, another section, delineates the plight of a former LTTE cadre who migrated to Malaysia. As a rape victim, she fears whether she will be infected with AIDS, which will lead to deportation in a muslim country like Malaysia. The writer emphasises the plans of this character, who strives to make her dream of a Tamil Eelam happen, even in the face of all these problems.

Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore how select primary texts narrativise the act of rape and its psychological, social, and emotional repercussions. Through a close textual analysis, the study critically examines narrative techniques, character development, and thematic representations to uncover the underlying ideologies and discourses surrounding rape. This study

employs comparative analysis to explore the psychological similarities and differences in the representation of rape victims and perpetrators across select texts.

In the context of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict, and focusing on the characters of the three primary texts, this study examines the psychological, social, and emotional repercussions of rape. To further explore these themes, the study will address the following research questions, which will examine the deeper psychological and societal implications of rape as portrayed in the texts:

(1) What psychological factors contribute to the perpetration of rape by men?

(2) How does the experience of rape psychologically impact women survivors?

(3) In what ways do societal stigma and victim-blaming exacerbate the trauma experienced by women who are raped, potentially leading to internalised trauma?

(4) What coping mechanisms do rape survivors employ to manage and mitigate the psychological effects of their trauma?

(5) To what extent do these coping strategies enable survivors to heal, and can they lead to full psychological recovery from the trauma of rape?

The study proposes an analysis of various psychological traits exhibited by rape victims, focusing on different coping mechanisms they adopt. The study further intends to focus on the psychology of men who rape. Both these will be analysed, focusing primarily on the characters of the select primary texts. The aim is to focus on the plight of rape survivors as outcasts due to their loss of chastity, which is

considered by society as the quintessential characteristic of honour. The concept of honour, and its development as the parameter of a woman's worth in a patriarchal society, persuaded her to alienate herself from other men. The socio-cultural construction of women as symbols of family, culture, and nation—representing cultural purity, honour, and resilience—deeply influences the way in which their experiences are perceived and understood. In societies that consider women as the bearers of cultural values and traditions, embodying the moral and spiritual essence of a community, their honour, well-being and suffering are closely tied to the collective honour and suffering of the group. In conflict zones, the suffering of women is not observed as individual trauma, but as a collective wound that disrupts the structure of family, community and nation. This perception enhances the impact of their trauma as it becomes intertwined with broader narratives of cultural survival, national pride and resilience. Positioning women in this symbolic role leads to the politicisation of their experiences, further complicating their identity and agency in personal and public spheres. These narratives of positioning women as the bearers of familial and national pride impelled men to possess women of his enemy group as a way of asserting his masculinity and thereby the superiority of his nation.

On an individual level, the degraded status of the female body as an object, along with men’s urge to possess her body as an added treasure to their wealth, drove them to commit acts of rape and claim possession over her, eventually giving rise to the institution of marriage. Catherine Belsey, in her article “Tarquin Dispossessed: Expropriation and Consent in 'The Rape of Lucrece',” states how rape was historically understood as a property crime, rather than a crime against the

bodily autonomy of a woman. This concept aligns with the assertion of Susan Brown Miller, where she states, “rape entered the law through the back door, as it were, as a property crime of man against man” (18).

The study intends to analyse the psychology of men who rape as a way to overpower their foe physically and psychologically. The study observes how women are *revictimised* as rape victims, which leads to their estrangement from society. The reading also emphasizes on victimised status of men who experience trauma and feelings of emasculation due to the rape of their women by the enemy group. As rape affects the human psyche in diverse ways, it is used as an effective tool to disseminate power and control the other physically and psychologically. Different theories interpret rape in various ways. While some theorists emphasise the biological aspects of rape, others focus on the pursuit of power through the physical and psychological domination of others.

The value system that guides social experiences has imposed set definitions on the identity of men and women. The value system supported by society defines women within the line of chastity. According to feminist theorists such as Susan Brownmiller, Judith Butler, Cynthia Enloe, and Angela Davis, both wartime and peacetime rape are understood not as crimes driven by sexual passion but as acts motivated by a man's desire to assert dominance over a woman. This theory is in opposition to Pressure cooker theory of wartime rape. Pressure Cooker theory states that war rapists are the victims of irresistible biological imperatives and that the chaos of the wartime milieu encourages men to vent their urges to terrible effect. In this case, the feminist theory of wartime rape is also a pressure cooker theory. Under

this theory, men in patriarchal societies are conditioned to distrust, despise, and dominate women. At the time of war, warrior rapists vent their contempt for women. While men fight on different levels, for different reasons, every woman is an enemy of men in all wars.

As per Bio Social Theory, all men have an urge to rape due to a primal subconscious drive to pass on their genes and successfully reproduce. As per the theory, evolution and biology force men to rape and commit heinous acts of sexual violence in order to pass on their genes to the next generation. According to biosocial theory, rape is inevitable.

Strategic Rape Theory opens up a new dimension in the readings of rape studies. Instead of focusing on the biological aspects, strategic rape theory centres on how rape is exercised as an effective war tactic. Rape is both a weapon and a strategy of war. As a weapon, it "attacks women's physical and emotional sense of security while simultaneously launching an assault, through women's bodies, upon the genealogy of security as constructed by the body politic" (Koo 528). As a strategy, it is a sanctioned, systematic means of attaining specific political objectives. Being planned as a coherent, coordinated, logical, and brutally effective war tactic, rape is a systematic attack upon every level of society: the individual, community and collective. In short, rape is a crime against collectivity. Furthermore, rape is used to terrorise, humiliate, demoralise, and dehumanise enemy groups for political, social, and economic gain.

When a woman is raped in front of her family, she with her family lose honour, and the male members of her family who are bound to protect her are being

emasculated, which leads both of them into trauma. Claudia Card, a feminist philosopher and professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, introduces her theory of genetic imperialism in her 1996 essay “Rape as a Weapon of War”. The theory of genetic imperialism states that women are viewed as a vessel for the male seed to grow. “Men are owners of the seed, in the form of both grain and children, and they control the seedbeds in which these are planted” (Delaney 239). In this view, women, being the vessels, nurture the male seed from the field that is her body, whereas the male seed determines the identity of the child. Nations, as territory and as land, are often identified symbolically as female, and it is the duty of *men* in the country to protect the honour of their motherland by saving her from outside forces. In this essentialist patriarchal construction, men are both the arbiters and the protectors of the boundaries for women and for nations. Thus, rape is not only an attack against women; it is also an assault on the honour of men, proving their inability to protect *their* women. As it questions the honour of women and the masculinity of the male protector, the attack and rape of women is an act that destroys a group's social bonds and humiliates and demoralises the community as a whole. The ideas of cleanliness and honour that are embedded in women from childhood by the patriarchal norms of the society are being broken with man’s physical colonisation of the victim, which led them into an inert state.

In this era, where every individual body is politicised, rape can be observed as a strategy of the power structures to create abject bodies and to pollute the bloodline of the enemy population. Catharine Alice MacKinnon states:

> …this is not rape out of control. It is rape under control. It is also rape unto death, rape as massacre, rape to kill and to make the victims wish they were dead. It is rape as an instrument of forced exile, rape to make you leave your home and never want to go back. It is rape to be seen and heard and watched and told to others; rape as a spectacle. It is rape to drive a wedge through a community, to shatter a society, to destroy a people. (187)

Michael Foucault, in his work The History of Sexuality (1976), speaks about the concept of biopolitics, in which he observes biopolitics as a concept that describes how modern governments control and regulate the lives of their citizens through power. He further discusses the transition in how power operates within society, highlighting a shift from sovereign power—characterised by the authority "to take life or let live" (136)—to a form of governance that focuses on optimising and regulating life itself. The everyday life, behaviours and bodies of its populations are controlled and regulated through diverse strategies (Foucault). As per the concept, the sovereign is the manager, controller and manipulator of the lives and bodies that it governs. The state regulates the bodies of its citizens to attain its own motives, while masquerading these actions as beneficial to the population (Foucault).

Drawing on Foucault's concept of biopolitics, Giorgio Agamben, in his work *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998), speaks about the relation between politics and life. In the work, he speaks about two kinds of lives in the classical Greek World: (1) bios and (2) zoe. Bios is defined as a kind of life that matters and is only possessed by people who are valued and qualified. Zoe is defined as having a simple life. In the polis, these lives are not equal; special privileges are

conferred upon bios, and they are included in the polis and considered qualified and worthy. But the zoe was excluded from the polis, but later incorporated into the polis from the sovereign's realisation that the existence of zoe within the polis is essential to maintain the power of the sovereign. Even though they are included within the polis, they are not equal; they are constrained and controlled by the sovereign, lead an inferior life, as they have no self-autonomy or agency, and the sovereign decides Zoe's fate. As Agamben states, this *inclusionary exclusion* of zoe in the polis is essential in modern politics, for the sovereign to maintain its power. Foucault, at the end of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* observes the inclusionary exclusion of zoe into polis as the beginning of biopolitics. Agamben states in his work *Homo Sacre: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* "Michel Foucault refers to this very definition when, at the end of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, he summarises the process by which, at the threshold of the modern era, natural life begins to be included in the mechanisms and calculations of State power, and politics turns into biopolitics" (10).

The systematic production of violated bodies serves as a tactic by which power structures maintain and intensify their control. These violated bodies are subsequently treated as *abjects*- bodies that exist outside social norms. The term *abject* is thoroughly discussed by Julia Kristeva in her work *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1980). She defines the *abject* as that which provokes disgust and fear and is considered a form of pollution (qtd in Diken and Lausten 116-19). It is considered an unsettling, abstruse, undefinable and inherent phenomenon that "disturbs identity, system and order" (Kristeva 4) and exists as "in between, the

ambiguous, the composite" (Kristeva 4). Because the *abject* threatens established norms of bodies, life and death, abject bodies are excluded from the polis. Henry Giroux, in his article, "Reading Hurricane Katrina: Race, Class and the Biopolitics of Disposability", speaks about the ways in which modern politics and society produce disposable people. Contextualising the sufferings of people of colour who are victims of Hurricane Katrina, he states that these people are "excommunicated from the sphere of human concern" (175) and "rendered invisible, utterly disposable" (175). These disposable bodies are treated as expendable. However, the incorporation of these bodies becomes a necessity for the sovereign to sustain and aggravate its power. Thus, violated bodies occupy a liminal space characterised by simultaneously inclusionary exclusion and exclusionary inclusion. Referring to Frantz Fanon, Achille Mbembe, a Cameroonian historian and political theorist, states, "sovereignty means the capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is disposable and who is not" (27). In other words, the subject both identifies and produces the *abject.* Although the *abject* is deemed disposable and unwanted, its existence is paradoxically necessary for the subject to maintain its own presence. On the other hand, a rape victim's internalisation of her own abjection leads her to a state of trauma where she perceives herself as unwanted and filthy.

The study also focuses on the trauma of rape victims and their relation to silence, exploring how unspoken experiences influence the psychological impact of trauma. Trauma studies developed in the 1990s, found their initial discussions in the work *Studies in Hysteria* (1895) by Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer. In Freud's earlier works, he argues that traumatic hysteria develops from a repressed, earlier

experience of sexual assault. Continuing the discussion in *Studies in Hysteria*, they state that the original event itself was not inherently traumatic but became so only in its remembrance. To address these effects, they advocate for the talking cure, as it is necessary for the victims to understand the effects of the past and gain freedom from its symptoms. The concept of trauma, originally rooted in its Greek meaning of "an injury inflicted on a body" (Caruth 3), evolved to include psychological dimensions and became understood as "a wound of the mind" (Caruth 4). This shift was influenced by Sigmund Freud's insights in his work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). Referring to Sigmund Freud, Carthy Caruth states:

> — the wound of the mind- the breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world- is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that, —is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor. (4)

Cathy Caruth, in her work Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History (1996), defines trauma as "the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a real truth that is not otherwise available" (4). But, the victims of rape trauma are silenced by the power structures or practice self-silencing due to their fear towards social stigma and victim-blaming. Contextualising the violent past of South Africa, Chris N van der Merwe and Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, in their work Narrating Our Healing - Perspectives on Working Through Trauma (2008), state the importance of speaking and writing about trauma

in the healing process. They state that trauma will inevitably find a way to surface, even if it is suppressed or ignored (33). The article of Suzanne B Phillips, "The Dangerous Role of Silence in the Relationship Between Trauma and Violence: A Group Response", delineates the self-destructive force of trauma once it is silenced. She states: "unspoken, unwitnessed and unclaimed trauma from violence "outs itself" as violence to self or others, a vicious cycle that is tragic" (66).

In feminist discourses, women are raped because of their gender identity as women. But in some cases, women are selectively targeted and raped in the name of ethnicity or religion with an aim to colonise and destroy the *possessions* of the enemy. In these cases, rape is not an attack on the chastity of women; it is also a strategy to carry out the political objectives of ethnic cleansing. Ethnic cleansing is accomplished through a racist and genocidal intent to contaminate the enemy group's blood and genes. Women are being impregnated and will be forced to live with the perpetrator till the termination of pregnancy is impossible. Under these circumstances, the aim of the perpetrator is to dilute or *purify the blood* of the invaded group by creating *ethnically cleansed* children who belong to the invading group.

> Rape has been used historically as a form of genocide, as the...destruction of a race...It produces a sense of inadequacy on the part of the collective heart of the race, a sense of helplessness, a sense of worthlessness. (qtd. in Peltola)

Drawing the theories of Lalita Banshyal, M. Popa-Wyatt and J. L. Wyatt, the study tries to discuss the ways in which verbal abuses are used as a tool by the perpetrator to oppress and degrade the victim, through which they will reach a state of self-

doubt about their own identity. This will further lead them to societal alienation, trauma and self-doubt.

Her self-doubt is drawn from the societal concept that equates the victim of rape to a *bad woman*. Lajja Bhaya, the concept put forward by Gananath Obeyesekere, Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at Princeton University, states the way in which a woman in Sri Lanka should have a fear of ridicule if she belongs to a respectable family. Drawing on this concept, the study initiates a reading of the state of raped women in Sri Lankan society. The societal alienation and victim blaming further victimise and traumatise them. The theories of victim blaming by Anna Wakelin, Karen M Long, Carlo Koos and Summer Lindsey state the ways in which raped women are being objects of victim blaming by society, which leads them into *internalised stigma*. The theories of Angie C. Kennedy and Kristen A. Prock are used in order to state the role of external stigma that results in a victim's internal stigma. Angie C. Kennedy and Kristen A. Prock state:

> Internalized stigma is a composite concept that includes aspects of self-blame, shame, and anticipatory stigma. Anticipatory stigma is a belief by the survivor that, should she reveal the abuse or assault to others, she will be stigmatized as blameworthy and lesser. (2)

The study aims to illustrate how anticipatory stigma and Nancy E Snow's concept of *agent regret* contribute to the victim's silence regarding their victimisation, positioning them as foundational factors in this phenomenon.

Her fear of rape, trauma and her ardent urge for social acceptance exhort her to search for alternative positions which will favour her desires of social acceptance,

like being silent, migration, committing suicide and being a suicide bomber. In contrast to the definitions that observe silence and voice as victimisation and authority, recent studies have come forth with multi-dimensional definitions of silence: (1) Silence as cultural censorship, (2) Silence as resistance, and (3) Silence as a coping mechanism. Using the theories of Kate Rose and French Psychiatrist Muriel Salmona, the study focuses on silence as a coping mechanism of the rape victim to dissociate from violent events that trigger traumatic memory within the victim. Self-silencing is also observed as a survival mechanism, "a vehicle of self-expression and a form of self-advocacy" (qtd. in Miranda 4), drawing on the concept of self-silencing by Wulf Kansteiner. Drawing the observations of Miranda Alison and Mia Bloom, the study further observes joining the LTTE as a survival mechanism of the women who are raped to take revenge upon the perpetrator and to recoup their honour in a society that equates female honour with the honour of the community. Fear of rape and victim blaming compel women from conflict zones to choose migration as a survival mechanism. Observing the theories stated by Susanne Schmeidl, Frederick L Ahearn Jr and John H Noble Jr and others, Erin Rider states migration as a compelling force for women in conflict zones to migrate to safe zones. Drawing on the theory of Erin Rider, the study tries to establish migration as a survival mechanism for women in Sri Lanka, especially Tamils, during the period of conflict.

Review of Literature

Rape, its definition, origins, historical significance, and its narrativization in various myths and literatures have been discussed in many writings. The emergence

of morality and its gradual progression to the status of a parameter of civilised society is delineated in Richard von Krafft-Ebing's work *Psychopathia Sexualis*. The aspect of shame which aroused from their nakedness restricted human beings from engaging in sexual activities in public and forced them to have sexual relations in private. The woman's assertion of her individual life, where she ceases to be a chattel, and her decree to have sexual life with the man she chooses, forced her to hide herself from other men. The ideals of colonisation, followed by the religious ideals of Christianity, gave prime focus to morality and monogamy by stating that "the Christian nations attained a mental and material superiority over polygamic races, especially over Islam" (3). Reinforcing the theory of Cesare Lombroso, he further states that "rape is very often the act of degenerate male imbeciles, who, under some circumstances, do not even respect the bond of blood" (526).

Germaine Greer, in her work On Rape, delves into the heterogeneous dynamics of rape and enunciates the need for transfiguration of the concept rather than the substitution of the expression from rape to sexual assault, as the penal code of New South Wales implemented. Explaining the vernacular appellations of vagina, the writer muddles the notion of vagina as sacred and manifests her incertitude in labelling the birth canal with profane language. The writer dismantles the banal notions on rape, as the assailant might be mentally deranged, a prisoner, or that rape will only happen outside a marital relationship. Exemplifying the cases of marital rape, she states that there are more unreported cases of rape compared to reported ones. In some cases, women unwillingly cooperate with their silence due to their circumstances, which men misinterpret as consent. German Greer pinpoints the need

of redefining the notion of consent not as the absence of no, but the presence of yes.

August Bebel in *Woman Under Socialism* alludes to the historic importance of rape as the ramification of men's desire to acquire property and to colonize female body as an object of pleasure. Drawing the history of female subjugation, he speaks about Jew's practice of raping captured women in war as she is considered as slave or concubine and the practices of cutting her hair and nails, replacing her attire with the one that is provided to her by the captor and mourning over her father and mother for a month (as a way to estrange them from her family), that she has to undergo to climb into the conjugal bed. He also talks about how marriage by rape existed among the Romans as they raped Sabine women and married them to sustain their lineage, as per the instruction of the Roman King Romulus. Among Araucans of South Chile, the symbolic act of rape as a prerequisite of marriage exists as the groom will capture the bride while the bridegroom's friends are negotiating with the father of the bride, and if the bride and bridegroom reach the woods, even without the consent of her parents, their marriage is considered consummated.

The fear of "an open season of rape" (16) impelled her to demean herself to the plight of a chattel, where she will be protected by *her man* in return for the possession of her body through monogamy, as it is stated by Susan Brown Miller in her work *Men, Women andRape*. "A crime committed against her body became a crime committed against the male estate" (16). Rape was considered a property theft a man commits against another man, as Catherine Belsey in the article "Tarquin Dispossessed: Expropriation and Consent in The Rape of Lucrece" states. She

delineates the state of women in Shakespeare's Rome as that of a man's property where "the property is expropriated, and the property owner dispossessed" (315).

The dispossessed-emasculated feeling of the male protector and the sense of lost honour of the female victim is being exploited by the perpetrator in almost all the ethnic conflicts and civil wars, as Carly Brown in the article, "Rape as a Weapon of War in the Democratic Republic of Congo", posits. Buttressing the study conducted by International Alert in the province of South Kivu, he elucidates four kinds of rape: "Individual rape, gang rape, rape in which victims are forced to rape each other and rape involving objects being inserted into the victim's genitals" (27-28). Individual rape occurs when one is raped by a single individual, while in gang rapes, more than one perpetrator will rape the victim simultaneously or one after the other. In some cases, in gang rape, the perpetrator will clean the female genitals by inserting the end of the rifle that had been wrapped in a soaked cloth. Usually occurring after a gang rape, the perpetrators will force family members to have incestuous relationships with one another. In the fourth kind of rape identified, the perpetrator will insert objects into the female genitals. In most cases, the victim will be either killed after rape by firing shots into their vaginas or their genitals will be burned or mutilated. The state of women of Congo as the breadwinners of the family made them vulnerable to rape, especially during wartime, as they were forced to go out "to cultivate, to the forest to make charcoal, or to markets to trade their goods" (28).

The predicament of women as the vulnerable prey of rape during wartime is ubiquitous as they are forced to go out, being the protectors of the household. As

they are burdened with the title of the upholders of the nation's honour by being chaste, leads them to trauma once her honour is at stake in the hands of the perpetrator. The trauma that women underwent during the time of Partition in India, exemplifying the story of the young girl of Hoa Khasla, Pakistan, is narrated in Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence*. Even though a survivor, the penitence of escape from a holy death, contrary to the village elder's advice to commit suicide by jumping into the well, as a way to protect her chastity at the time of conflict, haunts her. She narrates the story to reassert the fact that a woman is being the victim of assault by her own community in the guise of protection, honour and purity. The work further portrays the undocumented history of women who ended up marrying their rapist of *another* religion and were considered an apparition even by their own family.

The alienation that she faces often propels her to end up committing suicide or being a suicide bomber. Emile Durkheim, in his work *On Suicide*, defines different types of suicide depending upon the accelerating factors that lead them to commit suicide, namely Egoistic, Altruistic, Anomic and Fatalistic suicide. He defines Egoistic suicide as a form of committing suicide when a man feels alienated from society, while Altruistic Suicide is committed by a selfless individual for the common good of society. While Anomic suicide is due to a certain breakdown of social equilibrium, Fatalistic suicide is due to the overregulation in society.

The *culture of silence* that exists along with sexual violence as rape was an *entrenched feature* (7), of Sri Lankan armed conflict where the victim silences herself as a defense mechanism to either protect her family and herself from social

stigma or to cope with the system, as she is aware about the past experiences of other victims before law, is focused in *The Search for Justice: The Sri Lankan Papers* edited by Kishali Pinto Jayawardena and Kumari Jayawardena. An anthology of essays detailing sexual violence that women in conflict zones, especially in South Asian countries, endure and impunity that the perpetrators enjoy, evokes the need for society's attention to observe the rape victims as "potentially powerful agents of change" (xiv)

The need of a rape victim to come out from the state of a *zinda lash* (living corpses) to an empowered woman by snapping the link between shame and honour is discussed in Sohaila Abdulali's work *What We Talk about, when we talk about Rape.* The choice of women to be the silent victims as upholders of family honour and society's idealisation of those women are being criticised in the work.

The position of a victim, self-hate and remorse due to this victimisation, urges her to have vengeance upon the perpetrator, as Neloufer De Mel states. In the article "Fractured Narratives: Notes on women in conflict in Sri Lanka and Pakistan," Neloufer De Mel probes the plight of distorted women in the war zones of Pakistan and Sri Lanka and analyses the fantasies of revenge that impel women, regardless of their region, to take up arms. The victim's feeling of impotence due to impunity relished by the perpetrator coerced her into taking vengeance on the perpetrator. As she states in the article:

> Trauma, self-hate (many mothers blamed themselves for not protecting their sons enough from the enemy, or blamed friends, cousins and other siblings for encouraging their sons to join the militants) and guilt are strong emotions

> which also give expression to feelings of revenge. Revenge is expressed in several ways. Revenge as reparation through the intervention of the gods and nature was the most common, given the lack of faith in the judicial process in both Sri Lanka and Pakistan. (102)

Her lost faith in the judiciary due to the impunity that the perpetrator relishes intermittently incites her to be a part of radical movements like the LTTE. Even though they see it as a way of liberation, the article "Female Warriors, Martyrs and Suicide Attackers: Women in the LTTE" raises the question of whether membership in radical movements is liberating or not. The article raises apprehensions about the condition of Tigress women as they are not being acknowledged properly for their efforts, as many families are not ready to marry their sons to the daughters of Tigresses, and many women feel uncomfortable in their presence.

As the state of a Tigress woman and her prodigious quest for societal acceptance, espouses self-immolation as a way to recoup her honour, for which they became part of radical movements like the LTTE, even though the concept of the LTTE towards honour and virginity of women is vacillating as they include and exclude the rape victim simultaneously. Tamara Herald's *Women in Terrorism: Case of the LTTE* states the vacillating ideals of LTTE as the upholders of Tamil culture and values as it stands with the society, attributing paramount importance to women's virginity, which is in contradiction to their ideology of accepting socially alienated victims as combatants of LTTE. The respect that will be endorsed upon her once she becomes escalated into the status of a martyr entices her to take up the role of a suicide bomber. Along with this, the traditional notion of *agnipravesa* (self-

immolation by fire) to prove chastity, which is inscribed within her by myth and culture, accelerates her actions to become a suicide bomber herself. The concept of self-immolation as a way of revenge, vitalised by the LTTE, and the concept as a way to salvation, revitalised by tradition and culture, exhilarates her to sacrifice her life for the common good. Through this, she becomes a political tool in the hands of the organisation as its objectives are being gratified by invigorating the victim's ardent desire for social acceptance.

Women as political tools in the LTTE, the dilemma that the suicide bomber undergoes, and its narrativization form the core of Neloufer De Mel's article "Body Politics: (Re)Cognising the Female Suicide Bomber in Sri Lanka". The article discusses the narrativization of the dilemma that an LTTE female suicide bomber undergoes, focusing on Visakesa Chandrasekeram's play *Forbidden Area* (1998), Santosh Sivan's movie *The Terrorist* (1999) and Mohammed Mohan Niyaz's Sinhala film *Kalti Sudu Mal (Colourless Flowers)* (2002). The quandary of the protagonist of *Fobidden Area*, Urmila, the designated suicide bomber, is collated with the predicament of the protagonists of the two movies, as they are torn between the individual and the collective.

While there exists a significant body of scholarship on the Tamil ethnic conflict, as well as separate studies on rape and trauma in wartime contexts, there is a noticeable gap in research specifically addressing rape during the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict. Moreover, there is a lack of focused analysis on how rape and its psychological aftermath are portrayed in the select primary texts. This study aims to fill this critical gap by examining representations of rape and trauma within the

framework of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict through the lens of these underexplored literary works.

Relevance of the Study

> For anybody whose once normal everyday life was suddenly shattered by an act of sexual violence-the trauma, the terror, can shatter you long after one horrible attack. It lingers. You don't know where to go or who to turn to… and people more suspicious of what you were wearing or what you were drinking, as if it's your fault, not the fault of the person who assaulted you… we still don't condemn sexual assault as loudly as we should. We make excuses, we look the other way…[Laws] won't be enough unless we change the culture that allows assault to happen in the first place. (Obama)

The speech of the former President of America, Barack Obama, on the launch of *It's On Us* initiative, an awareness campaign to help put an end to sexual assault on college campuses in 2014, throws light on the trauma of rape and the need to prevent rape. The recommendations that *The Rape and Abuse & Incest National Network* (RAINN) put forward to the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault on 28 Feb 2014, stated that "rape is caused not by cultural factors but by the conscious decisions of a small percentage of the community, to commit a violent crime" (Marcotte). RAINN received wide criticism for this comment and its negation of the term rape culture. Critics stated that the inclination to focus on the individual act rather than considering the act as an upshot of culture, which grants impunity to the assailant and revictimises the rape survivor, should be criticised. There is a need to redefine the term rape in this context, where the founder

of suicide.org Kevin Caruso emphasises that rapists are fundamentally cowards, criminals, and losers who deserve imprisonment, and Professor John E B Myers of the McGeorge School of Law at the University of the Pacific argues that non-consensual sex without the use of force does not constitute rape. While commenting on the plight of women, who didn't have agency over their own body as they are enslaved by the doctrines of religion as the producers of children irrespective of their inner psyche, Margaret Sanger stated in *Woman and the New Race*, "woman was and is condemned to a system under which the lawful rapes exceed the unlawful ones a million to one" (178). Betrand Russell states about the need for consent from both parties involved in a sexual relationship and condemns the intrusion of economic motive into sexual relations as disastrous "marriage is for women the commonest mode of livelihood, and the total amount of undesired sex endured by women is probably greater in marriage than in prostitution" (153).

Compared to other crimes, it is the crime where the victim's role is jeopardised to a criminal, where she is victimised by the society as an *impure woman* or as a devil who ignited the suppressed sexual urge of men through her talks, looks, clothing or by going out at an *improper time*. Victim blaming and the struggles that she has to undergo while she raises a complaint against the perpetrator, pressurise her to be a passive object on numerous occasions. Their silence further leads them to trauma and suicide.

The realisation of the plight of women irrespective of their colour and nation, pressurised her to speak the unspeakable through campaigns like # MeToo, where women, upholding their gender identity, protested against the existing gender

hierarchy. In 2006, Tarana Burke, the initiator of the campaign, intended to arouse empathy in women as a way of women's emancipation by posting # MeToo on social media, which became an internationally popular hashtag in 2017, when women began using it to tweet about the Harvey Weinstein sexual abuse allegations. In 2019, the allegations of Fatou Toufah Jallow against the former President of Gambia, Yahya Jammeh, before the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC), established by the Gambian Government, spurred another movement where the young women of the country took a stand against sexual violence under the #IamToufah banner. The unconventional form of protest against the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) took place in the north east India, Manipur, where twelve women from Imphal stripped off their clothes and protested before the army camp carrying the banners “Indian Army, Rape us”, “Indian Army, Kill Us” in 2004. The protest, which was later named “Mother’s Protest”, was in response to the killing and possible rape of a young girl, Thangjam Manorama, by the soldiers of the Assam Rifles.The statement of one of the protesters, Mrs Laishram reinstates the severity of the issue.

> We were crying even before we left. We are women, all we have is our honour. And Manipur is a traditional society, we don't show our bodies. We are uncomfortable even showing our ankles…. I was thinking their action must stop, they must be punished. Women should not be raped anywhere in the world. (Pandey)

Statement of Babloo Loitongbam, a human rights activist and lawyer, on AFPSA enunciates the intensity of the issue. He states, “It has created a new category of

Indian citizens who are killable people, rape-able women" (Safi). The dissent of the Iron Lady of India, Irom Chanu Sharmila, is to be noted here as she led a sixteen-year hunger strike against AFPSA, which she declared in October 2015. She became the voice of the voiceless:

> I have been demanding that AFSPA be repealed or lifted from Manipur as the same has caused immense hardship to the common man of Manipur…. Thousands of innocent people have been killed; hundreds of rapes have taken place on Manipur's women. No action has been taken under the garb of AFSPA. ("AFSPA")

Impunity, delayed justice, social stigmatisation and fear of life once it is spoken out are being constraints to the rape victims, even though relatively few survivors speak out the trauma that they face, breaking the barriers of patriarchal myths. In India, the gang rape of a young student in Delhi in December 2012 culminated in mass anger, which led to the Supreme Court verdict to hang the convicts involved on 22 January 2020. Another shocking incident was the Unnao case in which a 17-year-old girl on 4 June 2017 in Unnao, Uttar Pradesh, was brutally gang raped, and the convicts were sentenced to life imprisonment. In the seven convicts of the Kathua rape case, where an eight-year-old girl was abducted, raped and murdered in Rasana village near Kathua in Jammu and Kashmir in January 2018, six were convicted and one acquitted. Three of those convicted were sentenced to life in prison for three to five years. These cases received justice without much delay due to the public attention it received, while in many other cases, justice is delayed, and some are not even being reported. The need of critical

mass or threshold to move a matter from the status of private concern to public concern is to be noted here as in the tweet on the verdict of Kathua Case, “I welcome the #KathuaCase verdict but over 1 lakh daughters still await justice in our courts. It is time to stop child rape through strong legal deterrent and social action.” (Satyarthi)

Violence against women in countries where they are glorified as goddesses is paradoxical. In Sri Lanka, where the majority preaches Buddhism which propagated respect for every being on earth especially women, is being ripped in the name of ethnicity and religion especially at the time of Sri Lankan ethnic conflict. A significant judgement was when the Jaffna High Court sentenced four soldiers to 25 years of imprisonment, compensation and reimbursement of legal fees on 7 October 2015 for the gang rape of a woman in the resettlement camp in Viswamadhu, Kilinochchi (Butalia Xii). Another case in which a Tamil woman got justice is the rape case of a Jaffna teenager, Krishanthi Kumaraswamy, where she was arrested at a checkpoint in 1996 while cycling to school and gang raped and killed thereafter. Her mother, brother and neighbour, who were in search of her, were also murdered. (Pinto and Anantharajah 47). Even though five army soldiers and a policeman were sentenced to death, and three others were sentenced to 20 years’ imprisonment and fined 50,000 rupees (780 US dollars), due to public pressure, only low-ranking officers who were directly responsible for the crime were convicted. Words of the first accused, Lance Cpl. Dewage Somaratne Rajapakse claimed that they were only obeying the orders of higher officials to bury the dead bodies, and his claims about the graves of Chemmani, which he stated as the burial ground of victims of army

atrocities, were left unheard by the authorities. As Kishali Pinto Jayawardena and Kirsty Anantharajah states in *A Crisis of 'Legal Indeterminacy' and State Impunity:*

> This failure of the legal order must be contextualized against a long and tortuous history of insensitivity of the law towards sexual violence, marked by a few legal victories that had little effect on the overall culture of state impunity. In general, the majority of sexual torture cases by the military have traditionally been treated in a high cavalier manner by state agencies. (48)

Since the rape cases in which the perpetrators are part of the privileged section of society are treated in a cavalier manner, victims do not file complaints, fearing the aftermath of the same. As per the statistics obtained from the Sri Lankan police:

> In 2008, there were 1,582 reported cases; in 2009 there were 1,624 cases reported; in 2010, there were 1,854; in 2011, 1,870 cases were reported; in 2013, 2,181 cases were reported; and in 2014, 2,008 were reported…. A 2013 Sunday Times commentary revealed a further alarming dimension of the statistics at issue: the majority of incidents involve underage victims. (Pinto and Anantharajah 44)

The report submitted by the Chief Government Whip of Sri Lanka, Minister Johnston Fernando, states that there are 142 cases of rape, 42 serious sexual abuse and 54 cases of child abuse reported within the first 15 days of 2020.

Even though some cases are being reported, most of the cases remain unreported due to the fear of social stigmatisation or due to the realisation of the

experiences of the former victims, especially at the time of war or ethnic conflicts in which the perpetrator is a part of the political agenda to impure the blood of the opposite group. In most countries, rape is considered an unfortunate consequence of war or ethnic conflict, where women are being used as weapons to disrupt the ethnic purity of one community. Ban Ki-moon, the former UN Secretary General, at the Security Council, opened a debate in New York on sexual violence in conflict, labelling sexual violence as a crime which destroys families and tears the social fabric of nations and a hindrance to reconciliation, peace and reconstruction. He states, “Conflict- related sexual violence is as destructive as any bomb or bullet” (Moon).

The report of the United Nations Secretary General on Conflict-related sexual violence, submitted on 29 March 2019, which analyses the occurrence and legacy of conflict-related sexual violence in nineteen countries, for which credible and verifiable information is available, puts forward suggestions to reduce wartime sexual violence. He advocated substantive gender equality where women are considered equal in social, political and economic life as a prerequisite to end sexual violence. The recommendations of the report state the need of considering the issue with utmost importance by every nation. Considering the case of Sri Lanka, he advocates:

> I call on the Government to ensure that cases of conflict-related sexual violence are systematically documented, and to ensure that transitional justice mechanisms are mandated to provide accountability and reparations

> in cases of sexual violence against women, girls, men and boys from all ethnic groups, including when committed by State actors. I urge the Government to expeditiously implement the recommendations of relevant United Nations human rights mechanisms relating to conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, to ensure that reparations are available for victims and that the Office for Reparations is operationalized and adequately resourced. (Guterres 42)

These statements in the report portray how rape cases are being underrated and silenced, even though every nation has its own laws against sexual violence.

Contrary to the studies on heterogeneous definitions of rape, the present study observes how the fear of social exclusion that originates from the myth of honour endowed upon the victim by the patriarchal society leads her to find alternative ways of recouping honour, which leads to revictimization and devastation. The study advocates the need to revamp the prevailing moral codes that estrange the female body from its cultural attributes of honour, cleanliness, and purity. The plight of rape victims as outcasts, suicide bombers or as silenced, traumatised beings and the predicament of their *male protectors* as silenced-traumatised-emasculated entities will also be examined, giving prime focus to the dilemma of the characters of select works.

Chapter Division

The thesis, structured in five chapters with an Introduction and Conclusion, tries to analyse the characters of three primary texts, including T D Ramakrishnan's

Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki, Nayomi Munaweera's *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* and Meena Kandasamy's *the orders were to rape you* on the backdrop of Sri Lankan ethnic conflict. The first chapter introduces the socio-cultural, political, psychological and historical dimensions of rape. The study that tries to state rape as a war tactic, delineates the ways in which the same is used as a tool during diverse wars and ethnic conflicts including the Yugoslavian war, World War I and World War II, Gautemalan civil war, war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwandan civil war, partition of India, the conflict between Pakistan and Bangladesh and more recently towards Yazidi and Rohingya population. The chapter further analyses the history of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, in which women were subjected to rape by Sri Lankan soldiers and the IPKF.

Chapter II, "In the Land of Men: About Military Masculinity and Myth Poisoned Nationalism", gives a detailed analysis of the psychology of men who rape, giving prime focus to the analysis of the male characters of the primary texts. The burden of *being a man* who, as per the socio-cultural construction of gender, is bound to protect *her woman* is discussed in the chapter in support of the theories of masculinity. The emasculation of the enemy man through violating the body of his woman is used as a tool to oppress the community of the enemy. Militarised nationalism "that equalizes loyal citizenship with the will and capacity of the loyal male to commit violence upon its enemy" (Price 213) burdens men to be efficient destroyers of the enemy force to claim themselves as loyal to the nation. The chapter discusses the ways through which the characters try to assert their masculinity and

loyalty towards the nation and feminise their enemy nation through raping and impregnating their enemy women. The perpetrator uses silencing the victim as a tool to exert agency over her. The role of myths, museums, and propaganda movies created by the state for the construction of *protective-self sacrificing-sinhala soldier heroes* in contrast with a*uthoritative-destructive-LTTE villains* is also discussed in the chapter.

Chapter III, "In (Wo)Men's Land: About Wounds and Scars," discusses the history of otherisation of women, especially Tamil women in Sri Lanka, which led to the justification of crimes upon their bodies, during the ethnic conflict. In a community that considers women as the socio-cultural reproducers of the nation, women are forced to protect their chastity in order to uphold the pride of the nation. The concept of *Lajja Bhaya* (fear of ridicule or social disapproval) that rules the psyche of every woman in Sri Lanka impels women to protect their chastity, as the one who is insensitive to public insult or fear of ridicule is treated with utmost contempt. Exploiting these socio-cultural constructs, rape is used as a weapon to oppress the enemy group. The plight of women post-rape who are further victimised through victim blaming and stigmatisation of society is also discussed in the chapter, giving prime focus to the female characters of the primary texts.

Chapter IV, "In No Man's Land: About Coping and Healing" delineates how the women characters of the text respond to their post-rape situations. While some of the characters find peace in silence, others consider joining the LTTE, commit suicide, or migrate to other countries as diverse ways of coping mechanisms, which

never give them a permanent solution to their problems. The societal myth of purity is manipulated by the LTTE as a tool of recruiting women fighters to the group. Belief in the patriarchal LTTE narrative that considers being a part of the LTTE as the only way through which rape victims can recoup their honour attracts them towards joining the LTTE. The exploitation of the female body by both the groups, i.e., the soldiers and the LTTE, is discussed in the chapter. It discusses the post-rape responses of the rape victims. Other post-rape responses, such as joining organisations like Sri Lankan War Widows, as done by the characters Gayathri and Juliet D'Souza in *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*, and the ceaseless battle of Sugandhi against the power structures of society, are also discussed.

The concluding chapter sums up the discussions of the previous chapters, highlighting the representations of rape in the context of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict. Recommendations, in the last chapter, point out possible topics for further study in the area.

Through the thesis, the researcher tries to state that the soldier who rapes a woman during conflict is a product of the societal and state narrative of military masculinity as the apex of manhood. He rapes women who are otherised based on ethnicity or women who question the ideals of nationalism in which he believes, as a way to prove his manhood. When a soldier from the victorious troop conquers the enemy woman, he simultaneously asserts dominance over both her and her nation, emasculating the man from the defeated side who failed to protect his woman and his homeland. The thesis also addresses the state of raped women who are

abjectified, victim blamed and stigmatised throughout their lives, as they are observed as an impure object who brought shame to her man, her family and her nation. The silencing of raped women by the power structures of the society and the self-silencing of women due to the fear of societal ostracisation and legal impunity in Sri Lanka is also a key point of discussion. The study also aims to discuss the coping mechanisms adopted by a raped woman and analyse whether these mechanisms provide her with absolute freedom from the label of a rape victim.

Chapter II

In the Land of Men: About Military Masculinity and Myth Poisoned Nationalism

Gender identity as an ideological construct standardised by societal norms defines gender under the binaries of *masculine* and *feminine.* This conventional status in the definition of *gender* intensifies the gender gap, generating identities as either male or female. Gender expectations characterised by society, religion, ethnic group and culture are irreversibly linked to the gender gap created by society. The binarised notions of gender positions reciprocated in societal discourse are owed to the mispositioning of human traits that narrow the definition of gender along the lines of biological configuration. These stereotyped representations contribute to the *expected* accommodating emotional status of women and the self-confident and aggressive status of men.

Gender definition in the line of these categorical distinctions (male/female) limits the complexity of gender identities to polarised entities. State /power that strategise hierarchy to exercise control reciprocates the same in gender constructs, also placing the 'masculine' as superior and the feminine as inferior. Gender definitions are extended from the specifications of physiological and biological status in terms of expected social roles. These social constructs, specified by societal perceptions, attribute assumed roles for men and women. As observed in *Three Essays on Sexuality*:

> In human beings, pure masculinity or femininity is not to be found in either a physiological or biological sense. Every individual, on the contrary, displays a mixture of the character traits belonging to his own and to the opposite sex; and he shows a combination of activity and passivity, whether or not these last character traits tally with his biological ones. (Freud 219)

Socially defined gender roles pressurise both men and women to reorient their identities in accordance with socially defined gender traits. Gender roles bestowed by societal codes entail the need for acceptance, where a willful compliance with the *conferred privileges* is initiated. While "good girl privilege" (Ralston 6) is bestowed upon women, considering their obedience and inclination towards socially constructed rules and regulations, men are bound to perform certain actions to achieve *manhood*. As David G. Gilmore states, "manhood ideal is not purely psychogenetic in origin but is also a culturally imposed ideal to which men must conform whether or not they find it psychologically congenial" (4).

Ascribed gender expectations compel men to be responsible for achieving the state of manhood. The responsibility of fulfilling the manhood ideals burdened upon him makes him more cautious about his valorous state. Social narratives that interpret masculinity as a personification of valour impel men to showcase themselves in this light, hiding their fragile f*eminine* emotions. As Norman Mailer perceives masculinity in *Cannibals and Christians*, "Masculinity is not something given to you, something you're born with, but something you gain. ... And you gain it by winning small battles with honor" (qtd. in McKinley 69), even though

parameters of masculinity vary culture to culture. As Joshua S Goldstein states in *War and Gender*:

> Culture after culture features rites of passage from boyhood to manhood…. In many cultures, initiation rituals, older males systematically inflict pain and injury on young ones, who must hold up without flinching, or face life-long shame…. The particulars of these rituals vary by cultural context…. In fishing communities, would-be men go on dangerous expeditions into the water. In hunting cultures, they risk their lives in hunting exploits. In societies with frequent warfare, young males must participate in war – and, for some, kill an enemy – before being called a man. (264)

When masculinity is equated with "strength, protection, rationality, aggression, public life, domination, and leadership", femininity is associated with "weakness, vulnerability, emotion, passivity, privacy, submission" (Sjoberg and Via 3), in the dominant patriarchal narrative. Constructing feminine characteristics as secondary to masculine characteristics, society degrades and subdues those who fail to measure up to these parameters, categorising them as aberrant. The ignominy of feminisation that is burdened upon men from their early childhood necessitates them to be in a constant battle of achieving manhood. As Laura Sjoberg states in *Gender, Justice, and the Wars in Iraq*:

> In the social process of gendered power, the hegemonic masculinity is at the top of the social pyramid, governing through socialisation, both of its members and its subordinates. To feminize something or someone is to directly subordinate that person, political entity, or idea, because values

> perceived as feminine are lower on the social hierarchy than values perceived as neutral or masculine…. The multiple masculinities simply continue to trump femininities in terms of social power…. Gender is not...simply the process of perceived difference but rather the process of perceived difference creating self reinforcing power inequality. (34)

Exploiting the patriarchal social narrative of gender identities, the State forges a new narrative that foregrounds military service as the duty of a *real man*. Warrior as a status of manliness corresponds to the figure of saviour, where he is assigned to safeguard his nation, conceived as feminine. The more he attains victory through destroying his enemies, the more he is glorified. The state narrative of glorifying military service as the apex of masculinity compels men to suppress their feminine characteristics, specifically fear and grief. Strategic policies of the ruling elite effectuate victimisation, where soldiers are trapped between their assigned expectations and innate human feelings. Diverse characteristics are attributed to soldiers in different cultures at different times. Some of the desirable qualities in warriors defined in most of the cultures embrace physical courage, endurance, strength, skill and honour. Goldstein defines warrior characteristics as:

> Physical courage: "The warrior enjoys a fight, is prepared to risk wounds or death, and will if necessary engage superior forces; if death is inevitable he faces it bravely and without flinching."
>
> Endurance: "The warrior can withstand extremes of climate, pain, hunger and thirst, and fatique; he will fight on after defeats and reverses, and is not demoralized…"

> Strength and Skill: "The warrior is physically robust, fit and proficient in the use of his weapons; he is also a shrew tactician and planner, not merely a berserk thug, although an element of frenzy in the desperate heat of battle is to be expected."
>
> Honour: "The warrior is a man of honour: he keeps his word, is loyal to his leader and to his comrades, and fights honourably…" (267)

As 'prestige in a social group is among the most central motivations of human behaviour' (qtd in Goldstein 269), men strive to achieve the above warrior characteristics so that they will be exempted from public shaming for not being a courageous warrior. Such constructs that consider warriors as the pinnacle of masculine ideals place the onus on the warriors to prove their masculinity.

In the Sri Lankan context, even though the country was never under military governance, it showcased many characteristics of a militarised zone. John Richardson, in his work *Paradise Poisoned: Learning about Conflict, Terrorism and Development from Sri Lanka's Civil Wars* (2005), observes the reasons behind the militarisation of Sri Lanka. He states:

> The failures of development and devolution of power, a demoralised and corrupt civil police force, the politicization and ethnicization of armed forces, the growth of defence budgets at the expense of development, the falling and discriminatory standards of education and subsequent alienation of youth, and ethno-nationalism that has pitted Sinhala and Tamil against each other make his list. (qtd in Mel 23)

The militarisation in Sri Lanka necessitated the creation of militarised masculinity as the central characteristic of a loyal citizen. As Neloufer De Mel notes, in Sri Lanka, military service became "one of the rites of manhood, and a successful war makes the nation and/or community waging it masculine rather than a defeated feminine" (25). Pradeep Jeganathan, in his work, "A Space for Violence: Anthropology, Politics and the Location of a Sinhala Practice of Masculinity," observes *bhaya-nethi* (fearlessness) as "an important practice of Sinhala masculinity; one that is associated almost closely with violence" (51)

As Anushka Kahandagama, a scholar and writer specialising in the area of Sri Lankan ethnic conflict, states:

> War sets a legitimised ground to maintain the military masculinity. Battlefield is a legitimised space for violence that allows the soldier to risk the body. By risking the body the soldier sustains the self esteem that might be challenged by the enemy…. Zone of masculinity…becomes a space of violence…. The masculine characteristics produced in daily activities have become supportive in constructing military male figures required by war. (54)

War space turns into a victimised space where humane emotions of gentleness, compassion, tolerance and amity are replaced with brutality, meanness and animosity. As Anushka Kahandagama further observes:

> The illustration of soldier as a protector and not as a killer was legitimised through the process of gender construction in Sri Lanka. Gender construction in Sri Lanka is based upon the concepts of shame and fear. Both the genders

> are afraid of being humiliated and try to maintain the self esteem without being shamed. To maintain their self esteem, both men and women must play the gender roles as prescribed. This, in turn, maintains and legitimizes the killing and violence under the label of 'protecting the nation'. (54)

The ideal of a perfect *Sinhala man* as a soldier who fights for his country during a period of crisis is disseminated through popular media. The song "Me Sinhala Apage Ratai" (This Sinhala is Our Country) sung by Nanda Malini with the lyrics of Magahama Sekera was reused with the agenda of inserting Sinhala nationalism during Sinhala Tamil communal violence. The song that emphasised Sinhala nationalism praised martial virtue.

> Mau bima venuwen porane
> Divi dun viru daruwange
> Le valinui me derane
> Muthu keta mini keta mevune. (qtd in Mel 16)

Translation: Martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the motherland in the past, whose blood pearls and gems created this land.

Even though her song "Bamuna Wuvath", published in the post-1987 period, is a plea to uphold equality and ethnic harmony, it reveals the normative prejudices circulated in Sri Lankan society and culture.

> Though a sage, fell him if he is evil
> Though a low-caste, honour him if he is fair
> Though a Sinhalese, fell him if he is a pariah
> Though a Tamil, honour him if he is a hero. (qtd in Mel 16)

The song, which reveals the prejudices of Sinhala society that considers a "sage wise, a low-caste vile, a Sinhala person a hero, and a Tamil a pariah" (Mel 16), reinstates the way in which a hero and a pariah are treated in Sinhala society.

The traits of military masculinity in Sri Lanka during the war are exemplified in the character Lion, portrayed by T. D. Ramakrishnan as The Military General of the Sinhala army in *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*. He represents the ideals of military masculinity, particularly in the Sri Lankan context, where martial virtues are revered as defining characteristics of the soldier-hero.

> He resembled a lion. A middle-aged man with greying hair parted on both sides. He sported a dark moustache. Though he was wearing pyjamas, he had a military bearing and physique. He had a way of staring at you with his eyebrows furrowed. (*SAAD* 81-82)

The character Lion represents some of the characteristics that the King of Beasts (animal lion) holds, like valour and courage, and he uses the tool of intimidation to silence his enemies. He is depicted as the product of narrow nationalism and patriarchy. He induces violence to otherize his enemy, as violence creates the difference between the violator and the victim, especially when it is used unidirectionally. Elaine Scarry, in her work *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, observes violence as a tool for creating difference. She further states the role of violence in creating a series of oppositions. She states:

> …the torturer has the absence of pain, the prisoner has the presence of pain; the torturer has the presence of the world, the prisoner has the absence of the world; the torturer has voice and therefore agency, the prisoner is either

> voiceless or his voice is a betrayal. Across these inversions, says Scarry, "pain becomes power" for as the prisoner's world contracts, so the torturer's world expands" (qtd. in Price 212-13)

Militarised state nationalism, as in masculine world view, equalises loyal citizenship with the will and capacity of the loyal male to commit violence upon its enemy (Price 213). Lion, being a representative of power, enjoys the absence of pain, presence of the world and has voice and agency. To reinstate his identity as a loyal military man, he induces violence upon Poovani, the voiceless other.

He uses rape as a biopolitical weapon to terrorise women who oppose government policies, exploiting their bodies as sites of domination and control. Through the strategic production of raped bodies, he intends to create fear and compliance, knowing that many women perceive death as a more desirable fate than the physical and psychological trauma of rape. Through exploiting societal stigmas surrounding rape, Lion silences dissent and reinforces patriarchal and State authority. Lion abducts Poovani Selvanayagam, a medical student who is also the student union's secretary, in a white car for conducting an informal meeting of the organisation "Women against War" in which they discussed the death of Rajani Thiranagama and questioned wartime violence. The comments that she raised during the discussion against the State made her the enemy of both the State and Lion. Lion justifies his act of rape as a punishment for a citizen's anti-national activity. He further interprets it as an act of punishment for a woman who entered into a political space, crossing the patriarchal boundaries of gender. Lion asks:

> ‘Why are you crying?’…. Don’t you want to become a human rights activist of international repute?.... Intelligent girls like you are the pride of the nation. You shouldn’t waste your life interfering unnecessarily in political issues. You are about to be punished just for that. (*SAAD* 83)

While aggression and physical courage are categorised as essential components of masculinity and war, the role of women in war is limited to nurturing and caring for the soldier's son, as per popular perception. Peace-time gender roles are mobilised for violent acts during wartime. The ruling elite uses Poovani’s identity as a Tamil and a woman to place her in a vulnerable position. Lion otherizes Poovani and induces violence upon her as she was courageous enough to raise questions against those who try to exploit her vulnerable position in society. Lion’s fear of being emasculated if he fails to accomplish the task of protecting his motherland impels him to suppress dissent and to induce violence upon those who question the protectors of the country, i.e., the ruling elite. He asks:

> ‘Didn’t you organize a meeting of Women Against War? How did you get the courage to organize such a meeting when the whole world is after our country, accusing us of war crimes and human rights violations? Don’t you know that what you have done is treason? Unfortunately, this country lacks the laws to punish such misdeeds. Moreover, the courts are filled with human rights activists, so laws would be futile anyway. That is why I have to punish people like you. War is the dominion of men. Why do women need to interfere? (*SAAD* 83)

Men from both the LTTE and the Sinhala army demarcate women’s spaces. The Sinhala army uses the threat of rape as a strategy to intimidate women, especially

those who are from the other group. During times of ethnic conflict, checkpoints were befitted as zones of "extra judicial arrest and subsequent execution following a logic that purported to see "enemies" of the state everywhere" (Jeganathan 405). For Tamil, especially for Tamil women, checkpoints stand as a symbol of intimidation and fear. Krishanthi Kumaraswami's rape and murder in 2006 exemplifies the precarious position of Tamil women in check posts. Reflecting this incident, Padmini Ganesan, a Tamil School teacher, responds to the Washington Post, "for us, the checkpoints are sort of a slow-motion thing, the trauma and the fear that we go through" (qtd. in Manoranjan 141). Checkpoints serve as a place where both the Sinhala army and the Tamil women view each other with suspicion. When the Sinhala army suspects her of being a terrorist, the Tamil women suspect him of being a rapist. Checkpoints become spaces of biopolitical control, where the freedom of a citizen is restricted under the guise of ensuing security. Security is employed as a tool of governance, justifying the restriction of personal freedom as a necessary sacrifice for collective wellbeing, thereby reasserting the authority of the State over its citizens. In Nayomi Munaweera's novel *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, Saraswathi and her sister Luxshmi perceive the checkpoint, which is near their house, as a space that creates fear:

> …there are soldiers everywhere. They look at us from under their rounded helmets with eyes that are filled with hate, but also with fear. They think any of us, man, woman, child may be bomb strapped, jiggling with flesh-tearing ballbearings secreted under skirts and shirts. It is always better to avoid their fearful eyes, to walk quickly past, trying not to betray our own palpitating

> terror. I have learned to keep my eyes averted when Luxshmi and I pass the checkpoint closet to the house, but the soldiers always lean over the sandbags, call to us in halting Tamil learned on the battlefield.
>
> "Why always in such a hurry?" they say. "Come and talk to us, we won't bite" and smile baring their wolfish teeth. (*ITM* 136)

Aruljothy Ramaiyah, in her poem "Identity*"*, delineates the plight of Tamil women in Sri Lankan checkpoints where their femininity is weighed by Sinhala soldiers to prove their identity. Sinhala soldiers instrumentalise rape as a weapon through which they assert their warriorship and masculinity. Through their dubious looks at checkpoints, they reinstate their hegemonic masculinity. The poem traces the plight of soldiers, where they are obliged to assert their masculinity through purposeful oppression of the other. "Revolting looks / Needing to touch and feel your femininity / To confirm your identity (qtd. in Eswaran 222)

The movie *In the Name of Buddha* by Rajesh Touchriver also portrays the plight of Tamil women in Sri Lankan checkpoints where soldiers use groping of breasts as a strategy to dehumanise and silence Tamil women and to emasculate their men. More than creating fear in the minds of rape victims, it is a strategy used by the army with large goals of silencing the Tamil community as a whole through the threat of rape upon every Tamil, including non-victims of rape.

Masculine strategies of power control are exercised at checkpoints where military symbols engender unprecedented fear in Tamil minorities. Like checkpoints, white vans, the vehicle notorious for illegal abductions and forcible disappearances, also stand as objects of fear in the Tamil community. The Human

Rights Watch Report "Open Wounds and Mounting Dangers Blocking Accountability for Grave Abuses in Sri Lanka", published in 2021, mentions white vans as a notorious symbol of terror:

> …Thousands of young Tamil men who were suspected LTTE supporters, as well as journalists, activists, and others deemed to be political opponents were abducted, many by armed men operating in white vans, which became a symbol of political terror. Many have never been heard from again. (3)

White Van Stories, a documentary directed by Leena Manimekhalai, throws light on the story of forced disappearances in Sri Lanka through the life narratives of different women. The trauma that engulfed the Sri Lankan psyche with the appearance of white vans is delineated by one of the women victims, whose husband is a moulavi. She describes how Shaheel Moulavi's abduction in the white van still haunts her third son. The child says, "Mum, I saw that white van, let us not go out, they will abduct us too" (00:43:00). The child's psyche is so traumatised as he comprehends any van white in colour as a symbol of terror.

Soldiers execute the ruling elite's strategy of forced abduction and rape to oppress the other. Forced abductions and rape are used as strategies to spread fear among the enemies. The actions of the soldiers are regulated by the demands exerted by the state to fit into their image of a powerful soldier.

In *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki* and *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, white vans disseminate terror among the suppressed group. Through terror, the suppressed groups are silenced and reduced to passive objects. The response of neighbours in the *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* when Saraswathi was abducted in a

white van shows how the sight of a white van haunts the Sri Lankan psyche. In Saraswathi's words:

> ...there is nowhere and I am in a corner of the black room, arms raised to cover my head when the soldiers break in…. I beg with my eyes as I am hurried past but no window is opened, no door is cracked, no one shouts and screams and stops these men from taking me. At the junction, they push me into the yawning maw of a white van, slam the doors shut and I am alone scrabbling on my knees, thrown from side to side on the cold hard metal. (*ITM* 144)

The passivity of society leads them into a state of numbness, where they hesitate to challenge or question their forced degradations. Poomani and Juliet in *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki* are victims of forced abductions. Their abductions in the white cars were also treated with yielding numbness as "this was a time when white cars were feared" (*SAAD* 79).

Women were abducted and sexually abused in "detention, checkpoints or interrogation on the suspicion that either the victim or their family members were collaborators of the LTTE" (qtd. in Traunmüller et al. 5). The Sinhala army's questions related to Saraswathi's brothers' LTTE connection reflect the perception of Sinhala soldiers towards the Tamil community:

> They encircle me, shouting questions that pound against my head. "What is your name? Where is your training camp? Where are your brothers? How long have you been a Tiger?" …. I see the rifle butt coming before its

> smashes into my face…. I fall hard on to my wrists, then they are upon me. Tiger Bitch. (*ITM* 145)

The army abducts and rapes Saraswathi, even though she is not directly connected to the LTTE. The army conquers her body as a punishment for her brothers' desire to conquer the Sinhala land by becoming an LTTE combatant. As Human Rights Watch opines, "there appears to be no category of Tamil who, once taken into custody, is immune from rape and other sexual violence" (36).

The army uses the threat of rape as a strategy to instil fear and to regulate the movement of women, especially from the minority community. Their confined social spaces force them either to stay within their homes or to flee from the land of Sri Lanka. The story of the threat of sexual abuse continued even after the official end of the war in 2009, with the murder of the LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran. The article published by Rajesh Venugopal titled "Demonic Violence and Moral Panic in Postwar Sri Lanka: Explaining the Grease Devil Crisis" identifies a fear of grease devil among war-torn Sri Lankan communities. As he states in the article, grease devils, that are also referred to as "grease man, grease yakka, grease monster, grease demon, grease bhoothaya, grease peyi, grease pootham, is a shadowy and ambiguous figure who inhabits the cosmos of rural and small town Sri Lanka" (616-17) and attacks especially women. The article talks about the contradictory perceptions of the existence of grease devils among Sinhalese and Tamils. While Tamils recognise it as a governmental strategy to drive them out of Sinhala land through spreading fear of rape, Sinhala authorities deny the existence of the same.

The looming threat of rape persuaded them to believe in the existence of grease devils, who they believed were the members of the army or the navy.

The ruling elite chooses rape as a war strategy as it is cost effective tactic compared with other forms of warfare. Mark Malloch Crown, a junior minister in the U. K's Foreign and Commonwealth Office, opines, "Rape is just as effective as traditional artillery, but it is easier to obtain and cheaper to use" (qtd. in Kirby 5). The unholy relation between war and rape is evident in forced pregnancy, where the deployment of sperm is used as a method of biological warfare. In *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*, Lion's intention of using his sperm as a weapon to disrupt the bloodline of the minority is evident in his statement towards Poomani.

Lion threatens:

> If you resist, you will be thrown into the sea. If you obey, your life will be spared. But you will have to give birth to a Sinhalese baby. Scared of death, she had agreed. But she hadn't realised that it was such an important person's baby that she had to conceive…. She did not want to aggravate the Lion further, so she tried to summon some confidence. (*SAAD* 83)

Lion's statement reveals the military tactic of using rape as a tool for ethnic cleansing. In the article titled, "You Are Not a Real Man Until You Have Scored Masculine Discourses and Teenage Pregnancy," Faustinus Shikukutu and Labby Ramratham look at the male perceptions of masculinity. The study made in the context of teenage pregnancy in Namibia, particularly in the Kavango East region, throws light on the role masculine discourses play in perpetuating the issue, as reflected in boys' conversations and attitudes toward sexual behaviour. The study

further explores the readings on male psychology behind impregnations, highlighting how self-esteem is often tied to *scorings*, a term used by men to signify the act of impregnating a woman as a marker of masculine achievement and social status, “Rape, as with all terror-warfare, is not exclusively an attack on the body--it is an attack on the ‘body-politic.’ Its goal is not to maim or kill one person but to control an entire socio-political process by crippling it. It is an attack directed equally against personal identity and cultural integrity” (qtd. in Clifford 3).

By impregnating the victim, the perpetrator engages in a genocidal warfare in which he uses his body as a biological weapon for a nationalist cause. In *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*, Lion considers impregnating those women who are “suffering from diseases like human rights or feminism” (85) as a way to distort the cultural integrity of the enemy country. As Kirby states, “it is not that the penis is used on occasion as if it were a stick or gun, but the stick or gun which are being used as surrogates for the penis” (10). Referring to the context of Rwandan rape, Brenda Fitzpatrick comments on the attitude of soldiers that forces them to insert a gun or a stick in women’s genitals and to mutilate women’s sexual organs to make them infertile throughout their lives. “A Still Unfinished War: Sri Lanka’s Survivors of Torture and Sexual Violence 2009-2015”, a report published on the accounts of injustices that happened during and after the war, by the International Truth and Justice Project in Sri Lanka in June 2015, delves into the insider’s accounts of war experiences. They confess their experience of being a witness to the mutilation of Tamil men and women in a sexual way. Witness 70 states:

> I saw them mutilate the bodies with small sticks and stones being forced into their vaginas along with small knives. They used knives to cut their breasts. I saw many female cadres get captured and then killed and after that is when they would be stripped and bodies desecrated…. They looked and went back to their command centre. They said do not do these things but they did not take any action to identify or punish those who did…. (50)

Witness 69 also shares the experience of witnessing mutilating bodies of the enemy group:

> One girl had a stick about four feet long sticking into the air from her vagina. One of the soldiers yanked it out and rammed it into her vagina again. I saw a female with a fresh knife cut on her bare breast… I saw some of the men saying things like 'bloody LTTE dogs', 'we teach you a good lesson'- all the while using filthy sexual swear words. (49)

The strategy of inserting weapons in female genitals is a way of either disrupting their bloodline by making them infertile or dehumanising them. Through the portrayal of the plight of Arulmozhi Nagai and Yamuna Sreedhar, T D uncovers the operation of inhuman detention camps in Sri Lanka where they are raped with torture pens and raping robots. Arul and Yamuna remain silent for the soldier's questions regarding Meenakshi Rajarathinam, Juliet, and Gayathri. Their silence was treated with electric robots and torture pens:

> Caesar asked once more, 'Who is Meenakshi Rajarathinam?' The moment she replied, 'My mother', the pen was pushed in her vagina. She screamed at the electric current that shook her body. Finally, she broke down and said,

> ‘It’s Sugandhi, who was in the Iyakkam. Sugandhi is Meenakshi Rajarathinam.’
>
> ‘Oh, now you are on track, you bitch.’ He pulled the pen out. (*SAAD* 239-40)

More than dehumanising the victim, it becomes a method through which the perpetrator upholds his masculinity. *The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo*, a documentary on the rape crimes committed by the soldiers of Congo, directed by Lisa F. Jackson, renders the soldiers’ experiences of raping a woman. Most of the soldiers interviewed acknowledge that they have raped and don’t have any guilt, as it is the right of a man, especially a soldier, to take women’s bodies when he is in need. One of them divulges, “I rape because of the need. After that, I feel I am a man.” (00:30:50). Soldiers consider women as war booty in almost all cultures. Witness 70 of the report “A Still Unfinished War: Sri Lanka’s Survivors of Torture and Sexual Violence 2009-2015” states how the army treats the corpses of women to celebrate their victory. The witness 69 recounts the incident as:

> What shocked me is that the clothing on all the bodies had either been fully removed or atleast such that the private parts on all of them were exposed…! Saw army soldiers continue to drink arrack and dance. They were dancing because they were very happy after the victory. They were kicking and stepping on the dead bodies of the LTTE fighters or civilians. There were officers there but they did not do anything…. Two captains just stood there talking while their men were doing that. Some of the soldiers then came and stomped on some of the bodies with their boots then posed for photographs

> with a boot on their body and and holding their rifle up posing like a hunter standing over a trophe with smiles on their faces. (49)

The perpetrator exercises agency over the victim while he rapes her and places her in a subordinate position. In *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*, Lion takes pride while he claims himself as the person who began rape punishment fifteen years ago. He considers it an achievement when he states, "I have punished eight so far" (85). The cultural construct of the myth of the heroic rapist that is instilled within him impels Lion to observe his act of encroaching on her body and silencing her as a political act of saving his country. Similar pride can be observed when Sugandhi, a former member of the LTTE, was captured and became a victim of an acid attack by the military. Robert Jayawardene, a military officer, takes pride in kissing her before he begins the punishment and states, "Let the last kiss you receive be mine" (*SAAD* 205)

More than silencing the victim, Lion uses forceful impregnation as a tool of ethnic cleansing. By deliberately impregnating women from the oppressed group, he aims to disrupt the continuity of their lineage and ingrain his cultural and national identity within the targeted community. In patriarchal and patrilineal societies, where a child's identity is typically tied to the father, he weaponises his body as a biopolitical tool to erase the cultural heritage of the victimised group. Since women are regarded as the bearers of familial, cultural, and national identity, raping and impregnating them becomes a biopolitical tactic employed by the state through its army as a method of ethnic cleansing. More than the victim, the collective identity of the target group is traumatised through forceful impregnation. His agenda of

forcefully impregnating the victim, whether to silence them or to contaminate their bloodline, is evident in the statement he makes to Juliet D'Souza, another of Lion's prey. Although Juliet is Sinhala, she is targeted and raped because she dared to speak against the Sinhala government. However, Lion's deeper motive for such acts of impregnation lies in his agenda of ethnic cleansing, using sexual violence as a biopolitical weapon to assert dominance and disrupt the cultural identity of those he considers adversaries. Juliet states:

> …he agreed to meet me in a secret place. He told me that I shouldn't bring my son…the word 'pattavesi', his fat ugly arms around me and the stench of his sweat. I only smiled when he said, 'I think you see now that rape and impregnation are the best ways to enslave a woman completely.'(*SAAD* 89)

His enmity towards Juliet fumes as she criticises the Sri Lankan army's unfair treatment of women in a public meeting. As othering is a prerequisite for humiliating a victim, especially in a war context, Lion otherises Juliet in the name of gender and categorises her as a representative of the other group. Since both share a common ethnic identity as Sinhalese, Lion uses her speech at the public meeting to reassert his categorisation of Juliet as other. Her Sinhala ethnic identity never saves her from the punishment of Lion. As she states: "The Lion was not a racist when it came to searching for a prey" (*SAAD* 86). He otherized her, accusing her of being an Iyakkam spy and a woman who spoke against the army. Later in the novel, the words of Gayathri Perera, a leader of the group called Save Sri Lanka from Fascism (SSF), reiterate the methods by which the state categorises its critics as Iyakkam spies and silences them. She opines:

> The government is manipulating our art, music and cinema to achieve these ends…. The President and his followers, who did not value any of the ideas put forward by Rajani, are now using her story to criticize the Iyakkam…. If we criticize the President, we will be labelled supporters of Iyakkam or JVP. It will be followed by arrests and murders. (*SAAD* 191-92)

Lion uses controlling the voice of the victim as a tool to gain agency over her. Lion inflicts pain upon Poomani that is rewarded with the proof of her scream and silences her again with his tight hugs. As Scarry states:

> [The prisoner] will, while being hurt, be made to speak, to sing, and, of course, to scream—and even those screams, the sounds anterior to language that a human being reverts to when overwhelmed by pain, will in turn be broken off and made the property of the torturers in one of two ways. They will, first of all, be used as an occasion for, be made the agent of, another act of punishment. As the torturer displays his control of the other's voice by first inducing screams, he now displays the same control by stopping them…. (49)

While Poomani's scream is silenced with tight hugs, Juliet is being silenced with a pistol. He rapes her and threatens to kill her if she speaks about the punishment to anyone, including her son, who was born out of Lion's rape. He says, "if you tell anyone, including your son, about your punishment- remember, I will kill you and throw your body into the sea." (*SAAD* 89) Sugandhi, another victim of military rape, is further threatened with an acid attack. The military man induced screams and later

controlled her voice by taping her lips shut, which provided him with agency over the victim.

The victim is subjected to subtle yet damaging humiliation by silencing through verbal and physical abuse. Lion's tactic is to "disgrace its victim by disgracing her body" (qtd. in Price 214), especially through verbal abuse. As given in the article "The Underlying Sexism in Swearing and Slurs", a renowned sociologist, Lalita Banshyal, opines, "verbal abuses are a tool that men use against women to subordinate them and to remind them that they are always powerless and should act as subordinates" (qtd. in Khadgi). The oppressor uses slurs to "harm and degrade their targets, making them feel humiliated, dehumanised, disempowered, and silenced" (M. P. Wyatt and J. L. Wyatt 2880). As M. Popa-Wyatt and J. L. Wyatt observe:

> Power is not, however, enough on its own. Slurring uses are rich enough in their effects that a single mechanism cannot account for all their properties… oppressive slurs achieve oppression via an act of role assignment. The speaker takes the dominant role, while the target is assigned the subordinate role. (2881)

In *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, Yasodhara was harassed with the slur word *Tiger Bitch* during rape, while Lion in *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki* slanders his victims with the word *Pattavesi*. Both these terms are oppressive slurs that the perpetrators use in order to maintain unjust power over their targets. Using the term Pattavesi, which stands as a strong abusive term in the Sinhala language for a prostitute, or Tiger Bitch, the perpetrators exercise control by provoking anger and

preventing them from venting it out. Lion's tactic of slurring politically active women as whores is a kind of psychological warfare that he wages to turn the woman into a whore that will otherize and traumatise them. As Agnes Heller argues, "many men who torture a politically active woman try to convince themselves that she is a kind of whore." (qtd. in Price 214). Lion verifies Juliet's political involvement post delivery, and her passive engagement in political affairs pacifies him. He asks: "Are you going to start your activism again?' 'No, Never. I like archaeology. I want to complete my work in that area" (*SAAD* 89).

The response of Juliet reiterates the way in which the low-power groups are subordinated and forced to adapt to the language of high-power groups. As Ardner states, muted group theory delineates this concept of muting and appropriating the language of low-power groups to that of the language of high-power groups when communicating in the public sphere. Reinforcing Ardner's view, Cowan states mutedness does not refer to the absence of voice but to a kind of distortion where subordinate voices… are allowed to speak but only in the confines of the dominant communication system." (qtd. in Hughes 14). As Juliet's voice is muted and appropriated through threatening, raping and impregnating her, the voice of Peter Jeevanandam's driver, who drove them to Sigiriya through the road, is muted through raping his daughter, murdering his two sons and mutilating his wife's leg in the bomb blast. He begs:

> Please don't ask me. But my sons died in the freedom struggle. My only daughter was raped and killed by soldiers. They did not even leave my wife. She lost her leg in a bomb blast. I am her only support. Nobody talks about

> politics here. Let's talk about movies, about Ajit, Asin or Vikram. Let's leave politics alone. (*SAAD* 180)

The collective Sri Lankan psyche, rooted in 'Lajja Bhaya', tames the minority psyche through ridicule, harassment and silencing. As the military observes silencing Sugandhi, a difficult task, they strive to appropriate Sugandhi's voice, demanding her to speak in support of them:

> You must speak to the media in support of government's humanitarian operations. You must openly speak against VP and the Iyakkam. You must praise the president specifically, and commend his administrative skills. You must say that Mahinda's ideas are the only way through which Sri Lanka can achieve development. If you agree to all this, I will stop the punishment right now. (*SAAD* 205-06)

Silencing and appropriating the voice of the victim is achieved by inflicting pain upon the suspects. As rape degrades the victim to an object and distorts her physical and emotional balance, it is employed as a strategy to make the suspect confess. When Sugandhi's sisters, Arul and Yamuna, were taken into custody for the alleged crime of attempting to assassinate the President at CHOGM, the chief Wickrama Ranatunga ordered "First rape, then question" (*SAAD* 238). As Elaine Scarry states, "when pain is induced upon the victim, the objectified pain is denied as pain and read as power" (45). She further states:

> Pain and interrogation inevitably occur together in part because the torturer and the prisoner each experience them as opposites. The very question that, within the political pretense, matters so much to the torturer that it occasions

> his grotesque brutality will matter so little to the prisoner experiencing the brutality that he will give the answer. For the torturers, the sheer and simple fact of human agony is made invisible, and the moral fact of inflicting that agony is made neutral by the feigned urgency and significance of the question. For the prisoner, the sheer, simple, overwhelming fact of his agony will make neutral and invisible the significance of any question as well as the significance of the world to which the question refers. (29)

As "the translation of pain into power is ultimately a transformation of body into voice" (Scarry 45), soldiers induce diverse methods of inducing pain while interrogating to make the detainees confess about their plans. Human Rights Watch report "We Will Teach You a Lesson: Sexual Violence against Tamils by Sri Lankan Security Forces" reveals the plight of LTTE supporters and alleged LTTE members in custody. Soldiers raped them to gather information on the LTTE network and to confess their membership in the LTTE. By inducing pain upon them and thereby invoking terror, the government presumed to discourage involvement in the LTTE through disseminating terror among the Tamil community. In the novel *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*, the army rapes Arul and Yamuna in detention centres to extort their plans.

Criticisms against the army's routine use of torture as a method of investigation faced from a range of persons, including judges of Sri Lanka's Supreme Court, heads of monitoring bodies and United Nations Special Rapporteurs, reveal how the strategy of rape became a common practice amongst officials during interrogation. As Wood observes, there were two categories of rape-

rape of suspected LTTE cadres in custody and rape of Tamil women and girls at checkpoints, during military operations and within their homes. The victim's silence due to impunity triggered sexual violence against women during the conflict. As Chulani Kodikaran and Sarala Emmanuel observe:

> Prosecutions in retaliation to sexual offences committed by members of the armed forces in Sri Lanka peter out without judgements; witnesses are harassed and intimidated until they are forced to flee the country. Furthermore, the police, the Attorney General's Department and the courts collude to undermine the very principles they are supposed to uphold. Impunity and lack of accountability for sexual violence have been entrenched features of the war in Sri Lanka. (7)

Meena Kandasamy's *the orders were to rape you* criticises impunity that the perpetrator of sexual violence relishes. A former Tamil tigress' memories that are documented in the section 'The Story of the Female Tiger in Her Own Words' portray the hardships, including rape, that she had endured during the conflict, being a tigress. The soldier rapist trivialises her admonitions of complaining about the rape to his senior officers. "'I shall tell your superiors.' And the men said, 'These are their orders. The orders were to rape you'" (53-54).

The testimony of one of the soldiers accused in Krishanthi Kumaraswamy's rape and murder at the checkpoint, who claimed he had orders to rape and kill, reveals the support of higher authorities for the implementation of rape as a war tactic. In the mid-1990s, Krishanthi Kumaraswamy, a Jaffna teenager, was detained at a checkpoint on her way to school, later gang-raped and killed. Her mother,

brother, and a neighbour were also murdered while searching for her. Krishali Pinto Jayawardena and Kristy Anantharajah criticise the apex court for inculpating only low-ranking soldiers who were directly responsible for the crime. They further state:

> The failure of the legal order must be contextualized against a long and torturous history of insensitivity of the law towards sexual violence, marked by a few legal victories that had little effect on the overall culture of state impunity. In general, the majority of the sexual torture cases by the military have traditionally been treated in a highly cavalier manner by state agencies. (47-48)

The Government observed allegations of sexual violence as an LTTE conspiracy to defame and demonise the armed forces for winning the war. A senior defence official condemned US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's statement in 2009 regarding the strategy of using rape as a weapon of war by the army. Later, the allegations raised in the documentary of Channel 4, *Sri Lanka's Killing Fields: War Crimes Unpunished* (2011) regarding the inhumane practices of the army, including sexual violence, were dismissed by the president's brother, Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa, in an interview with the Indian television channel, Headlines Today. He lashes out at a Tamil British woman in shockingly misogynistic language when she raised concerns about rape.

> [S]he says that there have been, you know, all these allegations: rape and murder and all these things. Now she is one person who will get attracted by the people (haha) soldiers that's right, because she's different from others.

> So, I want to know whether she was raped. She was there for one year she came with the IDPs and she was in the IDP camps. Now she was talking about the rape. How can she talk about the rape when she a person so attractive safely came into this area was in IDP camps and released? She was not raped; she was not killed. How can she comment like that? (Hogg 45)

The media turns out to be a tool to justify the inhuman acts of the ruling class. *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki* sketches out how the government counters the accusations using negative propaganda. When Sugandhi accepts their orders to confess before the media, The General enquires whether she was upset about being raped. Her silent nod of helplessness is greeted with sarcasm. The response to The General's question by one of the soldiers that it wasn't rape and she was enjoying it mirrors the Freudian male theory of rape. Freud observes that the male ideology of rape began to rely on the tenet that rape was something women desired. The dogma that women are masochistic by nature and crave the *lust of pain* (qtd. in Miller 315).

As A D Smith suggests, an ethnic community has six characteristics: a collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history, a shared distinctive culture, an association with a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity (qtd. in Sibirtsev 5). Co-existence of diverse communities is challenged when a particular ethnic group, especially the majority community, begins to rule the country and questions the rights of other ethnic groups, which will gradually lead to myth-poisoned nationalism (qtd. in Sibirtsev 7), hate speech and ethnic conflict successively. As Herman Goering states in the Nuremberg trials:

> Naturally the common people don't want war…but after all it is the leaders of a country who determine policy, and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is to tell them they are being attacked, and denounce pacifists for lack of patriotism and expose the country to danger. It works the same in every country. (qtd. in Kahandagama 51)

The State uses the tactic of creating such national myths to manipulate the conscience of the majority, forcing them to observe citizens from other ethnic groups as others who plunder national resources that really belong to the majority community. As Peterson argues, creating the enemy as the other who is entirely different from *us* justifies the majority's act of violence upon the minority (21). The Sinhala government adopted the strategy of creating an ideal of *a Sinhala hero and a Tamil villain* by referencing every soldier as a Rana Viru or war hero and every LTTE member as a terrorist. The state narrative portrayed every warrior as an epitome of humanity, mercy, goodness, protectiveness and benevolence in contrast to members of the LTTE who are portrayed as symbols of wickedness, cruelty and destructiveness.

A narrative is elevated into a myth when the identity and the self-confidence of the community depend on it (Ahonen 2). Sinhala Buddhists were awaiting the renunciation of Prince Diyasena, also known as Diyasena Kumaraya, whenever there was political unrest in the country. As per their belief, Prince Diyasena is

prophesied to be a great king who will be born in Sri Lanka 2500 years after the birth of Lord Buddha, destined to preserve the culture and uphold Buddhism in the country. As myths are an easy way for the state to operate, either to unify people or to employ "dubious arguments to mobilise support for nationalist doctrines or to discredit opponents" (Snyder and Ballentine 10), the Sinhala government recreated the myth of Prince Diyasena in order to get support for their nationalist propaganda. Most of the countries propagate belligerent nationalism that foregrounds ingroup patriotism and outgroup rivalry through mass media. Sinhalese nationalism foregrounded the narrative of Prince Diyasena, a mythical character, who appeared in Sinhala literature in the period of the Kotte kingdom. As Prematunga states, "This eulogy foretells that a great king will be born in Sri Lanka after a lapse of 2500 years from the birth of Lord Buddha, to preserve the culture and Buddhism of our country" (Myth of Prince).

The myth of Diyasena as the saviour of Buddhist tradition and culture was recreated as it suited the purpose of the ruling elite. The new narrative portrays the government as saviours of the land and each military man as Prince Diyasena, who is in a lifelong struggle to protect Buddhist tradition and culture. The advertisement in 2008 for "Apage Diyasena Kumara wenuwen meduru thenewa....", a joint venture of the Ministry of Defence and the Central Bank of Sri Lanka that raised funds for housing projects allocated to the three armed forces in Sri Lanka, portrayed soldiers as Prince Diyasena. As Prematunga states:

> At the end of the commercial it says "There will be palaces for our Prince Diyasena (Apage Diyasen Kumara wenuwen meduru thenewa....). In this

> commercial, soldiers were symbolised as Prince Diyasena, who is a mythical hero, said to have arrived after 2500 years of Lord Buddha's attainment of Nirvana (qtd. in Kahandagama 54)

'Api Wenuwen Api' campaign bestowed a heroic image to soldiers by altering the vernacular term used for soldier *hamudhakaraya* to a more superior term *ranaviruva*, which means war hero. This altered the popular perception of the military, especially in postwar popular culture. Soldiers were also portrayed as *guardian-gods of the nation* in post war culture. According to the chronicles, God Upulvan is the guardian God with whom Buddha entrusted the Sasana and the stewardship of Sri Lanka.

These state-created narratives of the soldier figure serve diverse purposes: (1) they justify state-perpetrated violence over Tamils, (2) they help to attain the support of the Sinhalese majority, and (3) they increase the enmity between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority. As stated in the article "Lions, Gods and Heroes":

> …2009 victory has helped to consolidate the deification of the military as the 'guardian- gods of the nation'. This deification of the military has made it both a tiresome and risky task to prosecute those who might have committed war crimes because such move will face a potential mass opposition from southern Sri Lankans. (Cooray)

Apart from memorials, movies also played a pivotal role in propagating the myth of *protective-self sacrificing-sinhala soldier hero* in contrast with *authoritative-destructive-LTTE villain*. This portrayal of showcasing the soldier as

an embodiment of everything good and the portrayal of the LTTE as a personification of everything bad (what a soldier is not), altered the perception of society towards both of these groups. *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki* describes the ways in which the authorities create these kinds of myths to justify state violence and to get the support of the public. Peter Jeevanandam, the protagonist of the novel, reaches Divine Pearl, "a secret military camp that lay ninety-five kilometres from Colombo" (*SAAD* 1) for the pre-production work on the movie The Woman Behind the Fall of Tigers, which is produced by Transnational Pictures in collaboration with the Sri Lankan government. Peter Jeevanandam observes this movie as "an effort by the Sri Lankan government to whitewash the atrocities that had been committed in brazen violation of human rights during the civil war" (*SAAD* 2). One of the top government officials in the cultural ministry and a close confidant of the president, Samaraveera, who accompanies Peter Jeevanandam and his crew, including Christi Alberto, the director and his girlfriend and cinematographer Mary Ann, to the hotel room from Divine Pearl, states:

> You can ask for anything you want. This is the president's pet project. The world needs to see the Tigers in their true colours. We have to silence those who are slandering the government with the accusations of human right violations and mass murder. (*SAAD* 5)

Samaraveera's response to Peter's suggestion to treat it as a movie only showcases how the state exploits the talents of its artists to create myths in favour of the elite ruling class:

> 'But Samaraveera, this is a movie.'

> ‘I know. We will not interfere with any aspect of the movie-making. You have complete freedom. All of us have read Peter’s story… even the president. When it is made into a movie, the world will undoubtedly see the truth.’
>
> ‘Thank you, Samaraveera. I didn’t know that your president was so broad-minded.’
>
> ‘Well, that is why he has asked the cultural department to pay your remuneration as well as finance the movie.’
>
> ‘He is indeed great. But if we speak about his greatness in the movie, we will lose credibility.’
>
> ‘An intelligent artist will find a way- and you are very intelligent.’ (*SAAD* 5)

Peter’s previous movie project was with the LTTE, from where he was forced to flee for his life without completing it. Christie’s remark at the dinner party about Peter’s connection with the LTTE divulges the manoeuvres through which the state utilises its artists, who were once in camaraderie with the LTTE, to create myths in an incontrovertible manner. Gayathri Perera’s remark in a meeting conducted in a slum in Colombo’s Slave Island Suburb reinstates the above. She outlines how the government manipulates the public psyche through the media.

> The government is manipulating our art, music and cinema to achieve these ends. The prime example is this movie on Rajani Thiranagama called *The Woman Behind the Fall of Tigers* that is being co-produced by the government. The president and his followers, who did not value any of the

> ideas put forward by Rajani, are now using her story to criticize the Iyakkam. (*SAAD* 191)

The meeting held in memory of Rajani Thiranagama, which Peter and his crew attended, depicts how the ruling elite used fear to create collective memory and distort the truth. A conference titled, Who Was Rajani Thiranagama, that was held with the secret support of the Northern Provincial Council, was trying to manipulate the answer in a way that suited them" (*SAAD* 56). The government could convince the majority of people who attended the meeting that it is organised by the staff, students and alumni of the Jaffna Medical College. But the people who spoke at the conference in support of the government version were victims of fear.

To retain the *ranaviru* image of the soldier in the collective memory of the country, the government used statues, monuments, war museums, commemorative plaques, military parades and postage stamps. A new stamp that was released on National Rana Viru or War Hero's Day (7 June 2005), which costs fifty rupees, holds a Rana Viru logo. The Rana Viru logo that portrays a nuclear family under an army helmet reinforces soldiers as the epitome of protection. The main monument of Rana Viru Park, which was inaugurated in 2002 (that is situated in the land granted to Rana Viru Seva Authority by the President), is made up of three stainless steel pipes that symbolise the armed forces and police.

> …memorial parks honouring their war dead such as the Rana Viru Remembrance Park in Mailapitiya… The Rana Viru Park, inaugurated in 2002, is situated on 35 acres of land granted to the Rana Viru Seva Authority (RVSA) by the president. The pipes join at the apex, depicting, according to

> the park officials, the 'worshipping hands' of the entire nation in gratitude for those missing or killed in action' (qtd. in Mel 19)

In *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*, Christie criticises the way in which war museums are utilised to create a status of dignity on the word war itself, within the Sinhala community. He says:

> …but I'm fed up, Peter. There are war museums and war memorials everywhere, and ghoulish tourists gaping happily at them.
>
> 'This is the time for war tourism in Sri Lanka. Hundreds of tourist buses come to Jaffna every day from the south. The word "war" has assumed the status of dignity in the Sinhalese community. Nobody talks of peace or democracy…' (*SAAD* 181)

Peter and his crew's visit to the war museum showcases diverse dimensions of observing the war museum. While it is a symbol of pride, nationalism and masculinity for the triumphant elite ruler, it is a symbol of trauma, fear, lost nation and emasculation for the enemy other.

The fear of emasculation forces men to hide their *feminine* qualities in a society where courage and valour are considered the parameters of masculinity. The State, exploiting these innate cultural values, forges a narrative that defines the military as the apex of masculinity. The concept of a *war hero* that is consciously constructed and propagated through diverse cultural myths reinforces the narrative of the State. Society and the state, through these male-centred narratives, equate war heroes with military men who protect their nation, which is conceived as feminine

and their women, while feminising those who fail to accomplish their roles as men. A war hero is defined as a protector of *our women and nation*, while he is an enemy to *other women and nations*. This narrative of otherisation justifies the atrocities of the military committed on women of the other nations as the colonisation and rape of the female body is synonymous with the colonisation and disruption of the purity of the other nation. Raping the enemy woman is used as a war strategy as the colonisation of the female body emasculates the enemy men and contaminates their bloodline. More than a tactic of contaminating the enemy's ethnic purity, this war tactic instils a fear of *pre-victimhood* within every woman. A *ranaviru* title is endowed upon the soldier by the society and the State, and his atrocities upon the enemy women's bodies are trivialised as a *necessary evil* of war. As the body of the raped woman reminds her men of their failure, they alienate and criticise her for being the reason for the loss of honour of her family and her community. The stigma that women undergo post-rape that forces her to be silent on the incident and the victim-blaming attitudes of the society will be discussed in the third chapter, "In the Land of (Wo)Men: Of Aching Wounds and Haunting Scars."

Chapter III

In the Land of (Wo)Men:

Of Aching Wounds and Haunting Scars

In a social context where valour and the ability to oppress are considered the parameters of manliness, and femininity is equated with weakness and vulnerability, women are constantly otherised. Men feel compelled to be chivalrous due to the fear of feminisation, while women fear losing their "good women privilege" (Ralston 6) and comply with the patriarchal social order. This social order defines women as weak and otherises their identity from men who are elevated to the status of protector. Women who are designated as protected others within this context are obliged to follow the rules of patriarchy, reinforcing their status as objects. These gender roles during peace become a justification for demeaning the status of those who fail to accomplish their roles during times of war, regardless of gender. Sinhala and Tamil cultures place a strong emphasis on female purity, resulting in the oppression and marginalisation of women who are unable to uphold societal expectations of chastity, as well as the feminisation and stigmatisation of men who fail to safeguard them. The state exploits this gendered attitude, using the colonisation of the female bodies of the opposing group as a strategy to gain victory over them. Sexual violence against Tamil women during the Sinhala Tamil ethnic conflict was not just a war on their bodies but also a war on women who speak out against authority. The third chapter, “In the Land of (Wo)Men: Of Aching Wounds and Haunting Scars,” delves into the state of women, both Sinhala and Tamil, during

war. It traces the history of otherisation of women in Sri Lanka that led to normalising their victimisation and the justification of military atrocities committed on female bodies, especially during the ethnic conflict. The chapter also examines the survivor's psyche and the secondary victimisation that she faces as the symbol of lost honour for her family, society, and nation.

Women in Sinhalese tradition are victims of this societal othering, where they are forced to define themselves as an object/property of their men. As Jayawardena states:

> The role of the brother is also more or less the same as the father. Brothers also have been seen as protectors and providers. It is an accepted norm in Sri Lanka that older brothers should not marry until the girls in the family are given away in marriage. In the family, it is the brothers who keep surveillance on girls and they have an unquestioned authority to beat or scold girls. Hence the girls learn to be obedient to the male members in the family. (80)

The asymmetrical power relations in the Sinhala family entrust men with authority over the lives of women. The older women in the family are allocated the duty of disseminating the set patriarchal laws to the younger generation of women. The problem of *othering* womanhood estranges her from being inclusive or belonging to her family or society. Women's once internalised state of being *other* is reinforced through education and curriculum that reassert gender differences through purposeful binary creation. As Asoka Jayasena says:

> the examples presented in text books illustrate the process of cultural and social reproduction through text books and the portrayal of women in school text books continues to be depressing. She has examples to show that the text books give students a clear demarcation of the roles assigned to men and women. In both Sinhala and English text books, there are lessons and illustrations indicating that girls and women perform household work while men go out to work. Also in lessons for various grades while occupations such as nurses, teachers and weavers are assigned to girls, jobs such as planters, astronauts, postmen and cricket players are assigned to boys. The text books also promote the ideas such as women are beautiful, deceitful and easily get frightened while men are masculine, bold and intelligent. (qtd. in Jayawardena 91-92)

Norms constructed through a male-dominated power structure tame women in the domestic sphere as nurturers of the family, while men dominate the public sphere as breadwinners. These norms are propagated through diverse myths of religion and culture. The fear of social ostracisation impedes women's agency and makes them unable to identify, understand and position their desires. Societal categorisation of women as good and bad impels them to engage in a lifelong battle to conquer their inner desires. Fear of losing their "good woman privilege" (Ralston 6) impels most women to comply with societal norms and criticise those who question it. They feel obliged to prove themselves in conformity with societal expectations.

Sinhala culture naturalises and internalises these restrictions through justifications such as *sampradaya* (tradition) or *ape sanskrutiya* (our culture). The woman is chained in the code of restrictions, as her act of crossing the boundaries of sampradaya will lead to the loss of nambuva (honour). These restrictive gender attitudes and norms masqueraded as culture force her to internalise her status as a cultural bearer. The increasingly controlled rules of culture impose upon her the obligation to restrict her attitudes when she is placed away from the realm of self-esteem.

Sasanka Perera observes that Sinhala women become "a repository for cultural knowledge and practices formulated by men" (qtd. in Jayawardena 101). He further observes certain culturally appropriate patterns of behaviour for Sinhala women. These patterns of behaviour are:

> Firstly, what women should attempt to achieve is their 'correct place' in society, and not equal status with men. Secondly, demanding equal status is not acceptable in terms of Sinhala cultural values. It also seen as an impossibility because of women's physical and psychological differences. Many of the problems the Sinhala society currently face and the cultural deterioration that has occurred have been blamed on women because of their failure, particularly as mothers, to perform traditional duties due to their Westernisation. It is clear that these notions are connected with preserving and implementing the traditional and cultural values both in and outside the home. The general belief is that those traditions and values embedded in

> Sinhala culture for thousands of years have helped to shape the behaviour of Sinhala women. (qtd. in Jayawardena 101)

The characteristics of a *good woman* defined by Sinhala culture and tradition impede women from questioning their sampradaya and impel them to otherise those who transgress gender hierarchies. As patriarchal rules have a major role in the construction of Sri Lankan women's psyche, they oppress dissent by labelling them as *bad women*. The binaries of good and bad women that the patriarchal Sinhala order creates become a tool through which men tame female sexuality.

In the Sinhala context, the male member who holds a higher position in the family tames female sexuality by restricting their entry to the public space. The fear and respect towards the father figure stems from the idea of placing man in the role of a protector and provider. Women in the family conform to his authority due to their belief in tradition and culture that entrusts men with the ascendancy of punishing women who deviate from cultural norms. This ascendancy is instilled within boys from early childhood, either through family or through the school curriculum that reinforces gender differences.

Internalisation of these social roles and the resultant confusion is reflected in Nishan's reactions to his friend's comments about her sister Mala's bowling abilities, in *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*:

> As they walk to school, Nishan's friends will say, "Aday Machang. That sister of yours can bowl like a goddamn champion. We should have her on the school team, even Ariyasinghe doesn't have an arm like hers." And he

> will feel the stings of pride and resentment at this sister who exists for exactly two hours of each day. (24-25)

Societal categorisation of cricket as a game fit for boys puts him in a dilemma of whether to encourage or discourage his sister's bowling talents. While his internal self feels proud of his sister's achievement, his external self fears emasculation if he fails to make her surrender to the cultural norms. He fears whether his sister's entry to the *boy's zone* will be misread by society as his inability to tame her within her own space. The conflicting emotions that rule him (the fear of societal judgment and admiration for his sister's achievement) while he listens to the comment are visible in his reaction of *pride and resentment.*

Similar anxiety is evident in Beatrice Muriel's words as she responds to her neighbours' criticisms of Maya for climbing trees and stealing the ripest avocados. Beatrice, being an embodiment of patriarchal values, tries to regulate Maya's world and defends her daughter from the criticism of neighbours, as she is afraid of gossip that will diminish her daughter's value in the marriage market. Maya's double life as an independent girl and an oppressed other in the absence and presence of Betrice Muriel, respectively, unfolds the ways in which fear towards the disobedience to patriarchal norms is inculcated in girls. It can be seen in the lines given below:

> ---she is quiet in company, silent in her mother's presence. ---a daily transformation. At noon, Beatrice Muriel returns from the school room for lunch and overcome by the heavy afternoon air, withdraws into her bedroom for exactly two hours. In these hours, a different Mala awakens. (23-24)

Beatrice's sleep is the time Maya experiences the freedom to flout patriarchal norms. She finds herself in another world, doing whatever she likes, like climbing trees and other forbidden pleasures. The indoctrination of patriarchal values restricts women and leads them to solitude, voicelessness and loss of identities.

"My Story" in Meena Kandasamy's *the orders were to rape you* delineates culturally imposed qualities that a Sri Lankan Tamil woman should uphold. She states:

> We lived in a Tamil society where girls were expected to conform to the four quintessential feminine qualities of accham, madam, naanam, payirppu (fear, ignorance, modesty, shrinking delicacy): we had curfews from four in the afternoon and a chaperone wherever we went; no boyfriends, no girlfriends, no short skirts, no jeans. My parents added other layers of oppressive regimenting: no television, no playing loud games outside, no visit to cinema, no glossy weekly magazines. (18)

A woman's denial of these laws affects the nambuva (honour) of the family, which will gradually lead to social humiliation. The ways in which the Tamil patriarch controls female sexuality to protect his family's honour can be read from the conversation between Sylvia Sunetra and Mr Shivalingam in *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*. Mr Shivalingam, who lives as a tenant in the upper storey of Beatrice Muriel's house with his family, criticises and degrades Beatrice as a *bad other*. This identification is the result of his conscience that observes women who follow western music and western way of life as the *bad other* of *pure traditional woman*. Shivalingam, the Tamil patriarch can be observed as an epitome of patriarchal

values who ensures, nothing that disrupts masculine dominance is not even heard by *his women*. He requests Sylvia Sunetra:

> Once a week, the Shivalingam patriarch comes to grumble that ---Sylvia Sunetra's daughter is again playing her Western songs too loudly---"Please, lady, understand that this all-the-time singing of Elvis-the-Pelvis, as he is known, is not suitable music for the ears of my various unmarried daughters and small grandchildren. In our house, it is permitted for the females only to listen to classical music and sometimes the music from Tamil films. Perhaps, it is advisable that you, likewise restrain your good daughter in her musical tastes." (38)

Obligation to protect chastity connects women with the notion that they are responsible for their family's honour and prestige, whereby the image of an acceptable family is inserted into their psyche. In order to uphold the status of the family, women are forced to maintain *Karpu* (chastity). The Tamil community believes that *anaku* (the sacred power of females) will be protective only to those women who maintain Karpu. As Zuzana Hrdlickova states:

> The basic framework of Tamil gender stereotyping in Sri Lanka has its roots in the ancient Dravidian beliefs in the protective, yet dangerous power of aṇaṅku, which was possessed by all women as biological beings (and by certain men of particular social status, e.g. kings). Woman's aṇaṅku could be protective and helpful if her state was auspicious. It could be dangerous and destructive if she was in an inauspicious state as defined by various factors, such as the loss of husband. In order to control aṇaṅku, every Tamil woman

> had to adopt a certain mode of self-restraining behaviour, known as karpu (often translated as chastity). (75)

As the protection of virginity and femininity is considered the primary duty of a female in Sinhala and Tamil culture, the family with girl children lives in constant fear. This impels them to restrict female sexuality by avoiding chances that lead to rupturing the respectability of the female. The loss of respectability of the woman not only leads to the loss of family honour, but also obstructs her status as a *marriageable woman,* if she is unmarried. Her relationship with any man other than her husband or even gossip about it affects the respectability of a woman's family; she is always under the constant supervision of male family members. Cultural norms are internalised in such a way that a woman is blamed for her loss of virginity, irrespective of the circumstances of her victimisation.

As Cahill states, "the persistent fear of sexual assault shapes women's physicality, behaviour and sense of dignity. Consequently, it robs women of their economic and social freedom, thus heightening their vulnerability further." (qtd. in Mohan 275). In *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, the fear that Saraswathi's rape created constraints on her family's movement, which leads her mother to keep Saraswathi and Luxshmi away from school. As Rohini Mohan states, the fear of sexual attack produces a "continuing phase of pre-victimhood" (281). The Female tiger's family in *the orders were to rape you* lives in constant fear thinking of her younger sister's life. The tamil tigress regrets:

> When I ran away my family began to suffer. My little brother was taken for interrogation. Where did your sister hide her weapons? To my family, the

> bomb is not the weapon. Nor the beating. It is my youngest sister, fourteen years old. The fear that she will have to face the same fate as me when she grows up. (54)

This fear stems from the socio-cultural patterns that categorise women as good and bad. The desire to sustain good woman privilege is deeply rooted in every female, and the dissociation from it results in a conflict between the internal and external self. Characters Juliet and Gayathri in *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki,* can be read as women who are caught between their identities as activists who work for war widows and still trying hard to disentangle themselves from the boundaries of patriarchy. The patriarchal baggage within them manipulates their conscience to demean Manju Gopal, Peter's friend, labelling her "a casino girl" (*SAAD* 218), rather than addressing her as "a failed actress" (*SAAD* 199). As Manju sells sex to survive, society looks down on her with contempt. Even though Gayathri and Juliet speak for the rights of women in public, they have not completely liberated themselves from the normative categorisation of good and bad. This internalisation is evident in Juliet's sarcastic smile while Peter talks out the struggle that compelled her to be a casino girl. Peter says:

> 'My friend, Manju Gopal. She has joined as a project coordinator in James Packer's casino project. I think Packer has appointed her to target the Indian middle-class who frequent casinos.'
>
> 'Are you friendly with the casino groups?'

> ‘She is a failed actress. She only manages to survive with the help of these people.’
>
> ‘Oh, What an escape route!’ She said sarcastically and turned over to her side. (199)

Even though chastity is never a criterion for Gayathri and Juliet to determine a woman’s worth, the patriarchal baggage impels them to otherise and categorise women who sell sex for survival or material benefits as bad. When Peter advises Juliet to seek the help of Manju Gopal to find suitable dancers for the dance performance as part of the Commonwealth Summit, she responds, “I don’t want these casino girls with me” (218). Like Juliet, the baggage of patriarchy impels Gayathri Perera to address Manju as “that casino girl” (94). Her social identities as a war widow or a rape victim and her political identity as the leader of SSF never restrict her from othering Manju. Both these characters identify Manju as their binary opposite, justifying their loss of chastity as involuntary in contrast to Manju’s voluntary act of selling sex.

Chastity is a cardinal virtue in most South Asian societies, especially in India and Sri Lanka. A chaste woman is endowed with a respectable status and is considered as pure, while a promiscuous woman is labelled as unchaste. The dualism of purity and impurity is evident in Orthodox Hinduism and in popular belief of South Asia. Impurity in the South Asian context is related to substances that are “associated with childbirth, menstruation, intercourse and elimination” (Obeyesekere 218), while Gods are considered the apex of purity. As “pollution can contaminate purity and purity cannot change pollution” (qtd. in Obeyesekere 53),

impure beings are exorcised from the ‘pure world’. The categorisation of purity and impurity is inculcated in the minds of people through diverse myths, as it is narrated in the birth myth of Goddess Pattini. She, who is considered the embodiment of purity, takes her opatika birth (birth outside the normal body process) from a golden mango, as per Sinhala myths. As Obeyesekere states:

> Pattini is a pure being, and the closest female approximation of this idea is virgin. In Ceylon- among Buddhists and Hindus- everyone emphasizes this attribute: she is pure (pirisidu), with no impurity (kilutu). Though pure, she must be born in the human world as a female in order to redeem it --- ordinary birth according to South Asian conceptions is an impure process par excellence. Is the pure deity to be conceived in the ordinary fashion, through sexual intercourse, conception in the womb, and birth---all impure processes? (220)

Women engage in a lifelong battle to protect their virginity as socio-cultural reproducers of their clan. To be respectable equates to virginity, and preserving virginity is propelled by the need for acceptance, indicated by moral character and social value. The fear of physical, social and psychological harms that a failed virginity test induces forces women in Sri Lanka to live with a constant fear of losing it. In *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, Visaka’s pride while her husband looks at a splotch of blood in her bed sheet the next day after her honeymoon indicates how the splotch of blood becomes an indication of women’s honour in Sri Lankan society. Its description is given like this:

> …her husband looks carefully at the sheet to find the splotch of blood that indicates her honor, she turns her head away. In the morning before they leave strips it from the bed, folds it up carefully and puts it in their bag so that he can present it to his mother. She knows that at the homecoming in two weeks it will be discretely displayed in the proper way so that all the family will know that he has married a good girl, an unspoilt girl. Now she turns her head, settles it into the crook of her elbow, in her heart, twin shards of gratitude and resentment. (58)

The pleas of Juliet in *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki* to Peter reveal the lingering grip of conventional feminine norms, despite her nonconformist lifestyle. Even though she wages war against patriarchal oppression in her own way, her own patriarchal consciousness impels her to question Peter while he addresses their relationship as a *working arrangemen*t in his conversation with Manju:

> 'I felt jealous when you were talking to her. What did you mean by working arrangement?'
>
> 'What else could I say?'
>
> 'If you don't want to say, "she is my wife," at least you could say that we are living together.'
>
> 'I'm sorry, Juliet. I'll do that." (199)

These words hurt her as her conscience is manipulated by patriarchal norms that observe the state of a wife as contrary to the state of women who live together with a man in a *working arrangement*. While the former is considered with respect, the

latter is treated with contempt by society. Juliet's repressed urge for social acceptance emerges in the form of a wish.

An urge for social acceptance characterises every society that is rooted in *shame fear*. As per the definition of Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead, societies rooted in shame fear need *external sanction* for their acts (Obeyesekere 500). They conform because of their fear of societal disapproval. Different from shame cultures, sanctions in guilt cultures are internalised and can be resolved by confession and atonement. Eugene Nida, in his anthropological work, *Customs and Cultures*, defines shame culture, guilt culture and fear culture. He states:

> We have to reckon with three different types of reactions to transgressions of religiously sanctioned codes: fear, shame and guilt. It seems that for the most part people are afraid of being punished or of being caught in the act by some person or deity. Often there is a sense of shame, expressed as "I'd feel terrible if anyone saw me doing this." A sense of guilt expresses itself as an inner feeling of failure for not having lived up to what the society or deity expects, irrespective of whether one is caught or seen. (qtd. in Cozens 327)

While Western cultures consider shame in a negative light, South Asian societies value shame as a virtue. In Sri Lankan society, *Lajja Baya (shame fear) is considered* an essential characteristic of a virtuous human being and is "inculcated in all children as a proper ingredient of all good public behaviour" (qtd. in Abeyesekere 158). Obeyesekere defines Lajja Baya as "fear of ridicule or social disapproval" (504). In the Sinhala context, a person without Lajja Baya and the one who is insensitive to the reactions of others is considered an outcaste. Obeyesekere,

in his work *The Cult of Goddess Pattini*, delineates the relationship between Lajja Baya and honour. A respectable family is defined as one that is sensitive to social disapproval and appropriates its members to that of societal expectations to sustain family honour.

> …socialisation of shame in Sri Lanka affects the self in such a drastic manner as to leave the individual particularly vulnerable to loss of self esteem. Often he attempts to bridge this by over compensation, that is to glorify his sense of self worth…. Thus, shame is opposed to honor in Mediterranean cultures; in Sinhala culture honor in the Mediterrean sense is of little consequence- its equivalent is status and prestige. (504)

This fear of ridicule that a love marriage creates in Sinhala society angers Mala's mother, Beatrice, in *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* when she hears about Mala's relationship with Anuradha Munasinha, her college mate. Her concern of family honour is apparent while she shouts at Maya and enquires about the depth of her relationship with him. She asks "Mala what do you have to say about this boy? If you have done anything with him I will skin you alive" (51). Beatrice Muriel echoes the patriarchal ethos of Sinhala culture in which the respectability of the family is irreversibly linked with the chastity of women. She states:

> "A love marriage", she says. In her opinion, love marriages border on the indecent. They signify a breakdown of propriety, a giving in to the base instincts exhibited by the lower castes and foreigners. She believes marriages are far too important to be relegated to the randomness of chance meetings and hormonal longings. They must be conducted with precision, calculated

> by experts, negotiated by a vast network of relations who will verify the usual things: no insanity in the family, evidence of wealth and fertility, the presence of benevolent stars. (52)

Since a Sinhala woman without Lajja Baya is treated with contempt as it denotes loss of "modesty, purity, innocence, and self-effacement" (qtd. in Abeyasekera 157), Beatrice Muriel doubts whether society will misread her daughter's act of falling in love with a man as immoral. The aversion that society exhibits towards love marriage is visible in the conversation between Visaka's daughters, Lanka and Yasodhara. Their talk on the satirical remarks that women make on Mala and Anuradha's relationship details society's aversion towards love marriage. When Lanka shares her apprehensions regarding the satirical remarks, Yasodhara, "with the infinite wisdom of thirteen" (75), clarifies, "because she had a love marriage" (75). The fear of societal judgment and the fear of loss of honour put Beatrice in a dilemma of "whether to hold on to her philosophies and see Mala a spinster, or succumb to impropriety and see her daughter married without the benediction of astrologers or a proposal" (52).

As the honour of the family is dependent upon the virginity of a woman, a man tries to protect *his woman's* virginity and employs the tool of rape against his enemy to overpower them. A woman's virginity is glorified in every culture as the colonisation of the female body can lead to the contamination of the blood of a particular race. As Nira Yuval Davis states:

> A variety of cultural, legal and political discourses are used in constructing boundaries of nations…. However, these boundaries are constructed inorder

> to sort people into "us" and "them" and stretch from generation to generation. As the biological 'producers'of children/people, women are also, therefore, 'bearers of the collective' within these boundaries…the central importance of women's reproductive roles in ethnic and national discourses becomes apparent when one considers that, given the central role that the myth (or reality) of 'common origin' plays in the construction of most ethnic and national collectivities, one usually joins the collectivity by being born to it. (26)

Fear of the other is instilled into both men and women from an early age to restrict intercaste, interethnic marriages that might lead to the contamination of *pureblood.* In *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, Visaka's dilemma of either choosing her inner desire to marry her Tamil lover Ravan or to marry as per her mother's desires to protect her family honour stems from the idea of considering a woman as a cultural bearer of the nation. Fear of societal judgment and the resultant social alienation as being the cause for the contamination of blood restricts her from prioritising her inner desires. When Ravan asks her to marry him by convincing her that the initial social ostracisation will eventually be dissipated, she expresses her anxiety that the differences cannot be blown away. His reference to his aunt's marriage to a Sinhalese couldn't pacify her dilemmas. She thinks of the state of her family if she marries a Tamil man as:

> …the whole of her life, the weight of her entire life. That is what he wants---Such a madness he speaks. As if the differences between them could be blown away like dusty cobwebs. As if Sylvia Sunethra, broken-hearted

> dawn-beach-walker, could survive the idea of one of her daughters wedded to a Tamil. (44)

The same fear of contamination of blood and societal judgment obstructs Sylvia Sunetra from accepting the marriage of her son, Ananda, with a Burgher girl. The fear is injected into the minds of children from an early age to maintain 'purity' of the ethnic group.

The fear of contamination of blood originates from the insecurity and fear that each group faces. The fear exhorts them to identify an ethnic group that is different from them as the *bad other*. A xenophobic attitude was groomed in the collective conscience of the Sinhalese that villainised Tamils as invaders who plundered them and grabbed their opportunities. Xenophobia, as it is defined by Rosaura Sa´nchez, is a narrative that offers "a poor, short-sighted and ultimately false explanation for the economic and political upheavals" (126-27) that is "especially attractive to conservatives" (127). He further states:

> To operate best, a narrative of xenophobia cannot acknowledge that it is an illusion, that is, a false narrative, nor that it is xenophobic in contradictorily placing blame on those that are themselves suffering most from the economic meltdown. The function of the narrative of xenophobia is to frame the way particular groups are represented as threats to a particular way of life, at an economic and/or cultural level. (127)

The xenophobia that rules the conscience of the Shivalingam family and Sylvia Sunethra's family forces them to identify each other as *foreign territories* in *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*. While Mr Shivalingam demeans Sylvia Sunethra's

family as the ‘bad other’, Sylvia Sunethra degrades Shivalingam’s family as shameless thieves. The fear of xenophobia is visible in Sylvia Sunetra’s words while she addresses Tamils as stealers who invaded the land to steal their opportunities. She asks, ““...Stealing is Stealing! This is our land! Anything that grows on it belongs to us. They should keep their fingers off our things!” She calls to unmerciful gods, “Bloody Tamils everywhere. What all have I done in another life to deserve this invasion business?”” (39).

The *Lingha-Singha war* is a miniature version of the conflict between Sinhalese and Tamil groups in Sri Lanka. The “new suspicion” (27) generated within Sylvia Sunetra, Beatrice Muriel and Seeni Banda reflects societal attitudes of othering that elevate their culture as superior and degrade other cultures as inferior. Seeni Banda, the one-legged fisherman, in his conversation with Mala, Beatrice Muriel’s daughter, tries to ascertain Sinhala’s superiority over Tamils. Seeni Banda sows seeds of hatred towards Tamils in Mala by constructing a Sinhala identity in the minds of credulous children. He tells Mala:

> “We Sinhala are Aryans and the Tamils are Dravidians. This island is ours, given to us from the Buddha’s own hand long, long before they came.”
>
> Mala says, “ But Seeni Banda, our teacher says the Tamils have been here just as long as we have. She says that no one really knows who came first.”
>
> … “Tamil buggers, always crying that they are a minority, so small and helpless, but look! Just over our heads, hovering like a huge foot waiting to trample us, south India, full of Tamils. For the Sinhala, there is only this

> small land. If we let them, they will force us bit by bit into the sea. Swimming for our lives." (26)

The same racial segregation of Tamil ethnic identity can be traced in Sylvia Sunetra's words towards Visaka's daughter Yasodhara, when she came to her holding her hands with Shiva, Shivalingam's grandson. She also tries to sow the seeds of anti-Tamil feeling within children that leads to Yasodhara's realisation of Shiva's identity as the ethnic other. Sylvia Sunetra slaps Shiva in anger and questions him, "Are you teaching my granddaughter Tamil?" (62). Yasodhara identifies this incident as the first moment of realisation of their difference, which is "as wide as the ocean" (62). Shiva's internalisation of his identity as the oppressed other can be observed later in the novel, where he tells Yasodhara about the burning of the Tamil library. When he says, "your people burnt up our history" (76), it echoes a society that tries to engender a gulf between them and us.

Sylvia Sunetra's hatred towards Shiva resembles Sinhalese hatred towards Tamils. Even though her financial crisis forces her to rent the house to Tamils, she nurses cultural hatred against them. This reflects the deeply ingrained fear, mistrust and hatred that the Sinhalas and Tamils have for each other. She tries to break the friendship between Shiva and their granddaughters, Yasodhara and La, as she is afraid of the *Tamil invasion* into their space. She asks:

> "Boy, don't you have a place to go?" Huh? A family of your own? She asks. When Shiva, eyes averted, leaves, she puts her twisted hand on my head and says, "Don't get fond of that one." And I at that age, bold, say, "But Achi, why not? What has he done?"

She: “He hasn’t done anything. But they are Tamil. Not like us. Different.”

I: “How? Different?”

She: “Can’t you see child? They’re darker. They smell different. They just aren’t like us.” (73)

The xenophobia can be further observed in the incident where a gang of hooligans chases a Tamil boy to kill him in the name of ethnicity. While Anuradha tries to protect the life of the Tamil boy, he loses his own life as well as the life of his unborn child in the womb of Maya. When Anuradha negotiates for this Tamil boy’s life, one of the hooligans retorts, “These mother fuckers ruining this country. Think they can take over” (85).

Like the Tamil boy, Radhini, Nishan’s lover, is also otherised in the name of her ethnic identity as a Tamil. The Sinhala hooligans consider their act of othering Radhini as a Tamil girl and inflicting violence upon her in public as a way of asserting their unquestionable authority as Sinhalese and as men. They further intend to create fear within members of her ethnic group and to demean them to the status of low-power groups. The hatred towards her stems from the Tamil ethnic identity that is tied to her. Their response to their teacher, Miss Abeyrathna’s pleas to leave her, reasserts the reason for Radhini’s victimisation. Miss. Abeyrathna pleas:

…. “This girl has done nothing. Let her be.”

She’s Tamil. That’s enough. They take our land, our jobs. If we let them they will take the whole country.” (29)

Radhini's black complexion often leads people to identify her as Tamil. The ethnic stereotyping that is embedded in Sinhala belief comes out through the words of the teacher, who protects Radhini from the hooligans. The teacher's statement, Radhini, is also Sinhala, "only a little dark" (29), mirrors the popular Sinhala perception of Tamils as black Dravidians, hence inferior. This perception is the root cause for Beatrice Muriel and her family's shock when Mala was born black. They criticise Mala's skin colour, ""If only it had been the boy who was so dark! This black-black girl! We will never get her married." To which her mother joins, "A darkie granddaughter. Such a shade we have never had in our family. Must be from the father's side!"" (14).

The otherisation becomes a justification for members of an ethnic group to inflict violence upon their enemy. Inducing violence upon women of the enemy group acts as a strategy to destroy the identity of the enemy as that of a warrior and protector. Through raping her, he asserts his superiority over the enemy woman and reiterates his dominance over the enemy man, emasculating him. While protecting his own women and nation are considered his prime duties, raping the 'enemy woman' to emasculate her men and their nation, thereby, is considered a heroic act. As Anna. T. Hoguland states "Rape has traditionally been apprehended as a crime by and against men: a crime against property, where the woman is seen as 'the belonging'" (353). Rhonda Copelin, a legal scholar in her chapter "Gendered War Crimes: Reconceptualising Rape in Time of War," critiques the traditional framing of rape that historically viewed the crime not as an act of violence or a violation of

the woman herself, but rather as an affront to the honour of men or the community associated with the woman.

> Traditionally, rape has been condemned as a violation of a man's honour and exclusive right to sexual possession of his woman/property, and not because it is an assault of woman. Today, the mass rape in Bosnia is often referred to as the rape of 'the enemies' women' -the enemy in this formulation being the male combatant and the seemingly all-male nation or religious or ethnic group... The victim is male, humiliated and emasculated by having failed as both warrior and protector. (qtd. in Hoguland 353)

The Sinhalas, by identifying an enemy other in Tamils, control them by inflicting violence upon their women. "The Story of the Female Tiger in Her Own Words", in Meena Kandasamy's *the orders were to you*, a former LTTE combatant, narrates the ways in which she became a victim of her brother's engagements with the LTTE. She further delineates how her identity as a Tamil woman and an LTTE combatant's sister otherised her from her Sinhala counterpart. She observes how her Tamil identity becomes a justification for the soldier's act of inflicting violence upon her body. She states:

> Why me? Because I am a Tamil woman. But also because I was a fighter. And my family background didn't help either- my elder brother was a martyr. And in the last days of the war, a younger brother too. They saw rapes as revenge for my brothers who were martyred as Tigers. (54-55)

The psyche of revenge upon the enemy can be further observed in "The Story of the Militant's Wife in Her Own Words" where the militant's wife narrates

the incidents that led her to be a rape victim. She regrets her marriage to the combatant without her parents' consent, which culminated in her incessant suffering as a rape victim. Her struggle to disentangle herself from the stigma of a rape victim through emigration becomes futile as her overpowering guilt traps her conscience within the confines of a rape victim, even in the immigrant land. She states:

> It's because I married this child's father that I'm undergoing all humiliation today. That was how I sinned against my parents. I made them shed all these tears and today I'm being punished for my own sin, I'm shedding all these tears. They were against this marriage. But I married this militant and I'm bearing all the consequences of that decision. I had no connection to the liberation movement. But because of his connection I became a victim. (47-48)

Like the militant's wife, the character S in "The Story of Gathering the Stories" also regrets her choice of spouse. Her husband's choice of being a guerrilla led her to incessant sufferings that obstructed her from revealing her name for years. The fear of "being identified and incriminated" (38) still rules her psyche. The author narrates:

> S never joined the Tigers. Her husband was a guerrilla; she fell in love, married him. The price she had to pay for her choice of spouse was the torture she was made to face in the camps. She is initially reluctant to share her story, for fear of being identified and incriminated. (37-38)

Frances Harrison's *Still Counting The Dead: Survivor's of Sri Lanka's Hidden War* delves into the real-life account of a wife who was married to the

family of the Tamil Tigers not knowing about their link with the organisation. Her interrogation and rape in custody is a tool of the authorities to demean the status of her husband, who, being a part of the LTTE labels himself as the protector of the Tamil land and his woman. Like the wife, Saraswathi in *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* of Nayomi Munaweera, is victimised due to her brothers Krishna, Balram and Kumar's engagements with the LTTE. The army reached in white vans rapes her and shouts questions at her regarding her brothers' connection with the LTTE. "They encircle me, shouting questions that pound against my head. "What is your name? Where is your training camp? Where are your brothers? How long have you been a Tiger?"" (145).

Othering the victim, categorising her as an enemy or an enemy supporter, justifies soldiers' acts of rape and murder before the majority Sinhalese, as they too feel the need to oppress Tamils to recoup their lands. The army observes a Tamil woman's body as a site to inflict their anger for the crimes committed by the LTTE. To the Sinhala soldier, colonising her body becomes a symbol of gaining victory over the LTTE and Tamil nationalism. Ruth Siefert states the ways in which the destruction of the female body leads to the destruction of a nation or community.

> Sexual violence against women is likely to destroy a nation's culture. In times of war, the women are those who hold the families and the community together. Their physical and emotional destruction aims at destroying social and cultural stability. Moreover, the psychological effects mass rapes have on the community concerned may lead to the devaluation and dissolution of the entire group. The destruction of women and/or their integrity affects

> overall cultural cohesion. Because societies derive their specific form, their self-image and their definition of reality from cultural cohesion, its destruction is of outstanding importance (39).

Contextualising the Serbian war against Yugoslavia, Seifert discusses the strategies that the Serbian army implemented in order to destroy the social and cultural stability of the enemy group, i.e., the destruction of objects of cultural heritage, imprisonment or murder of intellectuals and initiation of the rape camps. He further elaborates on the method of choosing female intelligentsia as objects of rape as a strategy to disseminate fear among other women. Destroying the objects of cultural heritage to disrupt the social and cultural stability of the enemy Tamils can be observed in the burning of the Jaffna library, which is considered a repository of Tamil heritage and culture in Sri Lanka. *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* depicts an instance in which "Sinhala policemen and paramilitaries storm the old Tamil library, rip books from the shelves, set fire to the mountains of paper" (76). Munaweera depicts how even a child's psyche can be poisoned through this incident by narrating Shiva's identification of an enemy other in Yasodhara. When he hears the news that details the burning of the Jaffna library, he says, "your people burnt up our history" (76). The second strategy they used to oppress the Tamil community in Sri Lanka was to imprison intellectuals from the Tamil side. The third strategy the army implemented to disrupt the social and cultural stability of the Tamil population was to rape or murder women, especially Tamil intelligentsia. Nayomi Munaweera, in her interview with Marianne Lonsdale, a writer known for her personal essays, fiction, and literary interviews, discusses the strategy of rape that was implemented

during the Sri Lankan war and the silence and denial surrounding the topic. She states:

> Rape was used as a weapon of war, but in Sri Lanka almost no one acknowledges that rape even occurred during the war. Rape is viewed as the fault of the woman. It was important to me that I depict these girls as victims. Some of my writing is based on first-person interviews that I recorded of those who lived through the civil war, but I could not find anyone willing to discuss being raped. Denial on this topic is so strong in Sri Lanka as well as in the immigrant communities in the United States.

In *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, Nayomi Munaweera portrays Saraswathi and Parvathi as victims of rape, while their mothers, driven by fear of social ostracisation, attempt to suppress the issue. In *Sugandi Alias Andal Devenayaki*, Poomani, Juliet, Sugandhi, Arul, and Yamuna become victims of rape as they are politically active. For the Sinhala army, it is a strategy to suppress dissent, emasculate Tamil men and regulate the space of women. Conservative societies that regulate women's spaces believe in the ideal that "man should be trained for war and woman for the recreation of the warrior" (qtd. in Miller 48). This ideal is explicit in Lion's questions towards Poomani. He asks, "War is the dominion of men. Why do women need to interfere?" (83).

The image of cultural reproducer imposed upon her denies bodily autonomy, restricts her to an object of patriarchy and reinforces inequalities and perpetuates violence. The state of women as cultural reproducers of the nation is exploited by the enemy force to degrade the enemy soldier. Her body becomes a *ceremonial*

battlefield where the physical and psychological dominance is asserted by the enemy troop. As Susan Brownmiller observes, "...the body of a raped woman becomes a ceremonial battlefield, a parade ground for the victor's trooping of the colours. The act that is played out upon her is a message passed between men- vivid proof of victory for one and loss and defeat for the other" (38). Sugandhi, in *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*, narrates an instance from her life where her body became a ceremonial battlefield of the victorious Sri Lankan troops. She says:

> …I was captured by the Sri Lankan military in Mullaitivu after the last battle, along with Isaipriya. As I was beautiful, they wanted to present me to the VIPs. So they took me to Colombo in a military boat. I was repeatedly raped for three days in a secret room near Temple Trees. It was on my body that the high-ups in the government celebrated their victory over the freedom fighters. My cries were drowned in their roars of victory. (204-05)

More than a mechanism of oppression, rape and forced impregnation are tools that the army uses for degrading, silencing, traumatising and polluting the blood of the victim's community. Siobhan K Fisher differentiates the perpetrator's objectives behind rape and forced impregnation, thus. "Rape might be used to achieve forced impregnation, but forced impregnation can be perpetrated by means other than rape" (93). Categorising forced impregnation as genocide, Fisher points out how the seemingly counterintuitive impregnation and genocide are related to one another. Fisher considers forced impregnation as interference with the group's autonomous reproduction that can eventually destroy a group. This forced impregnation that leads to the psychological traumatisation of the woman makes her

unable to have normal sex or childbearing experiences with the members of their group. Fisher further states that a woman who bears the child of the aggressor will be considered unmarriageable in society. Rosemary Grey, in her article "The ICC's First 'Forced Pregnancy' Case in Historical Perspective," analyses forced impregnation as "reproductive violence" (905), a crime committed on the reproductive autonomy of the woman. Analysing law and practice of the past and present international criminal courts, she analyses the harms that it creates upon individual victims as distinct from the groups to which they belong. Categorising forced sterilisation, forced abortion, forced miscarriage and forced pregnancy as diverse forms of reproductive violence, Grey defines it as "a gross violation of personal dignity, a value of 'paramount importance'…to the whole body of international law" (907). As the feminist scholar Rhonda Copelon observes:

> …the particular goals and defining aspects of genocidal rape do not detract from, but rather elucidate, the nature of rape as a crime of gender as well as ethnicity. Women are targets not simply because they "belong to" the enemy, but precisely because they keep the civilian population functioning and are essential to its continuity. They are targets because they, too, are the enemy - because of their power and vulnerability as women, including their sexual and reproductive power. They are targets because of hatred of their power as women, and because of endemic objectification of women, and because rape embodies male domination and female subordination. (262-63)

Copelon observes that forced impregnation "has drawn condemnation only when it reflects an intent to harm the victimised race" (263). In the context of Serbian

forces' rape of the Bosnian woman, she states that more than an ethnic crime on the Bosnian community, forced impregnation "expresses the desire to mark the rape and rapist upon the woman's body and upon the woman's life" (263). In *the orders were to rape you*, the female tiger narrates how the enemy forces took away women's reproductive rights by forcefully impregnating them. In conversation with the writer, she reveals the answer that she received from the army officials regarding the initiation of rape as a method of colonising women's wombs. "Why these rapes? I asked them too, just as you ask me now. They wanted the wombs of our women to bear their children. That's what they said during the rapes" (52).

In *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*, Poomani, and Juliet are victims of reproductive violence. Lion's violence upon the reproductive autonomy of women can be read in his acts towards Poomani and Juliet. While Lion compels Poomani to give birth to a Sinhala baby, Juliet is impregnated and incarcerated till the termination of pregnancy is not possible. As P. A. Weitsman states:

> Forced impregnation is viewed as a weapon of war to erase the identity of the mother and to leave her with a child belonging to another cultural group. Because of the ascribed patriarchal identity, perpetrators, mothers and children all view the children as belonging to the other group, despite the mothers' identities and despite the children being raised in their mothers' ethnic or cultural group.' (qtd. in Elisa 391)

Elisa Van Ee and Rolf J. Kleber elucidate the vulnerable state of children born of rape who stand as "a living reminder of the rape and rapist" (389) for the victim mother. Citing scholars extensively on the psyche of children out of rape and their

relationship with their mothers, Elisa Van Ee and Rolph J. Kleber further explicate that “some rape survivors give a positive meaning to the child born of rape. They construct their baby as a life-saver, a gift from God or as a new family to replace the one that was taken” (391). In *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*, Juliet considers her baby as a life-saver, whose kidnapping and murder by Lion’s men makes her life a void. She shares her despair, which has distorted her life, in her conversation with Juliet. She grieves, “though I hated the Lion, I loved my son” (197). When Juliet becomes a victim of reproductive violence through forceful impregnation, Arul and Yamuna are raped by the army officers with torture pens and rape robots that might disrupt their reproductive ability.

As Copelon states, when a woman is attacked to degrade the enemy, “she is also being attacked on the basis of gender, as man's property, lacking in separate identity, dehumanised and subservient. In this common scenario, women are the target of abuse at the same time as their subjectivity is completely denied” (263). “Depicting rape and sexual violence as an attack on a woman’s honour, rather than an attack on her body” (Alexandra 18) reiterates the cultural construction of her body as a property of *her man*. As Hoglund states:

> The rape becomes a symbolic expression of humiliation of the male opponents, telling them they have failed to protect ’their’ women. They are thereby emasculated, wounded in their masculinity and marked as incompetent males. To the women rape gives the message that they are weak, threatened by some men and therefore in need of protection by other, ’their own’, ’good’ men. This means, that from a constructivist gender

> perspective, rape in war is but one way of constituting superior masculinity for the perpetrator. At the same time it is the constitution of subordinated femininity for the victim and deprived masculinity for the male. (354-55)

Societal expectations force men to perform the duty as the custodian and protector of their women's bodies. As any invasion of the body of his woman reminds him of his failure, the man alienates the woman, criticising her lost honour as her fault. A raped woman becomes a living reminder of the lost honour of her man, her family and her nation. Stigma related to rape and the social ostracisation that continues distorts her normal life as a member of a community. Carlo Koos and Summer Lindsey, citing scholars extensively on stigma states:

> Stigma can stem from many sources such as former combatant status, forced displacement, employment, membership in ethnic minority groups, as well as sexual violence. Stigma associated with sexual violence is experienced by both male and female victims. Stigma can also extend beyond the victimized individual him or herself .When sexual violence is perpetrated against a man's wife or daughter, he may be stigmatized because of his failure to protect his family members--- Community members may also ostracize a rape victim's husband (and family) for failing to reject his wife. Through such dynamics, stigma extends beyond victimized individuals, creating conditions that can divide and weaken communities. (1040-41)

In *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*, society alienates Juliet for her lost honour as a rape victim. Her identity as a Sinhala woman never saves her from the hands of the Lion. He rapes Juliet for her involvement in the political movements

that raised a voice for the protection of women. Societal estrangement becomes a root cause of her helplessness, impelling her to seek help from the perpetrator itself, which further provides agency for the Lion over the victim. Juliet narrates her story of victimisation and the resultant social estrangement in her email to Peter. She writes:

> When I reached home, my parents behaved as if they didn't know me at all. They said they no longer had a daughter and asked me to leave. Even my mother, who had begged my abductors for mercy, had changed. My activist friends refused to help me because they were scared. After my experience, many of them gave up their activism. (88)

The stigma of rape otherises Juliet from the society that she was once a part of. As it is a crime against the honour of the family, the woman is ostracised in society. As stated in *The Broken Palmyrah*, "the loss of virginity in a young girl, even if against her will, meant that she could not aspire marriage in our society and, if already married, there is a good chance that she will be abandoned" (Hoole et al.; Ch.4, sec.9). Juliet, abandoned by her family and her husband leads an alienated life with another woman, who is also a victim of Lion's rape with her son in Lion's kindness.

Rape and the resultant social ostracisation take the life of Saraswathi's friend Parvathi in *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*. Parvathi is alienated from society due to her status as a rape victim, even though it is not her fault. The extreme societal estrangement that she faces as a victim can be read from the act of Saraswathi's mother, who thwarts her daughters from talking to Parvathi. Societal treatment of

the rape victim as a *spoilt* object and the attitude of the society towards the *spoilt* object obstruct the slightest chance of assimilation for the victim. The physical pain of sexual victimisation is doubled due to the mental torment that arises out of stigma and social ostracisation. The gossip after the victimisation regarding the alleged rape and the loss of virginity leads to the loss of the victim's and her family's honour. Saraswathi, who doesn't even know the meaning of *spoilt*, narrates Paravathi's rape and its aftermath. She realises the meaning of the word *spoilt* as something terrible, due to the societal ostracisation her friend Parvathi faced. She states:

> I don't know what 'spoilt' means exactly, but it must be something terrible. It happened to my friend Parvathi. She was coming from school when a soldier grabbed her, dragged her into the chili fields and spoilt her. People stopped talking to her as soon as it happened, but they never stopped talking about her. (136)

The fear that this *terrible* incident and the gossip regarding Parvathi's victimisation necessitates Saraswathi to be more cautious of her virginity. Like Parvathi, Saraswathi also becomes an object of gossip after her victimisation of rape. The depiction of fear-stricken villagers who welcome her "with wide staring eyes" (147) post-rape reveals the attitude of society that denigrates rape victims as spoilt objects. This fear of societal judgment transforms Balakumar from a proud father who boasts about his girl Saraswathi's achievements in studies to a father who "wears silence like a cloth pulled over his head" (148). The guilt of a failed protector dominates his psyche, terrifying him to look into the eyes of Saraswathi, Luxshmi, and their Amma. His status as a failed protector within the family and society leads

him to identify his position as an emasculated other. Fear of the prospective societal blaming for his inability to protect his family's honour burdens him with guilt and traumatises him. This trauma of failure impels him to reject the existence of Saraswathi by avoiding her. Saraswathi narrates:

> From the moment I staggered into the house, lame, bleeding, wild-eyed, he has not talked to me. He has avoided my eyes and also those of Luxshmi and Amma. His gaze skims over us all as if we are not in front of him. In the mornings, he limps from the house although we know there is nowhere for him to go. When he returns at night to this house of grieving women, we hear the lagging reluctance in his step. (148)

The fear of societal judgment necessitates him to transform from a person who narrates stories to his children at night to a father who turns his back on Saraswathi in bed.

The dilemma of social acceptance of her raped daughter and the consequences that this incident will create upon the life of her younger daughter traumatises her mother. Angie C. Kennedy and Kristen A. Prock state the negative effects of general stigma upon individual survivors in the disclosure of the incident. They state, “This broader, more general stigma conveyed to the survivor may be compounded by specific victim-blaming responses from family members, friends, partners, and/or service providers upon disclosure” (2). This fear of societal stigmatisation impels her mother to hide her daughter’s rape and present it as a fever in front of neighbours and Saraswathi’s teacher. Her mother’s external self, which is afraid of societal judgment and the loss of family honour, supersedes the internal

self that forces her to protect her raped daughter. Mother advises Saraswathi, "Think, my girl. What will you do here? What man will take what the soldier have spoilt? Who will give their son for your sister? If you don't go, you will ruin us all" (152).

As a woman "who gains a reputation for shameless behaviour jeopardises her chances of good marriage as well as her family's chances for upward economic and social mobility" (Abeyasekara), she becomes a burden for her family. Her pure identity is questioned when there is an alleged sexual attack on her that will gradually diminish her value in the marriage market. As Saraswathi states in *Island of a Thousand Mirrors,* "If you are a girl, there is always the chance that the soldiers will spoil you or that people will say that they did" (136). The female Tiger in Meena Kandasamy's *the orders were to rape you* narrates the experiences of thousands of alleged rape victims. She powerfully articulates her indignation towards the societal attitude of looking down on any woman who is called by the army for questioning as a rape victim. This alleged rape and the concomitant social shaming distort her identity and hinder the possibilities of a normal life for her. She states:

> It is a shame. Women keep it hidden. It is a society where your story cannot cross your doorstep. Even if we say that the army called us for questioning, the people would say, 'If the army calls you, would they let you be? Would it just be questions? They would have tested and tasted every part of you.'
>
> The immediate implication was that we had slept with the army. This happened with thousands of women. (53-54)

The rumours of rape after Saraswathi's victimisation of rape make it impossible for her parents to sustain her within her family, in *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*. Her family's loss of honour, which is fuelled by her father's emasculated feeling, her mother's helplessness and social blaming, burdened her with the responsibility of regaining a good woman status in society. As S narrates in *the orders were to rape you*, the burden of regaining her and her family's honour is imposed upon the victim as society views her as a woman with "compromised morals" (40) even after years of victimisation. She states:

> …Because she is a woman who has suffered sexual violence, she is seen as someone with compromised morals (being with more than one man is a judgement that condemns a woman to shame in the Tamil moral universe) and any man lending her a helping hand is construed as receiving sexual favours. Such gossip destroyed S. Raped women who are not broken down by the experience are seen as continuing to exercise their sexual autonomy: they are condemned by a spectre of fear that they will wreck families. (39-40)

Women are supposed to "play traditional gender roles and to restrict their behaviors accordingly," (Wakelin and Long 477); otherwise, they receive blame from society. People assign blame to the rape victims, arguing that the attitudes of the raped, her manners and the way she dressed provoked the rapists to act violently towards her, and that the victim herself enjoyed the event to an extent (Wakelin and Long 477). The socio-political nature of the perpetrator's voice denies women the victimised state where his judgements are asserted as acceptable. The voice of the

assailant shrinks the victim's voice, where her preferences are judged on his interest. These assertions absolutely erase her state not only as a victim but also as a living human being, where she is reduced to his sexual target. These slut shaming attitudes of the perpetrator add insult to injury for the rape victim, as a sexually promiscuous woman is treated with contempt. As Joyce J Endendijk et al. observe, "society expects men to be sexually agentic, that is, dominant, powerful, and assertive, and rewards men for such behaviors. In contrast, society expects women to be sexually communal, that is, submissive, passive, and reactive in sexual relationships, and accordingly rewards women for such behaviors" (2). Her violation of gender roles through dominating in a sexual relationship will elicit a negative evaluation of her character as sexually promiscuous. Sugandhi, in *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki* is reduced to an object of pleasure by the army officials. She is not even given the human consideration of being a rape victim when the army man accuses her of enjoying rape. He says. "Sir, that wasn't rape. She was really enjoying those moments" (208). She is further accused of seducing the main security guard to escape from the custody of the army. Sinhala soldiers' act of burning her face with acid for her accused crime of seducing the main security guard reiterates the ways in which Sugandhi is denied even the status of a victim.

The character S in "The Story of Gathering the Stories" of Meena Kandasamy's *the orders were to rape you* is revictimised as her label of a rape victim haunts her throughout her life in the forms of "derision, suspicion and blame" (40). As Carlo Koos and Summer Lindsey states "Even when it is very difficult for society members to blame a woman's dress or habits for her victimisation,

community members may still ostracise a woman who has been raped because of beliefs that the victim is to blame for violating community norms of sexual fidelity" (1041). These victim-blaming attitudes of degrading the victim as a whore result in *internalised stigma.* Citing scholars extensively on the creation of external stigma that results in a victim's internalised stigma, Angie C Kennedy and Kristen A Prock state:

> …a survivor of abuse or assault may learn through the broader societal context, via media representations, dominant narratives, stereotypes, and so on, that certain behaviors are considered to be morally and socially unacceptable, and certain statuses—incest victim, rape victim, and abused woman—are stigmatized and blameworthy--- Shame is the key affective component of stigmatization following abuse or assault; it is defined as a moral emotional response, in which the survivor feels deeply unworthy, defective, and debased in comparison to others. (2)

Poomani in *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki* feels unworthy when the Lion labels her as Pattavesi. The notion of unworthiness that developed within her when she was called Pattavesi sprouts from her prior knowledge or sense that connects Pattavesi to a spoilt being. In a culture where sexual promiscuity is equated with immorality, a woman who engages in sexual interaction with a man outside the conjugal ties, with or without her consent, is named as a *prostitute* and treated with contempt. The linguistic straightjackets to which the male-centred language and culture confine a prostitute degrade and traumatise a woman who is called so. Julia P Stanley, in her article "The Prostitute: Paradigmatic Woman", delineates how men

maintain their superiority and masculinity through a *screen of language* and place women in their positions. She further illustrates how the fear of being called a prostitute that bludgeons women into submission forces females to accept patriarchal social rules, as it is a “more tolerable, less despicable form of slavery” (3).

Straitjacketing a woman as a prostitute deteriorates the perceived value of a woman before society, and her own self-worth as women perceive and define themselves through the lens of male-centred social norms. Using restrictive terms like prostitute, men justify their act of rape as women who belong to the category of prostitutes are stereotyped as women who are sexually promiscuous. But the underlying metaphors of the word prostitute traumatise and silence her. She, who is irritated by Lion's labelling of her as Pattavesi at first, accepts her identity as a whore who sells her body in exchange for her life later. Instead of blaming her perpetrator, she blames herself. As Sandra Lee Bartky observes:

> To be psychologically oppressed is to be weighed down in your mind; it is to have a harsh dominion exercised over your self-esteem. The psychologically oppressed become their own oppressors; they come to exercise harsh dominion over their own self-esteem. Differently put, psychological oppression can be regarded as the "internalization of intimations of inferiority”. Like economic oppression, psychological oppression is institutionalized and systematic; it serves to make the work of domination easier by breaking the spirit of the dominated and by rendering them incapable of understanding the nature of those agencies responsible for their

> subjugation. This allows those who benefit from the established order of things to maintain their ascendancy with more appearance of legitimacy and with less recourse to overt acts of violence than they might otherwise require. (22-23)

Through the act of blaming herself, she convinces herself of her own responsibility for the rape she has undergone. Here, Poomani becomes her own oppressor. She regrets, "Though the term 'Pattavesi' irritated her, she didn't say anything. She felt that it applied to her. She wasn't a virgin anyway. But only a woman who sold her body could be called a whore. Well, from today she was a whore, exchanging her body in return for her life" (84).

Like Poomani, the militant's wife in *the orders were to rape you* also becomes a victim of societal stigma. She states, "I was under the impression that I would die" (45). This impression sprouts from her prior knowledge, which she attained from society, that a rape victim is an unworthy being and should be ashamed. This internalised stigma creates anticipatory stigma within her. As Angie C. Kennedy and Kristen A. Prock state, "Internalized stigma is a composite concept that includes aspects of self-blame, shame, and anticipatory stigma. Anticipatory stigma is a belief by the survivor that, should she reveal the abuse or assault to others, she will be stigmatized as blameworthy and lesser" (2). This anticipatory stigma prevents her from speaking about her victimisation. In addition to the anticipatory stigma that sprouts within the militant's wife, *agent regret* obstructs her from revealing the rape instance. Nancy E Snow states that agent regret elucidates

the victim's experience of self-blame. She distinguishes agent regret from regret by three key features as:

> First, unlike regret, a person can feel agent-regret only towards her own past actions or actions in which she regards herself as participating…. The second feature of agent-regret is its subject-matter, which is formed by first-personal conceptions of how the agent might have acted otherwise…. Finally, agent-regret is characterized by a specific kind of expression: the desire to give reparation or restitution to someone who was harmed by the agent's act. In some cases, no reparation is possible. Then, the agent is left with the desire to make recompense and the painful awareness that amends are impossible. (379)

The militant's wife's regret stems from her past action and from her awareness of her inability to recoup her identity as a rape victim. She married the militant, rejecting her parents' disapproval of the marriage. This marriage with the militant and his connection with the liberation struggle made her a victim of army rape. Her regret for her past decision to marry him is evident when she considers that she has sinned against her parents by marrying him despite their disapproval. She further states "I made them shed all these tears and today I'm being punished for my own sin" (47). There is an intense desire within her to recompense her identity for her son and mother. She says, "I don't want this child to carry the shame" (47). Her regret stems from the awareness that no reparation is possible for her identity as a rape victim. This attitude of agent regret can also be observed in the Tamil tigress who narrates her story of victimisation in "The Story of the Female Tiger in Her

Own Words." She, who became a victim of rape by the army, regrets her family's suffering due to her victimhood. Her regret is rooted in her inability to recoup her identity as a good woman in society so that her family's suffering will come to an end. She says, "Because of what happened with me, my family is ill-treated" (53).

Her regret, along with the fear of negative reactions and her lost faith in justice, consequently leads to her silence. The character S in "The Story of Gathering Stories" of *the orders were to rape you*, delineates the dilemma of rape victims, where they have nothing to hold on to other than silence. "'Justice' is a word women like her have learned to disbelieve; 'retribution' is another" (38). Foregrounding the experiences of women victims of rape, Kishali Pinto Jayawardena and Kirsty Anantharajah criticise the judicial system of Sri Lanka that failed to address the torments of those raped. They state:

> …This failure of the legal order must be contexualised against a long and tortuous history of insensitivity of the law towards sexual violence, marked by a few legal victories that had little effect on the overall culture of state impunity. In general, the majority of sexual torture cases by the military have traditionally been treated in a highly cavalier manner by the state agencies…. Approximately one hundred soldiers were present at the trial where one victim identified her attackers; their presence appeared to have been aimed at intimidating and threatening the victim-witness. The intimidation continued outside the court: the victim faced ongoing harassment, insults, intimidation and threats of physical harm from both the police and military." (47-48)

The threat of murder intimidates Juliet in *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*, and the character militant's wife in "The Story of the Militant's Wife in Her Own Words" in Meena Kandasamy's *the orders were to you* from speaking against their perpetrators. The fear of murder that controls Juliet's psyche even after her perpetrator, Lion's, death is evident in her mail to Peter. She writes, "Though the lion is dead, his spirit still guards me" (184). The fear psychosis that rules the victim's psyche shrinks women's spaces into their homes, affecting their future employment opportunities, economic independence and future agency (Jayawardena and Anantharaja 119) and silences them.

The State exploits and adopts the patriarchal notion of female purity that is hitherto engraved on the collective psyche of society to suit the purpose of sustaining the hegemonic power over its citizens. The gendered nationalistic narratives that restrain women's roles as socio-cultural-biological reproducers of the nation, victimise and estrange those women who slightly deviate from this lineage, either by external force like rape or by internal stimuli, such as the desire to practice sexual and reproductive autonomy. These gendered narratives that are consciously constructed and gradually normalised lead to the social alienation of the rape victim that believes in rape myths that justify the acts of the perpetrator through victim-blaming. The resultant self-denial and self-doubt of the victim accentuate her trauma. Her lack of faith in the judicial system and the stigma that she carries as a rape victim silences and traumatises her. The revictimisation in the form of victim blaming of the rape survivor produces within her a sense of distrust in the legal system and promotes a disbelief in a just world.

Chapter IV

In No Man's Land: About Coping and Healing

The patriarchal myth of female purity that controls women's sexuality degrades and otherises those women who slightly deviate from the traditional definitions of *pure woman*. A rape victim conditioned by societal expectations positions herself within that impure status where she is entangled in individual desire and social demand. The society becomes her second perpetrator, where she is placed in a doubly marginalised state associated with her victimhood. The raped bodies that occupy a liminal space between life and death are rendered intangible, disposable and least important, considering them as *abjects*. The internalisation of abject position in the society compels the rape victims to endure a life of double victimisation, where "the rape victim suffers twice: first by being raped and second by being condemned by a patriarchal community" (Diken and Lausten 113). As social reactions to rape victimisation add insult upon injury to the victim, she adopts diverse coping mechanisms after rape as an escape from the alienation that she faces due to her victim status. It spans from unhealthy coping mechanisms that provide short-term relief to healthy coping mechanisms that provide long-term relief to the victim. As per the observations of Malkah T Notman and Carol C Nadelson, the coping mechanisms of the victim vary depending on "her age, life situation, the circumstances of the rape, her specific personality style, and the responses of those from whom she seeks support" (409). Her intrapsychic experiences of guilt and self-doubt are catalysed in a negative way if these characteristics are not favourable enough to elevate her from the rape trauma syndrome. Victim blaming post-rape in

societies that consider purity as the apex of femininity, impels the victim to find self-coping mechanisms to protect her honour, along with her family's honour. As rape can be viewed as “a crisis situation in which a traumatic external event breaks the balance between internal ego adaptation and the environment” (Notman and Nadelson 409), the victim struggles to create an equilibrium with the environment in which she lives as a way of adjusting to society. She considers this equilibrium that she maintains through adjustments as a way of recouping her honour.

As the aftermath of the loss of purity is long-lasting, the purity myth is exploited as a tactic to destroy the enemy population. In the Sri Lankan context, the two ethnic groups, Tamil and Sinhala, who believe in the myth of the Goddess Pattini, consider the loss of purity as a sin. In a patriarchal society like Sri Lanka, a raped body is marginalised to a liminal space, “a shaded, interstitial space that defies the dualism between life and death” (Oku 13-14). Due to the taboos surrounding rape, a victim of rape is subjected to societal condemnation and character assassination following the violent attack on her body by the rapist. The physical and mental trauma that she undergoes traps her in a space of “alive dead,” forcing her to lead a life as a “living corpse” (Oku 14). In this space, though she remains physically alive, her treatment as a social outcast, equivalent to a corpse, further intensifies her trauma. This suffering of the rape victim can be observed in the interaction between The Female Tiger and the author Meena Kandasamy in the chapter “The Story of the Female Tiger in Her Own Words” of *the orders were to rape you* where the character describes the condition of raped women as inferior to a corpse. She states, “A corpse is superior, to them, to a raped women like me” (61).

The guilt, self-contempt and the fear of social stigmatisation necessitate for raped women the need for alternative coping mechanisms. Though the trauma that she undergoes after rape forces her to find an immediate coping mechanism, those coping mechanisms never guarantee an absolute survival from the scar. The coping mechanisms offer before her the possibilities of escape, even though the results are ephemeral. The demand and need for time led her to the assumption that an escape from the stigma can only be attained through these coping mechanisms.

The characters analysed in the selected works respond to their post-rape situations in diverse ways. Some characters find refuge in silence, migration and suicide as they assume that these coping mechanisms will give them an immediate solution. Their decision to choose these three as coping mechanisms is dependent upon their self-assumption that these will liberate them from the label of a *polluted woman*. The revenge within them against the perpetrator and contempt towards their own polluted body are exploited by the counter groups. The shame and contempt of the victim are strategically manipulated by the countergroup, whereby their body is used for their political motives. Their belief in the purity myth and the forged narratives of the counter groups lead them to assume that the status of a suicide bomber will redeem her status to a hero from the polluted other. They identify diverse methods of coping as they are entangled by victimhood, and their journey of survival is a struggle to wipe out their state of being the polluted other. But some characters who are victims of rape grow beyond the ties of victimhood and elevate themselves to the state of saviours.

Chapter IV "In No Man's Land: About Coping and Healing" is an attempt to analyse post-rape responses of the characters in the works *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*, *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, *the orders were to rape you*, under study. The characters in these works find diverse coping mechanisms through which they try to recoup their honour. The self-assumed coping mechanisms like silence, suicide and migration fail to give her relief. The assumption that being a suicide bomber is the only way to revolt against her avenger comes out of her belief in patriarchal and LTTE narratives. The victim's vulnerability is exploited by the counter groups for their political motives, and in the guise of avenging, they are being victimised again. Some characters place their protest through murdering the agent of violence or through transforming themselves into a saviour of victimised women.

The guilt within the victim arises out of the myth of purity, catalysed by victim blaming, impels her to find refuge under the veil of silence. In contrast to the definitions of silence and voice that represent victimisation and authority respectively, recent studies have come forth with multi-dimensional definitions of silence: (1) Silence as cultural censorship, (2) Silence as resistance, and (3) Silence as a coping mechanism. Introducing the concept of silence as cultural censorship, Robin E Sheriff, in his article "Exposing Silence as Cultural Censorship: A Brazilian Case", differentiates cultural censorship from state-sponsored censorship. He argues that ". . . there may be meaningful, even profound, psychological motivations underlying this silence, it is socially shared; the rules for its observance are culturally codified" (114). He further states that cultural censorship is practised

without explicit coercion or enforcement. The silence of rape victims and their families can be considered as the result of cultural censorship, where the fear of degrading themselves to an abject state obstructs them from verbalising the atrocities that they have undergone. As Susan Brownmiller suggests "rape is a crime not only of sexual violence, but of silences: the publicity and formal categories surrounding rape make the communication and reporting of rape incompatible with societal definitions of femininity as pristine and honourable" (qtd. in Ferguson 53). Contrary to this definition, feminist scholars have defined silence as "a form of resistance to the dominant discourses" (Mahoney 604). Contextualising the *enforced silence* and *performatory silence* of the Kashmiri Valley, the article "'Silence' as a Language of Power and Resistance in Kashmir" states silence as a tactic of withdrawal and avoidance from institutions that require participation.

> "Silence" speaks of an "action"; to "not act". Does silence really speak? Silence can be understood both as a withdrawal as well as avoidance. While communication through language as a human endeavor creates a structure of human relationships, silence is seen as renouncing ties with fellow citizens. It was the feminist critical theory which transformed the meaning of silence into the act of silencing; an imposition of silence through patriarchal cultural norms by denying agency to women. Such discourse, where both "silence" and "silencing" seem unnatural, created a compass to understand silence not only as a *"lack of speech imposed on the powerless"*, but also as a "non-participatory tactic" to resist the enforced silence. If "silencing" can function as a "participatory act of imposition", "silence" can also function as a "non-

> participatory act of resistance"- a demand without necessarily opposing – to any institution that requires participation. (Khanday)

The article further discusses silence as a "non-participatory democratic resistance" that annoys and becomes a threat to institutions, which "regulate behaviour with Participation" (Khanday).

Silence can also be a survival mechanism to dissociate from violent events that trigger traumatic memory within the victim. As Kate Rose states in her article "Sexual Violence, Traumatic Memory, and Speculative Fiction as Action", there are diverse ways in which the victim dissociates from the emotional trauma that she has undergone: avoidance, numbing or permanent dissociation or complete emotional shut down if the trauma is constant. French Psychiatrist Muriel Salmona calls these dissociative behaviours through which the victim tries to save himself from *psychic death* as *emotional anaesthesia.*

> When avoidance behaviors no longer suffice or are not a possibility, the only solution left for the victim to control her traumatic memory is to use the dissociative behaviours whose efficiency she empirically discovered during the violence. To stop the intolerable state of suffering and distress or avoid at all cost that it recurs, the victim seeks out the emotional anesthesia that will protect and relieve her. (qtd. in Rose 7)

Marlen Miranda, in her article "Silencing, a Tool of Suppression and Survival", delineates the need for "reconceptualising silence- as a form of trauma, healing and survival" (5). Wulf Kansteiner, in his article "Genealogy of a Category Mistake: A

Critical Intellectual History of the Cultural Trauma Metaphor", describes two reasons for the self-silencing of the rape victim: (1) the victim feels that silence can only convey the inexplicability of their experience, and (2) they are afraid that their experiences will be distorted through words. He further states that their silence is powerful as it is a portrayal of changes in their character post-violence and a depiction of their irreparable trauma. In this context, Kansteiner defines self-silencing as "a vehicle of self expression and a form of self-advocacy" (qtd. in Miranda 4).

During violence, silencing through sexual violence becomes an act of the perpetrator, while self-silencing becomes a survival mechanism of the victim. As Chulani Kodikara and Sarala Emmanuel state in their article "Global Discourses and Local Realities: Armed Conflict and the Pursuit of Justice," there are wide reasons for self-silencing that became a survival mechanism for rape victims in Sri Lanka. The fear of reprisal by the perpetrators impels the victim from verbalising the trauma of violence, often by finding safety within the cocoon of silence. As the taboos surrounding rape remain pervasive, the identity of *a spoilt object* that she will be forced to bear throughout her life makes the trauma of violence remain unrepresented. Furthermore, impunity and the less chances of investigation lead to underreporting of the *unspeakable crimes.* Quoting Sumathy Sivamohan, Urvashi Butalia, Luxmi Murthy and Navsharan Singh in "Introduction" of the work *The Search for Justice: The Sri Lankan Papers*, Kishali Pinto Jayawardena and Jeannine Guthrie state the reverse consequences of silence.

> Impunity in Sri Lanka is both a failure of the formal justice process and a product of individual, community and societal conditions, and choices that victims and families make that promote silence- what Sivamohan Sumathy calls the 'untelling of the act; that too becomes a truth, a choice that the victim and the family make; a truth that shuts out other truths of violation, including the violations committed by society before and after the public act of rape. (xxiii)

Describing the diverse manifestations of silence, Cheryl Glenn, in his book *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*, defines silence as the choice of a human being, other than a meaningless void. She calls this choice of humanbeing to be silent as "the deliberately unspoken" (qtd. in Parpart 320). Contexualising the state of rape victims during the Balkan conflict who adopted the strategy of self-silencing, Jane Parpart states:

> …silence can provide room for agency in the face of threats as it enables 'victims' to choose between acceptable speech and the unsayable. This choice can be life saving…. Silence often helped people to survive and resist 'the oppressive discourses and apparatuses structuring their lives. Thus silence can be a crucial survival strategy, a source of comfort, and an effective mechanism for dealing with hostile and dangerous environments. Yet silence can be more than simply coping; it can create a space for reflection, for healing and for rethinking one's position, values and identity. As an informant recalled, "There is a silence in which you have no voice, but there is also a silence in which you have chosen not to express your voice….

> That is a nice place…it's a place of freedom, ultimate and total freedom-so much that it is a much more spacious voice." (320)

The character S in Meena Kandasamy's *the orders were to rape you* is a woman who asserts her agency through the "untelling of the act" (Sivamohan 382). The "deliberately unspoken act" (qtd. in Parpart 320) that she practices enables her to identify "her past, her trauma" as her own (38). From a rape victim who practices self- silencing as a survival strategy, she transforms to a woman who asserts her agency through silence. Her "fear of being identified and incriminated" (38) once she verbalises the violence is overpowered by the realisation that "she is not obliged to share anything" (38). Being a documentary maker, the author needs the voice of S to fulfil her task of making a documentary about women victims of sexual violence during war. But the identity of a fellow woman, who tries to trigger S's traumatic memories, induces guilt within her. The conflict between a documentary maker and a fellow woman is vivid in the words of the author. She says, "I am torn as I try to make her speak. Why should one woman ask another to remember, recollect and narrate the very things she barely wants to forget?" (38). Her silence turns out to be resistance and protest, while she starts responding to the questions regarding her silence for a couple of days, in the midst of making arrangements for the film. The author states, "I am thrown into disbelief. I had read her as a victim, as someone who suffered, but underlying all her desperation was a courage that cannot be contained in the words I know" (41). The power shift of S from a passive, traumatic victim of sexual violence to a survivor who asserts her agency through silence is

vivid in her disinterested narration of the atrocities that she faced in her life. The author states:

> S's lack of interest, almost aversion to talking about the war, underlined the magnitude of what she must have endured. She did not choose or anticipate such tragedy…. When S opened up, it appeared like an act of charity, as if she had taken pity on me. She was not doing this for herself, she was doing it for me. In the course of afternoon, I realised how easily power had switched: I was no longer the writer-filmmaker helping her, she was the woman helping me. (44)

Through forcing the victim to speak about the incidents that trigger traumatic memories within her, the writer engages in an act of violence. The victim observes the author's encroachment of her private secret space with suspicion and fear. Her victimisation of sexual violence is further extended to revictimisation as her survival strategy of self-silencing is oppressed by the enforced speech of the writer.

While the silence of S is a resistance, the silence of The Militant's wife in the section "The Story of the Militant's Wife in Her Own Words" can be read as a defensive silence that comes out from her fear towards the perpetrator and societal stigmatisation. The fear of revictimisation obstructs her from revealing the act of sexual violence. In her conversation with the author, she reveals the reason for her silence. She says, "Akka, they said that if I spoke about this to anybody they would kidnap my child. Murder the baby. That's why I never spoke about this to anyone…. This child is the reason I put up with so much torture, so much sorrow, so much difficulty. That is why I refuse to talk about my story to many people" (45-47).

The familial ties and responsibilities force her to take refuge behind the self-defensive wall of silence. Her mother's trauma, which is the consequence of the intermittent inquiries about her whereabouts by the CID, impels her to be silent about her sufferings, even to her mother. The fear of gossip, which could lead to further victimisation, also becomes a cause of her silence. She asks, "Today, when someone comes to help me- they are already creating gossip about me- how is it possible that they expect me to survive without any help from anyone? She talks to the author about women's inability to verbalise the act, especially if she is married, if she has lost her husband, or has abandoned her, or if she is divorced" (48). She says: "you cannot speak of what we go through" (49).

The urge to verbalise the act of violence, to take revenge upon her perpetrator, and to establish a Tamil Eelam that they expected would reassure equal rights, impelled Tamil women to believe in the LTTE-constructed narrative of joining the organisation as the last resort of liberation. As the LTTE was the only resistance group available after the deployment of the Indian Peace Keeping Force in 1987, women joined the LTTE for Tamil Eelam. As the choices before them were either murdered in the hands of enemy force or be raped and dishonoured, joining the LTTE became a rational choice for Tamil women who wanted to take up arms. As per the official position of the LTTE, as stated by Adele Balasingham (also known as Adele Ann), wife of Anton Balasingham, LTTE's chief political advisor, women's inclusion in the LTTE was a natural evolution of Tamil nationalism. She states:

> Young women too experienced the horror of the racial riots…. The forces of social constraint which had obstructed their deeper participation earlier, had left them exposed and defenceless in the face of violent racist hatred and State terror. Deepening genocidal oppression now propelled them out of their established social life into a new revolutionary world. Young women broke the shackles of social constraints, they ripped open the straight jacket of conservative images of women. The militant patriotism of Tamil women finally blossomed as they entered into a new life of revolutionary armed struggle…. The credit for providing and creating the facilities and opportunities for women to complete a comprehensive military training programme has to be given to the leader of the Liberation Tigers Mr. Velupillai Pirabakaran. (O'Connor 46)

LTTE recruited women to combatant positions only after 1984, and they were not used in combat till 1987, as the organisation "emphasizes the value of traditional Tamil culture, which had no place for militant women" (O'Connor 47). Another reason that made the LTTE reluctant to recruit women was the negative perception of Velupillai Prabhakaran about women as a "liability, a distraction that would detract from the male cadres' commitment" (Ramachandran 160). Even though the other militant groups like People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) and Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) had started recruiting women as they are guided by Leftist Philosophies, LTTE was forced to find out its own justifications for including women as the traditional philosophy that they follow is in opposition to the roles that women have to take up within the

organisation. As Alisa Stack-O'Connor states in her article "Lions, Tigers, and Freedom Birds: How and Why the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam Employs Women", the availability of men who are willing to or able to join the LTTE decreased, due to emigration, arrest and death, which forced the organisation to recruit women. Even though LTTE membership increased post-1983 riots, the Sri Lankan government's Counterinsurgency policy that arrested and detained Tamil men between 14 and 40 years crippled the male army of the LTTE. "The new willingness to recruit women was not the result of an ideological shift in the LTTE with regard to gender. It was just that more fighters were now needed" (Ramachandran 161).

Miranda Alison, in her article "Cogs in the Wheel? Women in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam", delineates diverse reasons that encouraged women to join the LTTE. As she states, contributing one child from every Tamil family was an unwritten law of the LTTE. Beyond this forcible conscription, there were members who joined the organisation voluntarily, either due to their nationalist sentiment for a separate Tamil Eelam or due to suffering and oppression that women have undergone during war. Other reasons that she states include Tamil communities' frustration towards the Sinhala rule due to their policy of *standardisation* that discriminated against Tamil students in the university entrance, and due to the suffering of fellow Tamils. Quoting the interviews that she conducted with the former LTTE members Tamilachi, Shanti and the LTTE member Barathy, Alison states another major reason for women's decision to join the organisation as either

rape or fear of rape. Tamilini's response to Alison in the interview delineates how rape or fear of rape becomes a compelling force for women to be a part of the LTTE.

> Tamilini answered that the fear of sexual violence was part of her motivation. She felt that there was nobody who could protect her, so she had to be able to safeguard herself. She also reported that in normal Tamil society women are usually blamed for their own rape. She claimed that the LTTE does not do this and instead views sexual violence as an 'accident', meaning that it was not the victim's fault. (43)

Mia Bloom, in her article "Female Suicide Bombers: A Global Trend" states "witnessing rape…hearing about rape from other villagers and the Army's killing of Tamil youth (girls and boys arrested by the Sri Lankn army)...and the feeling of helplessness in not being able to defend against the Sri Lankan army" (96) as the major reasons for women joining in the LTTE.

In *Island of a Thousand Mirrors,* Saraswathi's brothers Krishna and Balaram voluntarily joined the LTTE, listening to the speech of the LTTE leaders at school. In the novel, Nayomi Munaweera depicts the ways in which school children are recruited to the LTTE.

> The Tigers had come to our schoolroom. They showed us videos of what Sinhala do to our people. They spoke of their Leader, his lifelong struggle for Eelam, a homeland where we would be safe from the Sinhala. What determination shown on my brothers' faces! They wanted so much to help save our people, but also to be known as brave and valiant fighters. They come home quivering with hate, the war shining in their eyes. (124)

While Saraswathi's family accepted their joining in the organisation and their martyrdom with pride, the abduction of Saraswathi's youngest brother, Kumar, in the white van disseminated fear within the household. The fear of being captivated either by the army or by the LTTE further worsens the traumatic experiences of the family who live with the remaining two girl children, Saraswathi and Luxshmi. Their helplessness is vivid in Amma's response to Saraswathi's Appa Balakumar's pleas to escape from home. She says, "And go where? To the IDP camps? And then what? Live there for years? With no food and a shit of toilet? What will happen to me and the girls in such a place?" (129). This helplessness of the Tamil community either forces them to join the LTTE voluntarily or places them as tools of LTTE manipulation, where nationalistic sentiments within Tamils are redirected towards recruiting Tamils.

The dilemma of families who are forced to contribute their children for the purpose can be read from Saraswthi's mother's words when she was compelled by LTTE combatants to send her girl children to fight. They request the combatants to leave their daughter at least till next year, as she is only sixteen. Amma mutters after their departure, "What do they want? I gave my sons. Now I must give my daughters also?" (143). Saraswathi, after being an LTTE combatant, describes the ways in which they recruited civilians to the organisation. As she states, they have recruited the children of the dead, the children of the disappeared and a child from every family. Justifying the act of forced recruitment as "the price of war" (180), she states, "Sometimes they give us the child quickly, easily, but sometimes we have to

negotiate, threaten. I hate these scenes. I hate ripping a child from his mother's arms, but it must be done. This is war and to fight we need bodies" (181).

The need for bodies to fight forced the LTTE to recruit on a larger scale at the end of the war. *The Report of the OHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka* states that the LTTE changed its policy of "one person for family", depending on the size of the family, after September 2008 due to military pressure. The report further states that the LTTE combatants went from door to door and recruited men, women and children by force and during the last weeks of fighting, they recruited even from No Fire Zones. The fear of the LTTE's forced conscription compelled families to hide their relatives for long periods of time. The absence of a person led to the abduction of another family member, and those who hid their relatives became victims of violence as they never complied with the rules of the LTTE. Getting married was another tactic that women used, as the LTTE initially exempted married women from forced recruitment. As a result, the LTTE declared that all marriages post-August 2006 are legally invalid. In a talk with the researcher, Sri Lankan activist Dr Sumathi Sivamohan observes that many women preferred marriage and pregnancy as the LTTE exempted pregnant women from recruitment. The observation is recorded as part of an interview conducted on 14 March 2023 related to this research study.

The forcible conscription of civilians, especially children under eighteen years, to the LTTE faced criticisms from the international community, where they justified the act by claiming that the civilians joined the organisation voluntarily, citing a wide range of reasons. They claimed that they join LTTE due to diverse

reasons "including death of parents, family separation, displacement, lack of food, ill-health, poverty, harassment by Government forces, detention, lack of educational and job opportunities, abuse in the home, identifying with the LTTE 'cause', or feeling hatred for the 'enemy'" (*OHCHR* 133). However, Saraswathi in *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* is an LTTE combatant who justifies the act of forced recruitment of children. She states that forced recruitment is the only way of gaining victory over the Sinhala military and wiping the tears of Tamils. She further justifies this act by claiming that there is no hope for children without the LTTE.

> We take the children, we wipe tears from their faces and take them sometimes because they are hungry, because they have no shelter, sometimes because they have no shelter, sometimes because we force the family to give them. We take the children because they are easily trainable, eager to follow orders after a few weeks, small and agile enough to slip over the land unseen, and catch the enemy off guard. We take them because soldiers, no matter how battle hardened, always hesitate before children. And it is that moment of hesitation which often grants us victory. (181)

The narrative that claims the LTTE as the saviour of the Tamil people was a strategy that attempted to justify the recruitment of children to the group. The narrative of the LTTE as the saviour of female honour was another rhetorical strategy adopted by them to recruit raped women to the group. The raped women's hatred towards themselves, fuelled by societal ostracisation and abjectification, is used by the LTTE as a tool to instil revenge among them against their enemy, whereby they are enticed towards the state of martyrdom. As Sudha Ramachandran

points out, “in a society where chastity is the ultimate virtue, linking rape with loss of chastity enables the LTTE to exploit the vulnerability of rape victims” (165). The narrative of Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination propagates the view of revenge, where the suicide bomber Dhanu is said to have done the act of revenge against her state of rape victimhood. The strategic narrative on Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination created empathy among Tamils that catalysed their recruitment process. As Tamara Herath states, “ethnic sentiments of the violation of female honour take precedence in public discourse, within which women are reconstructed as craving vengeance for the disgrace they suffered, hence Dhanu was portrayed to the world as an avenging victim of a rape” (Murray 40). As a woman’s chastity is linked with the pride of the nation, Dhanu’s rape became a blemish on Tamil honour. Her act of revenge against her enemy for regaining honour is paralleled by her fight to regain the honour of Tamil Eelam. This narrative, propagated by the LTTE, elevated her to the status of the representative of the Tamil nation. The projected narratives of women like Dhanu and the heroic aura as martyrs are used as tools to manipulate hatred and helplessness among women who are victims of rape.

> The loss of a woman’s virginity due to violent sexual acts committed during conflict is emotionally and psychologically damaging and becomes part of the gendered discourse. Such civic women become socially stigmatised as polluted beings that do not deserve care and respect. The future life options these civic women have become limited to either living in the community as outcasts with little or no civic status, or joining the revolutionary movement where women’s gender construction based on sexual purity in particular does

> not form part of their contribution to the armed struggle, or importantly to women's perceived worth. (qtd. in Herath 163)

As Sudha Ramachandran puts it, "that helplessness makes her a valuable weapon in the LTTE's arsenal, a willing martyr for the Tiger's cause" (169). Saraswathi in Nayomi Munaweera's *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* is a character whose dreams of being a teacher are shattered due to a single incident of rape. The rape incident, followed by societal stigmatisation, forces her mother to believe that joining the LTTE is the only option for them to regain family honour. The fear of societal judgment and anxieties about her younger daughter, Luxshmi's, future prevent her from protecting Saraswathi at home. She advises Saraswathi to join the LTTE to prove that she is a good girl, and it was an assault. She instructs:

> "Think, my girl. What will you do here? What man will take what the soldier have spoilt? Who will give their son for your sister? If you didn't go, you will ruin us all."
>
> I beg for my life. "Amma, please. Please. Let me stay with you."
>
> She shakes her head. "You must go. Show people that you are a good girl. If you don't go, no one will believe that you were taken by force. They will say, she is not even angry. There is a checkpoint close to the house and she must have encouraged them in some way. We will lose all respect. You must go. It is the only way." (152)

Saraswathi's mother is a product of patriarchal and LTTE narratives, where she believes that the raped woman is polluted and the only way to prove her

innocence before society is joining the LTTE, which clearly states before society that she has revenge towards the perpetrator.

Gayathri in *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*, a journalist, becomes a victim of her husband Aniruddha Jayathilakan's acts of criticising the State's human rights repression through his articles. To put an end to these criticisms, Aniruddha, an assistant editor of the Sri Lankan Guardian, was killed, and his wife Gayathri was raped during their honeymoon in the Maldives. These traumatic incidents, followed by her father, novelist Karunarathna's death, shocked her and forced her to fight against the authorities. She fights against these injustices using the same tool that her husband fought with, and joins the *Sunday Leader* at first and *Al Jazeera* later. Juliet's reply to Peter while he asks the reason behind Gayathri's and Juliet's decision to be a part of War Widows meeting delineates the helpless situation of raped women that leads them to be suicide bombers. Peter states:

> I felt great respect for Gayathri, who had not let the tragedies in her life beat her down. When she said, 'Peter, almost all the women activists in Sri Lanka are rape victims,' I could feel tears welling up in my eyes. These words contained the answer to the question why Sri Lankan women chose to become suicide bombers. (211)

There are diverse reasons, other than rape, that impel Tamil women to join the LTTE and other militant organisations. As Neloufer De Mel states, there are individual reasons for women to join the LTTE and other militant organisations. As women joined the organisation in the early 80's as a defence to escape or pre-empt rape or to take revenge against Sinhalese or Indian soldiers, there was a popular

assumption that rape was the only reason for women to join the LTTE (qtd. in Rajanayagam 9). Quoting a personal communication with a student, who became a victim of war, Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam states that the violent attacks of the Sinhala army turned out to be a reason for her decision to join the LTTE (10). When her school was bombed by the army in 1997, which led to the death of her classmates and teachers, she and most of her classmates were impelled to take the decision of joining the group (10).

In *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*, Sugandhi joins the LTTE to take revenge upon the murder of her father Ratnasabapathy, a Professor of Tamil in Colombo University, her mother Kanakavalli, a gynaecologist and her brother Soorya Jyothy. The murder of her family and the traumatic childhood in the refugee camps that resounded with the abuses of Sinhalese soldiers catalysed her desire to be a woman soldier. As Martha Crenshaw states:

> A desire for revenge or vengeance is a common response to redress or remediate a wrong of injustice inflicted on another. It is not difficult to imagine that "one of the strongest motivations behind terrorism is vengeance, particularly the desire to avenge not oneself but others. Vengeance can be specific or diffuse, but it is an obsessive drive that is a powerful motive for violence toward others, especially people thought to be responsible for injustices" (Borum 24-25).

Sugandhi states. "It was my unfortunate childhood that led me to become a freedom fighter. Unlike many of the other women soldiers, I was neither forced into joining the Iyakkam nor were my family members threatened by them" (10-11). Her

revenge towards those who murdered her family was further fuelled by Anton Balasingham's wife, Adele, and she convinced Sugandhi that it was an armed leftist revolutionary movement to attain the dream of the Tamil nation. This desire for revenge against the murderers compelled her to give up her graduate studies at the London Film School and join Iyakkam, rejecting the advice of her uncle, Kumaravel, a researcher at the London School of Economics. Her uncle, Kumaravel, and aunt, Neelambari (who had close associations with the British Communist Party), had ideological fissures with Iyakkam. They were against the ideology of Iyakkam that shrunk to Tamil Hindu nationalism from Marxist philosophy. They tried to dissuade her from joining Iyakkam by advising her that her hands are not meant for carrying weapons. The dying embers of revenge within her, fanned by Adele, overpowered the advice of her uncle. As she states, "I was led by a thirst of revenge against the Sinhalese nationalists who had massacred my family" (12). Like Sugandhi, Meena, Saraswathi's friend and an LTTE combatant in *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* also joined the LTTE due to her revenge against the murderers of her family. Her friendship with Sinhala friends turns to hatred while she witnesses the murder of her family, in hiding, by the Sinhala nationalists. "When she talks of it, her eyes shine with hatred. When she talks of Eelam, she looks transcendent" (173). The Female Tiger in *the orders were to rape you,* also join the LTTE as a reaction to the disasters that happened to her family. As she states, she was asked to wait till she was eighteen, as hiring child soldiers invited public criticism during that period. The alienation and insecurity that she endured after her brothers' deaths as LTTE martyrs and the responsibility of protecting her mother and sisters made her take up arms against Sinhala nationalism. She states, "I need to save my sisters and

my mother from the trouble. My brother died when he was thirteen. That's my younger brother. I have an elder brother who died too. The Tigers took care of my basic needs. They let me study. They trained me when I turned eighteen to be a combatant. There were no violations." (50)

Sitralega Maunaguru states that the war situation and the mass recruitment of women into armed groups made drastic changes in the behaviour of normal Tamil women that appalled Tamil culture, which expected their women to be "the couriers of their cultural and ideological traditions" (166). To keep women away from these unconventional behaviours like riding bicycles freely on the road and wearing dresses that suited their physical movements, an unsigned handbill appeared throughout Jaffna in 1985 that directed women to restrict their behaviour. Even though all women's groups issued counter statements by claiming the bill as anti-social and anti-women, the women's wing of the LTTE supported the bill by stating that it is important for women to follow traditional pottu and that upholding tradition can never be enslavement. This statement reaffirms the conventional patriarchal Tamil culture in which the LTTE is rooted. As Sudha Ramachandran states, in a society that considered chastity as the ultimate virtue, the LTTE used women's sexuality as "a site to control over their physical movement and to ensure allegiance to the organisation" (165). The unsigned letter that was published in the LTTE newspaper Eelanatham of April 1991 reasserted their attack on female sexuality that is used as a tool to get women to fall in line. As per the letter, women were instructed to remain in their homelands and to participate in the war effort, instead of travelling to the South. The letter titled "The Denigration of Tamil Women in

Colombo" opposed women's movements from North to South and labelled those women as "sexually loose, and therefore a traitor to the cause" (Maunaguru 169).

> Young Tamil women who travel to Colombo come into contact with the military at various points. They are physically handled by male soldiers on the pretext of checking. In Colombo, these women become friendly with policemen from Sinhala and Muslim communities and lose their morals. In addition, they pass on information on the struggle which is taking place in the North. Hence, a total ban should be imposed on young women travelling to the South. And women who return from Colombo should be considered anti-social elements and punished accordingly. (Maunaguru 169)

Maunaguru further states the LTTE propaganda of labelling those women who either leave Tamil areas or criticise their policies as sexually loose, citing the instance of Nirmala Nityanandan. She, who was a strong supporter of the LTTE in the early 1980's, was branded as a *fallen woman* after her dissociation from the organisation around 1986. Sumathy Sivamohan also delineates the ways in which the LTTE categorised those women who either had sexual relationships with soldiers or dissented with the LTTE leadership (women like Thiagarajah Selvanithi and Rajani Thiranagama) as traitors and executed them. As per Neloufer De Mel, the intersection of security and morality placed the bodies of Tamil women as a site of control both by the LTTE and by the Sinhala army. As per De Mel, the murder of a Tamil woman from Batticola in 1999, who was first married to a Tamil, then to a Sinhala soldier, suspecting her of being a decoy of the Sinhala police, reiterated the LTTE's control over the physical movements and sexuality of women masquerading

as security. Quoting Sumathi Sivamohan's play *In the Shadow of the Gun*, De Mel explains the state of Tamil sex workers in Jaffna who had clients in the Sri Lankan army. They were shot down by the LTTE as part of their moral policing. Citing Mia Bloom on the extrajudicial killing of two Tamil women, De Mel writes about the pressure that the allegedly raped Tamil women endured from the LTTE to join the organisation. Three Tamil women, who became victims of rape in 2002 by men who spoke Sinhala, were later identified as Tamils. Although they never reported the case, they were approached by the LTTE three days later and were forced to become Black Tigresses "to recover the family honour of having had sex with Sinhalese men (qtd. in Mel 216). Those two women who approached an international aid organisation to speak about the story of rape was killed on their way to interview with Mia Bloom in November 2002 and the third women flew for her life. De Mel opines:

> Apart from the instrumentality of the gendered violence in such recruitment practices, that two of the women were killed on their way for an interview with Mia Bloom in November 2002 and that the third had to flee for her life points to how the licence to survey, control and summarily execute these women was provided, yet again, by a discourse on security interests, honour and discipline. In each of these cases the bodies of these women became sites of biopower: regulation and control on which ethnic purity had to be affirmed and if/when transgresses, deemed fit to be cast out from the polis and onto the terrain of 'bare life.' (Mel 216)

LTTE's phrasing of the word rape as *Karpu Azhipu* (wiping out of chastity), in the propaganda literature, instead of *Balatkaram* (sexual act by force)-the word which they used in their propaganda literature abroad (Ramachandran 168) itself reiterates the intention of the group to use rape victims as a political tool to achieve the goal of Tamil Eelam. Her vulnerabilities and insecurities as a rape victim are exploited, and her anger is fuelled throughout her training as an LTTE cadet.

Saraswathi, a rape victim in *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* is depicted as a woman who was forced to join the LTTE training camp due to her mother's compulsion, as she feels it is the only way through which her daughter can assert her identity as a 'good woman' in the society. Her regret of not living the life that she dreamt is visible in her words, once she joined the LTTE. "The soldiers have left me a blank page. They used me, spoilt me and threw me away like a piece of refuse. They had not expected me to survive. They should have killed me, but they didn't and this is their mistake. Now the Tigers write upon my surfaces" (172).

She regrets the ways in which she lost her authority over herself, and she considers herself a puppet in the hands of the male order, at the hands of the Sinhala army at first and the LTTE later. Her whole journey post-rape is a struggle to gain her honour back, as the societal narrative that equates a raped woman to a spoilt object is further fuelled by the LTTE propaganda videos and their leader's speeches. She is further strengthened by the *cyanide thali* that her leader presents to all cadets. The traditional concept of marriage is subverted as she, through receiving the *cyanide thali*, elevates herself from a traditional woman to that of a legitimate tiger. The "wet pride shining" *(ITM* 176) in her family's eyes empowers her, as their tears,

filled with a mix of joy, admiration, and relief, serve as a source of strength and validation. From a helpless rape victim who cries before her mother to protect her without leaving her to LTTE camp, she evolves gradually to the role of a fearless predator. She states:

> The cyanide makes me smile. It will grant me victory in any battle because I am willing to die while my enemies are not. Our Leader's words ring in my ears, "Fear of death is the cause of all human fears. One who wins over the fear of death wins himself. He is the one who wins freedom from his mental prison." I am fearless. I am free. Now, I am the predator. (*ITM* 176)

Her irresistible thirst for acknowledgement and admiration, which she lost due to the rape incident, can be observed in many of her actions. Her first murder of a Sinhala soldier, captivated by the LTTE, is accepted with applause by her fellow girls and by the Commandant. Meena, her friend in the LTTE, appreciates her courage, and the admiration in her voice overwhelms her. Even though she feels herself empowered and acknowledged, and identifies herself with "Nataraja, the dancing face of death" (*ITM* 177), there is an unrepresented trauma within her that makes her feel the presence of blood in her hands. She says, "...even here, even now, despite washing over and over I feel the thick slipperiness of gore on them" (*ITM* 175). The acknowledgement that she receives from her fellow combatants in the LTTE, propelled by the videos of her leader, equips her to take up the role of a suicide bomber. Her Leader, through the videos of martyrs, makes her believe that martyrdom is the most supreme sacrifice one can make to attain Tamil Eelam. He

says, “we will fight even for a hundred years for Eelam. But if we are willing to kill ourselves, it will take less time” (*ITM* 182).

Saraswathi’s desire to join the LTTE suicide wing- Karum pulikal (Black Tigers)- also arises out of her strong desire for acceptance. In the four categories of motivations among terrorists, Martha Crenshaw considers the desire for social acceptance as one (Borum 24). Jerrold M. Post similarly states, “the need to have a stable identity, to resolve a split and be at one with oneself and with society” (247) as one of the major motivations for terrorists to join the group. He adds further:

> Alone, alienated, on the margins of society, seeking to belong, to find acceptance, to find others who feel the same way, that it’s society’s fault, that it’s not me, it’s them- for such individuals, what a wonderful feeling it is to find that one is not alone, to find other like-minded individuals, to have one’s inner doubts quelled and shored up with an ideology, to be accepted at last. (248)

Saraswathi’s struggle for social acceptance is materialised only after her solidarity with the LTTE. She is accepted with mixed feelings of love and fear by her villagers and her family. She feels proud of her identity when she finds a different look in the eyes of her villagers, and the thought of her elevated status from an “Appa’s daughter spoilt by the soldiers” to that of a “tiger with teeth and claws” (*ITM* 183) makes her jubilant. The pride she feels reasserts her extreme desire for social acceptance. The fear in the eyes of villagers and her family members, the trauma of rape that resurfaces when she enters her room, estranged her from her home. She states, “My true family is back at the camp, these are strangers I knew in a different

time" (*ITM* 185). In her interview with Marianne Lonsdale, Nayomi Munaweera discusses the gradual transformation of her character, Saraswathi, from an ordinary girl with dreams of becoming a teacher to a woman who joins the LTTE and ultimately aspires to become a suicide bomber. She observes:

> I was consumed with how a girl could grow up and become a suicide bomber. What would drive a woman to do that? My character's identity develops over the course of the story as a reaction to her deep family ties, the violence inflicted on them, and a thirst for justice. I wanted to create a fictional account that layered in the emotional content in a way that history books cannot. (Lonsdale)

Her decision to be a suicide bomber evolves from her realisation that she will no longer be accepted by society and from her strong urge to be accepted at least by her new family, i.e., the LTTE. She witnesses the way in which martyrs are celebrated and remembered in front of their families on Fallen Heroes Day and considers martyrdom as the sole way to materialise her dream of social acceptance. Michael Roberts, in his article, "Pragmatic Action and Enchanted Worlds: A Black Tiger Rite of Commemoration", notes the ways in which *mavirars* or fallen heroes and heroines are respected every year by the LTTE, especially on days like Heroes Day and Black Tigers Day that are celebrated on November 27 and July 5, respectively. Quoting Natali, he further states the respect of Tamil people towards these martyrs, which makes them consider their burial ground as *temples* rather than cemeteries. Her strong desire to be respected as a martyr can be observed in her journey towards killing her victim, a Tamil politician. Even in the last walk of her

life, her innermost fear is centred around her possible rejection post death from the minds of her people, her parents and Luxshmi. But he reassures her that she will be remembered in the name of her bravery and dedication to the group. She says:

> They will remember me. All of them. My portrait, miles high will hang everywhere extolling my bravery, the new cadres will come stand in front of it, inhale the scent of my jasmine garland, be inspired by my fearlessness, my dedication. Amma and Appa will be proud. Luxshmi will be the sister of a martyr. I cannot give them more than this. (*ITM* 203)

From an agent of violence who takes revenge against the atrocities that happened to her, Saraswathi is again deteriorated to the status of a victim of patriarchal social order and that of the LTTE narrative, when she claims her martyrdom as a sacrifice to protect her family honour. As Sudha Ramachandran states, there is no sensitive handling of the raped women's problems, and nothing is done to remove the feelings of pollution and unworthiness by the LTTE. She states:

> Instead, it is the very feelings that are exploited and preyed upon. A raped woman is not encouraged to forget her suffering and to move on with her life. She is reminded of the violence and anger is cultivated. It is believed that some of those who participate in suicide missions are victims of rape. The LTTE motivates rape victims to 'annihilate the enemy which destroyed their lives.' The rape victim's anger and desire for revenge is nurtured in a way that makes her feel that by destroying the enemy she is liberating herself from the violence she suffered. (169)

The LTTE propaganda videos and the speeches of her Leader make her an ardent admirer of her Leader. She adores him as a person who has given them back their dignity and feels that negating her polluted body is the only way to regain her lost dignity. As Sitralega Maunaguru states:

> A raped woman is considered one who has lost her chastity:the 'super virtue' of a Tamil woman. She is not only violated but polluted. She cannot regain her purity by any means except by negating her polluted body. In addition, rape by a soldier of an enemy country is considered a political act. Hence, the Tamil woman has to perform two sacred tasks together. One action is to take revenge against those who violated her, and by that act violated her country and caused her to experience additional shame within her community. The other action is to purify herself. The woman killing her oppressor using her polluted body as a weapon symbolically performs the above two functions. In other words, by killing Rajiv Gandhi, she not only takes revenge against the enemy, but also performs an ancient purification ritual- the agni pravesam (immolation by fire). (169)

LTTE's utilisation of the woman's body can be further observed in their development of a suicide belt that is perfected for the female body (Reuter 161). While it was convenient for male combatants to carry heavy weapons, women could conceal bombs using maternity clothes. Christoph Reuter defines it as "division of labour by gender (161). In *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, the LTTE cadet Chandrasekaram fixes a suicide belt on Saraswathi, which makes her feel like a pregnant woman in society. Women suicide bombers are more successful than male

suicide bombers due to many reasons. They are less suspected or searched for because they are seen by society as life-givers, and their transformation into a *typical aggressor* is not always imagined. The media attention that a female suicide bomber grabs more than that of her male counterpart, through which the LTTE can publicise their demands, is also a reason for the LTTE to choose more women for suicide missions (Murray 18-19).

There are basically three trends in literature regarding the empowerment of women in the LTTE. While Peter Schalk defends LTTE naming the empowerment as martial feminism, scholars like Radhika Coomaraswamy, Stack-O'Connor, Sudha Ramachandran and others attack the kind of sexual control that exists within the patriarchal power structure of LTTE. Coomaraswamy harshly criticises women in the LTTE as *cogs in the wheel* of a patriarchal nationalistic project, without true political or social empowerment. She further criticises the tactic of suicide bombing used by the LTTE and comments that "the complete annihilation and mutilation of the female body in pursuit of a political cause is…unusual and disturbing" (Murray 25). Mia Bloom also mirrors a similar argument while she states:

> …rather than confronting archaic patriarchal notion of women and exploding these myths within, are actually operating under them…. In a sense, martyrdom is the ultimate and twisted fulfillment of these ideals. So, the spectacle of female suicide bombers doesn't challenge the patriarchy as much as provide evidence of its power. The message female suicide bombers send is that they are more valuable to their societies dead than they ever could have been alive. (102)

Scholars like Darini Rajasingham Senanayake and Miranda Alison consider the discussions over LTTE women's empowerment as a futile process. Darini Rajasingham Senanayake states that there is *ambivalent empowerment* when the empowerment of women is taken into consideration. She further states that even though "they may have broken out of the confines of their allotted domesticity and taken on new roles as fighters, it is indeed arguable that they are captive both to the nationalist project of the LTTE leader Prabhakaran and the history and experience of oppression by the Sri Lankan military" (11). Defending the concept of Ambivalent Empowerment, Miranda Alison extends the argument by stating that "the debate over whether LTTE women are agents or victims, liberated or subjugated, emancipated or oppressed strikes me as an unnecessary and unsophisticated binary" (52).

The experiences of women in the LTTE differ depending on their class, ethnicity and the multitude of ways in which they are related to war. When the character Saraswathi's case is taken into consideration, it can be observed that she is a victim of the patriarchal nationalistic project of the LTTE. She is a woman whose dreams of being a teacher are shattered by a single incident of rape and is forced to join the LTTE due to the compulsion of her mother, to protect the honour of her family. Even though joining the LTTE empowers her martially, it can not be considered that her empowerment was complete. She creates an imaginary space within her subconscious where she considers herself as the bride of her Leader and the cyanide as her thali.

When the symbols of marriage are attributed to her joining the LTTE, she presumes that she will be protected by her bridegroom (Leader) as the patriarchal society entrusts the security of the wife in the hands of her husband. But there is a constant battle between the subconscious and the conscious within her, which obstructs her from taking refuge even in the imaginary space that she has created for herself. The dreams of being raped that terrify her at night also challenge the imaginary space. And her fear when she is awakened from the dream is whether "the women have heard my cries and know my dreams, the extent of my sins" (*ITM* 179). Even within the imaginary space that she has created for herself, the concept of purity haunts her in the form of dreams.

Her fear escalates when the face of soldiers turns into the face of her Leader. She says, "now, it is not the soldiers who rip me apart, but our Leader himself" (*ITM* 179). This unbearable dream disturbs her and leads her to self-introspection as she doubts herself as a "flawed, defective and corrupted" (*ITM* 179) human being. Her statement "the soldiers have left me a blank page…now the tigers write upon my surfaces" (*ITM* 173) reasserts her double victimhood in the hands of the Sinhala army and that of the LTTE.

The episode of commemoration of Rajani Thiranagama, portrayed in *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki,* throws light on the life of women during war and the patriarchal nature of the LTTE. It was an informal meeting conducted by the female students of Jaffna Medical College in commemoration of the brutal murder of their teacher, Rajani Thiranagama. Rajani Thiranagama, along with her friends, began an institution called Poorani, where the creative talents of women were

promoted for the empowerment of those who had to face the devastation of war. In the meeting, Karpooram criticises the attitude of the LTTE, which degrades labelling the members of Poorani as anarchic feminists and for exploiting the vulnerable state of raped women. She states:

> ...if women were oriented in this manner, they would find it difficult to forcibly recruit women to the Iyakkam and brainwash rape victims into becoming suicide bombers…the Iyakkam promotes a patriarchal power structure. They have never accepted that a woman has complete control over her body. They assumed extremely reactionary stances regarding morality. (*SAAD* 76)

The character Sugandhi also delineates the patriarchal nature of the LTTE and how those who question the policies were treated. She states that her marriage to Stalin, whom she hated, was a part of Iyakkam's disciplinary action against her. She further criticises the anti-democratic ideology of the Iyakkam, which she thinks is the reason for its failure. She states:

> …like fascists, they wiped out the people who criticized them. If it was a woman, they would get her married to somebody from the Tiger leadership and put her into the prison of marriage. The value system of the Iyakkam was extremely patriarchal. The marriage would be followed by pregnancies and children. All critical thinking would end with that. (*SAAD* 213)

As Sudha Ramachandran states, the LTTE controlled the sexual and reproductive rights of women. It encouraged the termination of pregnancies of its cadets, while the same was not allowed for Tamil women, as the war needed more men to fight.

Even marriage was restricted for LTTE women in the early 1980s. Through propagating the ideal of the *warrior mother*, they elevated the status of women to that of a *superwoman* who nurtures her family and fights for her nation.

But those women who were once elevated to the status of *superwoman* were degraded to that of unwelcome guests in Tamil houses. The words of Tamil Tigress in Meena Kandasamy's "The Story of the Female Tiger in Her Own Words" delineate the pathetic post war phase of LTTE cadets as they were "being condemned by the same people whose life they had sought to defend and protect" (61-62). The writer states, "while the war was on, Tigresses were objects of worship. After the war, they were unwelcome in other people's homes" (56). Quoting the work of Nimmi Gowrinathan, Meena Kandasamy states the ways in which Tamil women, especially Tamil Tigresses, are targeted by the Sinhala government and army post-war. She delineates the ways in which "rehabilitation programmes targeting women militants end up domesticating them" (62) and "how rapes by the occupying Sri Lanka army have become a routine feature of life" (63). She further describes the state of LTTE female militants who are under the heavy surveillance of the army. Their struggles were erased from their memory by denying them the freedom to commemorate and remember their martyrs. Meena Kandasamy writes about their transformation from "the fierce Tamil Tigresses of the last three decades" to "the nameless-faceless-helpless asylum seekers of today" (64).

Women who lose their agency due to the war context in their homeland try to reassert their agency by migrating to another land, which they expect will provide them with agency. As Erin Rider states, "In armed conflict and war contexts in

which women are vulnerable to sexual violence, the conditions coerce individuals to migrate toward safe zones in order to decrease their exposure to violence" (78). On observing the theories stated by Susanne Schmeidl, Frederick L Ahearn Jr and, John H Noble Jr and others, Erin Rider further states:

> Based on the violent and detrimental conditions central to war practices, women must negotiate lack of safety and resources in order to reduce their vulnerability. Significantly, Schmeidl (1997) finds that "Political violence, genocide, and foreign military intervention" constitute as "push factors" for political refugees (p.302). Forced migration results from a precarious situation in which women survivors of sexual violence, along with their families, must not only evacuate their homeland out of fear of or actual violence and victimisation, but also must negotiate the refugee or asylum process and adapt to a new country. (78)

Sri Lanka witnessed a large amount of migration, especially of Tamils, to the West after the 1983 riots, and they settled comfortably, particularly in Canada, Western Europe and Australia. There are diverse reasons behind the mass migration of Sri Lankan Tamils to the West, like the fear of long detention and torture in the hands of the Sinhala military, the enactment of the Sinhala Only Act in 1956 and the riots of 1958. Manohari Valamati identifies three categories of Tamils who migrated to the West after 1983. She states, "First, students and professionals who could migrate using their education, knowledge and skills; second, refugees seeking political asylum and third, those Tamil expatriates, already established in those countries" (274). "She further states sexual violence against many Tamil women,

including gang rape and murders by the security forces in the northern and eastern provinces made them migrate" (274). This reasserts the fact that fear of rape or rape victimisation impelled victims of rape, their families or those who were in fear of their vulnerable identities, to observe migration as a coping mechanism, which they imagied will ensure them a safe space.

Meena Kandasamy's *the orders were to rape you* narrates stories of three characters who are immigrants- character S in "The Story of Gathering the Stories," militant's wife in "The Story of the Militant's Wife in Her Own Words", and the Tamil tigress in "The Story of the Female Tiger in Her Own Words." Their migration is the result of their outcaste state that arose out of their status as a rape victim and the resultant stigmatisation during ethnic conflict in their homeland. The militant's wife admits to the writer, "I came here to flee the difficulties" (45). Her words reiterate her hope for a safe place in the new land. But she is desperate while she states that "But here again I had to face the same.… I suffered there, I suffered here" (46). The statement reiterates the marginalised status of women who seek safety by migrating, even post-migration.

As Erin Rider states, "sexual violence in armed conflict places women in a precarious context in which they must negotiate between vulnerability in their homeland and the insecurity associated with coerced migration" (76-77). The character S in "The Story of Gathering the Stories" is a rape victim who has migrated to Cisarua, Indonesia, in search of a safe space to live in. The writer narrates the pathetic condition of women like S, who are refugees or asylum seekers in the host country, as prey to the circles of exploitation. She states, "these women's

vulnerability- as women, as poor, as people without papers, as strangers in a new land- makes them easy prey to sexual harassment, rumours, ostracisation" (39). S's fear of being identified and incriminated if she speaks about the sexual violence that she experienced haunts her even in the new land. The cultural baggage of a rape victim that she carries alienates her even in the new land, as "raped women who are not broken down by the experience are seen as continuing to exercise their sexual autonomy: they are condemned by a spectre of fear that they will wreck families" (40). The fear of alienation and social stigmatisation that impelled her to migrate from her motherland haunts her even after migration. The gossip that the men who help her are receiving sexual favours from her obstructs them from helping her, which gradually leads her to alienation. She states:

> The people who promised to help S with her eventual asylum process in Europe disappeared from her life overnight. 'They told me they could not bear my expenses any more', she said. 'They asked me to borrow money from home and buy my own safety. No one picked up our calls, no one made any arrangements, no one bothered about what happened to us.'(39)

She also narrates her experiences as a refugee, where she is always under surveillance in the host country. She states:

> We are taken on Wednesdays and Saturdays. We are thoroughly checked. They go through all our stuff. Everything. That's why we do not have phones- they're taken away from us- so that we do not call anyone, so that our locations are not traced, so that they do not get into any trouble. They are taking a risk for us-and they do not want us to put them at risk either. (41)

Militant's wife in "The Story of the Militant's Wife in Her Own Words" also narrates about her victimisation in the host country. She is doubly victimised in the migrant country, where she again becomes a victim of sexual torture in the house where she is working. Like S, the concept of chastity haunts her even in the new land in the form of sexual violence and gossip. It was rumoured that she eloped with N, who is helping her in the asylum process.

While these two characters narrate about their sexual victimisation in the host country, the tigress in "The Story of the Female Tiger in Her Own Words" speaks about another phase of being an immigrant, where she is in search of a house to live in the host country. The author writes about "the contrast between her ambitions and reality" (58). Even though she is homeless in the new land of Malaysia, her ambition is to recruit Tamils from Malaysia to fight for Eelam. She plans to fight with the help of Ray, a former gangster she met in Malaysia, whom she thinks can help her find ways to get weapons. The author states, "It seemed to me that she saw the present events in her life (being stateless in Malaysia, the impending asylum process in Europe, starting a new life in a safe country) only as temporary measures" (58). Even though she dreams of fighting for Tamil Eelam, she is struggling in Malaysia for the impending asylum process in Europe. Her fear of going back to Sri Lanka impels her to seek asylum in Europe. Her fear reverberates in her statement, "she would rather die than face a situation of being back in the hands of the Sri Lankan army" (59). The longing for a return to the homeland is overpowered by the desire for a safe space. She is further afraid of the possibility of having been diagnosed with HIV, as it will lead to her deportation from Malaysia

and will negatively affect her asylum process in Europe. The characters S, militant's wife and the tigresses are triply marginalised in the name of gender, ethnic identity and nation, and a safe space becomes a myth for them even after their constant struggles to attain a peaceful life. They are marginalised and otherised in the name of gender and ethnic identity in their homeland, while the migrant or refugee status devalues them to second-class citizens of the host country.

There are reasons other than rape that impel characters to choose migration. The fear of impending violence impels Tamils, Sinhalese and other ethnic groups to find refuge by leaving the country. The family of Yasodhara in *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, a representative of the majority community, the Sinhalese, decides to migrate after the July 1983 riots, especially after her aunt Mala Nanda and Anuradha Munasinha were attacked by a mob. The murder of Anuradha and the trauma that Mala faces amplifies fear of violence within Nishan and Vaisaka. She whispers:

> "I won't bring up my children here," she whispers. "What sort of a place have we become that grandmothers and children get burnt in the street?"
>
> "But where to go?"
>
> "America," says Amma with finality. (90)

The Rajasinghes' family is not in immediate danger; they choose to migrate to America as the violence escalates. But the Shivalingams are forced to migrate as they belong to the minority community. The article "The Refugee in Flight Kinetic Models and Forms of Displacement" discusses the classification of migrants into three categories, considering refugees' attitudes towards their displacement. They are

categorised as (1) majority identified refugees, (2) events related refugees, and (3) Self alienated refugees (Kunz). The majority of identified refugees are people who, even after their displacement, hold stronger bonds with the nation. They distinguish between the government and the nation itself, opposing the former while remaining loyal to the latter. They firmly believe that their opposition to events like conflict, persecution and government policies made them displaced, and this belief connects them with the general population, even if they are physically separated from them. In contrast to the majority of identified refugees, self-alienated refugees alienate themselves from their home country, government, its culture, people and national identity. Event-related refugees are individuals who are displaced due to specific, often sudden events that disrupt their lives and force them to leave their home country. As per the classification, the Shivalingams can be identified as *events related refugees*, where they were forced to migrate due to the active discrimination that existed towards the ethnic group to which they belonged, the Tamils.

In *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*, Meenakshi Rajarathinam finds migration as the only way through which she could save herself and her daughter, Arul, from the refugee camp. She finds an escape route through marrying Dr Rajarathinam, who misunderstood her as his late wife, who was murdered in the 1983 riots. Her relief is vivid while she states, “He asked me whether I would go with him and I agreed. Anyone in my situation would have” (214). Her marriage became a way for her to migrate to Canada. Her search for a safe space never materialised, even after her marriage and migration to Canada, as her husband was murdered by the LTTE when he refused to pay them money that every Tamilian

should give every month as a contribution. While the characters S, militant's wife and the tigress consider migration as a way of escape from the social stigmatisation of being a rape victim, Rajasinghe's, Shivalingams and Meenakshi consider migration as an escape from war. But they are further victimised in the country as migrants.

Apart from migration, there are diverse ways in which characters react to the rape episode. While the character Poomani kills her avenger Lion to free herself from post-rape stigmatisation, characters like Gayathri and Juliet D Souza try to cope and later react through joining organisations like Sri Lankan War Widows, and they consider their membership as a way to protest against those equally corrupted forces, the LTTE and the Sinhala government. More than a way of coping, Gayathri's journey after her husband's murder, her rape and her father's sudden death after these tragic incidents is a protest. In Juliet's words, Gayathri remained unfazed, even though her life was also under threat. She states, "she remained unfazed and joined Vikrama's Sunday Leader. When Vikrama was killed, she started writing a column called "Witness" for Al Jazeera. Her mother, a lawyer, and her brother supported her in everything" (211). Juliet, who became a victim of rape due to her statements against the government, was rejected by her husband and her own family. Her helplessness that arises out of her rape victim status impels her to rely on her rapist, Lion. As she states, "only the Lion could help me in this predicament as he had placed severe restraints on me, forbidding me from going out or meeting people" (87). From being in the state of a helpless victim of rape with a two-year-old child, she gradually evolves to be a woman who revolts using the same

tool that the man used to degrade her. When Lion uses her sexuality to control and degrade her, she uses his sexual desire towards her as a tool to win over him. Her laugh, while she returns home after meeting Lion in a chauffeur-driven car, is a kind of protest not only against Lion but also against the society that made her helpless as a victim. Her contempt and scorn towards society, mixed with her own helplessness, is visible in her words, while she states:

> I laughed at the irony of arriving in a tuk-tuk and leaving in style. The henchmen started addressing me as 'madam'. I went to a supermarket and spent lavishly…within a week, all difficulties regarding my job disappeared. He had arranged a car and a flat for me…my absence of one-and-a-half years had been treated as a special leave, and that I had been transferred with promotion. (90)

Even though these luxuries give her a temporary happiness and pride, she is always under the surveillance of Lion, and he suppresses her by not allowing her to speak about the tragedies that she went through, including rape and the murder of her son. Even after Lion's murder, she is trapped with an unknown fear towards him that obstructs her from revealing her identity even in the mails that she sends to Peter Jeevanandam. She states, "Though the Lion is dead, his spirit still guards me" (*SAAD* 184). She views her membership in SSF (Save Sri Lanka from Fascism) after her son's murder as an opportunity to protest against the two fascist groups and to avenge her enemies. In the beginning, she considers her relationship with Peter as a tool to accomplish her revenge. Her answer to Gayathri's questions regarding her relationship with Peter, who is making films sponsored by the Sri Lankan

Government, reiterates her plan to use Peter's sexual desire towards her as a tool to accomplish her aims. She asks:

> 'Juliet, what has happened to you?'
>
> 'Peter loves me. We are living together, that's all.'
>
> 'I'm not concerned about whom you sleep with. But this man makes movies by taking money from Rajapakasa. How can you collaborate on such a project?'
>
> 'Do you think I will take such a step for no reason?'
>
> 'What do you mean?'
>
> 'I want access to Temple Trees.' (*SAAD* 201)

From a helpless rape victim and a silent witness who copes and uses the sexual desires of his rapist for a living, she evolves to be an agent of violence after her son's murder. Even her relationship with Peter and his pleas never drew her back from her aim. But her expectant motherhood creates guilt within her, where she is torn between her responsibility and personal desire. Her responsibility that SSF has entrusted upon her is to operate the mosquito drone to kill the President at CHOGM (Commonwealth Business Forum). Even though Peter's words "my baby is growing inside you" (*SAAD* 228) reverberate in her head, she walks towards her responsibility by stating that "one cannot shirk away from one's responsibilities" (*SAAD* 228). From the status of a mother, from the protector of her own child, she elevates to the state of a mother of all those who are oppressed.

From a daughter who joins the LTTE to avenge her parents' murderers, Sugandhi transforms into a saviour of women who are victims of war. Like Rajani Thiranagama, she questions the injustices of the Sinhala army and the LTTE. Her realisation that "the fight for freedom was, in fact, a fight between two fascist groups" (*SAAD* 191) impelled her to find an alternative resistance movement, Save Sri Lanka from Fascism (SSF). The group that began in the form of an online group on Facebook became a platform for women victims of war to resist through their creative writings. The group that was rooted in nonviolence as a strategy to resist violence turns out to be a violent group when Sugandhi decides to take up a suicide mission as per Arul's advice. Arul convinces Sugandhi by stating that "we are not making violence a weapon against the helpless. We are using it against those who have lost their humaneness to the insanity that power bequeaths" (*SAAD* 220). The end of the novel depicts the way in which Sugandhi drove the car with explosives, even though she didn't have both her hands. The writer narrates Sugandhi's appearance at the end of the novel. He states, "'But how can a woman without hands drive a car? Then fly to the skies?'...When the aircraft took off, I saw Devanayaki. From a burning Lanka, she was coming to Kanthalur with me. She had placed one foot on Sigiriya and the other on Sripada" (*SAAD* 241-42).

In contrast to Saraswathi, who engages in the suicide mission to retain honour, Sugandhi engages in the mission as a saviour for all women who are victims of war. Using the magical realist technique at the end of the novel, the writer elevates Sugandhi as the reincarnation of the mythical character Devanayaki. The Devanayaki myth that the writer has created positions her as an avatar of Kannaki,

the legendary figure of female power and empowerment. During her nirvana, she states, “No matter what level of nirvana I reach, I will not be able to tolerate violence. I will have to rush to that place where a woman’s tears are shed. I will have to burn down the cities of sinners” (*SAAD* 174). The narration positions women in a strong and elevated status, upholding their strength and power, where the real character Rajani Thiranangama, the fictional character Sugandhi, and the mythical character Devanayaki converge as Kannaki, the goddess who burnt the city of Madurai in revenge for the injustice inflicted on her by the authority. Though the struggle of choosing non-violent methods to react against injustices disturbs her ideological stand of non-violence primarily, Arul stimulates the urge of revenge within her. She asks, “Don’t you think Rajani Thiranagama was a reincarnation of Devanayaki? Aren’t you also another reincarnation of Devanayaki?” (*SAAD* 220). Her self-identification with Devanayaki is visible in her letter to Ananda (Peter Jeevanandam), her former lover. She states:

> It was Mother who awakened my memories. When she narrated Devanayaki’s story, even she did not realize that it was my story. She still doesn’t know. Devanayaki’s story is repeated in different ways in her different births. If her breasts were cut off then, now it is her hands. Her line will not end with me. The fight for a woman’s honour and freedom will continue with others. (*SAAD* 236)

The post-rape scenario positions women in a dilemma of coping with the trauma, as the concept of purity that is normalised, otherises her from the mainstream society and instigates a concept of unworthiness within her. The liminal

space between life and death in which she exists compels her to see herself as a *living corpse*. Trauma arises out of social stigmatisation, victim blaming, and self-hate impel her to rely upon a mechanism to either cope with the system, to find an alternative defence mechanism or to protest against the system that otherised her from the mainstream society. Her post-rape journey is a struggle either to retain her honour along with her family honour or a revolt against the system that became the root cause of her alienation.

When we consider the characters under discussion, most of them observe their state of being a rape victim with guilt due to their internalised cultural belief that a raped woman is polluted. Her responses to rape, like silence, committing suicide or being a suicide bomber, which she considers as her survival mechanisms, fail to get her assimilated in the society at times. Her struggle to assimilate into the normal society by retaining honour further endangers her, as her vulnerability is exploited by groups like the LTTE for their political motives. She is made to believe that negating her polluted body is the only method of survival before her. As her self-negation of body through committing suicide will further lead to victimisation and contempt, she is made to believe that being a suicide bomber is better as she will earn respect post-death.

Characters like Saraswathi become victims of these manipulated narratives of the LTTE as she joins the group to prove to the world post-rape that she is a good girl. Saraswathi's friend commits suicide post-rape as an escape from social estrangement. Characters like S and the Militant's wife find refuge in silence. While S's silence is a protest against the system, the silence of Militant's wife can be

observed as defensive silence. Migration is another strategy that the characters follow as an escape route. While these mechanisms of survival equip the characters to move along with the system, there are characters like Sugandhi and Juliet D Souza who break the barriers of cultural norms and are ceaselessly in battle with the power structures of the society.

Chapter V

Conclusion

The former US President Barack Obama's recently published book *A Promised Land* (2020), which criticises the inability of the United Nations to prevent the ethnic slaughter in Sri Lanka, has reignited the discussions on the same. United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, in January 2021, reminded UN member states that they have the option to hold perpetrators accountable for crimes and to provide measures of redress for victims, which led to the adoption of a resolution during the 46th session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). Following the resolution, a decision was made "to strengthen . . . the capacity of the Office of the High Commissioner to collect . . . and preserve information and evidence and to develop possible strategies for future accountability processes for gross violations of human rights or serious violations of international humanitarian law in Sri Lanka" (qtd. in Wanigasuriya 222).

Even after fifteen years since the end of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict, victims are still awaiting justice, and the issue of ending impunity is uncertain. Reconciliation mechanisms from the side of successive governments post war in Sri Lanka like theestablishment of diverse institutions like: (1) The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL), (2) Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC), and (3) Military Court of Inquiry (MCI), (4) Presidential Commission to Investigate into Complaints Regarding Missing Persons (Paranagama Commission), (5) Consultation Task Force (CTF) on Reconciliation

Mechanisms, and (6) Office on Missing Persons (OMP) and Related Legislation, have fallen short of achieving their intended goals. The committees came out with a report that humanitarian operations were conducted by the army with zero civilian casualties at the end of the civil war. In this context of ceaseless struggles for justice by war victims in Sri Lanka, the study initiated a discussion on human rights violations, particularly rape, that occurred during the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict and its narrativizations in the select texts such as T D Ramakrishnan's *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*, Nayomi Munaweera's *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* and Meena Kandasamy's *the orders were to rape you: tigresses in the tamil eelam struggle*.

The reading of these works through the lens of the Tamil-Sinhala ethnic conflict unravels the history of trauma of women as victims of rape. The reading further sheds light on the concept of the cultural construction of female purity that segregates women as good and bad. As the purity of women determines the honour of the family and nation, she struggles with the lifelong burden of protecting her chastity, chained within the constraints of patriarchal rules. Her fear of being a *whore* impels her to continue the relentless struggle of protecting her chastity. The concept of purity, propagated through myths, is also visible in the Sri Lankan cultural scenario. The epitome of Goddess Pattini as a symbol of purity in Sri Lankan scriptures can be associated with Goddess Kannaki in Tamil culture. Sri Lankan psyche, rooted in Lajja Bhaya, prioritises purity and chastity, where the failure of protecting these results in victim blaming and stigmatisation.

The war on women is implemented as a biopolitical weapon by the State to control its enemy population. The deliberate degradation of enemy women as

objects, which places their men as powerless, results in the emasculation of men through a continuous deterioration of themselves. This involves both physical and psychological warfare, where women are haunted both physically and emotionally. This tactic of physical and psychological warfare, resulting in female objectification, creates a dual form of trauma. Direct violence and abuse, like rape and assault, leave lasting bodily harm and scars, where they suffer from fear, humiliation, and emotional distress, which lead to long-term mental health issues. This dual haunting—physical and emotional—deepens their suffering and reinforces the subjugation intended by their oppressors. The abjectification of the raped body, rejecting it from the socio-political and cultural space, forces her to live in a liminal space. This liminal space between life and death positions her as a *living corpse*, further intensifying her trauma.

The men are also haunted by a sense of emasculation, where they are made to feel powerless and inefficient, which undermines their sense of strength. The societal definitions of masculinity are weaponised against them, creating feelings of shame, guilt, and inadequacy. This emasculation affects their mental health, self-esteem, and identity, arousing within them a sense of defeat and helplessness.

Traditional definitions of rape often remain narrow, focusing primarily on non-consensual vaginal intercourse perpetrated by men against women, thereby overlooking other severe forms of sexual violence such as anal or oral rape, genital mutilation, object penetration, and male-on-male assault. To address these limitations, this study adopts the broader and more inclusive definition established by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in the *Akayesu* case. This

definition recognises rape as any physical invasion of a sexual nature committed under coercive circumstances, framing it as a grave violation of personal dignity and, under certain conditions, equating it with torture. This comprehensive approach allows for a more accurate representation of the multifaceted nature of rape.

Expanding the definition of rape beyond mere penetration of sexual organs is essential in recognising the full spectrum of harm inflicted upon victims. While traditional definitions of rape focus solely on the physical act, they often fail to acknowledge the profound emotional and mental anguish experienced by survivors. The expansion of the definition of rape as a physical invasion of a sexual nature, including any gestures or actions without consent, challenges societal norms and empowers individuals to prioritise consent, creating a culture of consent and accountability.

The study explores how rape was described and understood during the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict and how women in Sri Lanka experienced rape and its aftermath. Through a comparative lens, the study places the trauma of these women within the broader framework of conflicts worldwide, providing an overall view of the violence worldwide and its impact on innocent civilians. The history of ethnic conflict and its long-lasting effects on individuals and societies, emphasising the importance of acknowledging and addressing the trauma experienced by survivors of sexual violence, is discussed.

Apart from the trauma endured by the victims, the trauma of the rape victim’s family, especially men whose masculinity is questioned through the act of the enemy force’s invasion of her body. The perpetrator’s attainment of physical and

psychological domination, manifested through the rape of women from the defeated side and their subsequent impunity, leads them to view rape as a strategic tool of warfare, given its perceived ease and effectiveness compared to other tactics. Through the examination of primary texts, the study explored rape as a tool of strategic warfare employed by the Sinhala army against women during the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict. The reading of the primary texts further sheds light on the psychology of the perpetrator in using rape as a war tactic during the conflict.

The three texts discussed in the thesis are *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki* by T D Ramakrishnan, *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* by Nayomi Munaweera, and *the orders were to rape you: tigresses in the tamil eelam struggle* by Meena Kandasamy. In the work *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*, T. D. Ramakrishnan blends history and myth, using the context of the Sri Lankan war to universalise the plight of women, who, along with children, are always the most affected in conflicts. He avoids taking sides, focusing instead on the struggles of common people trapped in the crossfire between the State and the violent Tamil movement, highlighting how no one spoke of peace. He expresses his intent to give voice to those who advocated for peace, using his writing as a platform for their stories. By crafting an alternative history, he challenges the accepted narratives of the land, which often serve to reinforce power structures.

Through his creative work, T. D. Ramakrishnan rebels against oppression, viewing writing as "a continuing revolt against oppression" (*SAAD* 253) and a means to question and resist systems of power. Nayomi Munaweera, a Sri Lankan residing in the United States of America, speaks about the experiences of being a

Tamil and a Sinhala in a war space through her portrayal of characters like Saraswathi, a Tamil, and Yasodhara, a Sinhala. Even though the work has never taken sides on the issue of the Sri Lankan war, it was criticised by the government, claiming that the book is untrue. Different from the other two texts, *the orders were to rape you: tigreeses in the tamil eelam struggle* discusses the lives of tigresses in the LTTE especially post-war. Through the first-person accounts of their experiences during war, the author focuses on the harrowing struggles that these women went through during the times of war, especially in the form of rape. The transformation in the state of Tamil tigresses to unwelcome guests of Tamil homes post-war, from heroines during the war period, is discussed.

The three texts represent diverse perspectives on the Sri Lankan conflict and its aftermath. T. D. Ramakrishnan, a Keralite, provides an external yet intimately connected perspective through his narratives, focusing on the history of the marginalised. Challenging mainstream history, his works challenge dominant accounts and shed light on voices that are often silenced.

Meena Kandasamy, who is an Indian Tamil, sheds light on the unheard voices of Tamil tigresses, drawing on her cultural roots and solidarity with the Tamil identity. Through highlighting the Tamil perspective, by centring on the experiences of Tamil tigresses who were once considered as saviours, the work critically examines the actions of the Sri Lankan army and the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF). Through questioning their roles in perpetuating violence and oppression, Meena Kandasamy provides a powerful critique of the military state apparatus and

external interventions that catalysed the suffering of marginalised communities, particularly women, during the conflict.

Nayomi Munaweera, a Sri Lankan who later migrated to the United States of America, explores a deeply personal and nuanced exploration of the Sri Lankan conflict. As a member of the Sri Lankan diaspora with close proximity to Tamil experiences through personal connections, her work bridges the divide between Sinhalese and Tamil narratives. Offering an unequivocal portrayal of both sides of the conflict, her work promotes a deeper understanding of the complexities and human cost of war.

Through the three texts analysed in the study, the researcher tried to explore the psychology of the rapists, rape victims and the coping mechanisms that the characters adopt in order to survive within the society. When the character Lion in *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki* represents the side of the perpetrator, Sugandhi, Juliet D'Souza, Poomani Selvanayagam, Arulmozhi Nagai, Yamuna Sreedhar and Gaythri Perera of *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*, Saraswathi and Parvathi of *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* and the Tamil Tigress, the militant's wife and the character S of *the orders were to rape you: tigresses in the tamil eelam struggle* represent the side of the victims.

Viewing rape from the side of the perpetrator, it can be considered a form of biological and psychological warfare to dismantle the enemy population. Due to its long term and highly traumatic effects upon the victim and their family, along with the unique aspect that it revictimises the victim while elevating the perpetrator's status to that of a hero, particularly in wartime contexts, perpetrators employ this

tactic to subjugate and isolate the victim, thereby raising their status to that of a *ranaviru*.

The character Lion, part of the Sinhala army, employs the tactic of rape as a war strategy towards women like Poomani and Juliet, aiming to suppress dissent against the Sinhala army. He chooses forced impregnation as a way of silencing the victim and ethnically cleansing the enemy group, through which he tries to assert his loyalty towards the nation. By impregnating the victim, he partakes in genocidal warfare, employing his body as a biological weapon to achieve nationalist objectives. Lion exerts control over those women who question the state and military through raping, silencing and appropriating their voice as dictated by the hegemonic power structures of the society. Through this, he punishes women who defy patriarchal gender norms by venturing into traditionally male spaces, such as the battlefield.

The attitude of using slur words to dehumanise, disgrace and silence the victim is visible in the character of Lion and the soldiers who rape Sugandhi and Saraswathi. The slur words Pattavesi and Tiger Bitch are used as a way of psychological warfare where the perpetrator degrades the victim through attacking her honour, which gradually leads her to doubt her own self-worth. Through dehumanising and disgracing the victim, the perpetrator asserts his masculinity over the female body and the nation/community to which she is entailed. The attitude of the soldier rapist to appropriate the words of the victims as per the narratives of those who are in power is visible in the rapes of Sugandhi, Juliet and Peter Jeevanandam's driver.

Using the muted group theory propagated by Ardner and Cowan, the study initiates a discussion on the ways in which the Sinhalese army tries to appropriate the voices of dissent. By manipulating language and disseminating it through the media, they endeavour to construct a portrayal of a humane, merciful, good, protective and benevolent army juxtaposed with the wicked, cruel and destructive villain.

The thesis is structured in five chapters focused on analysing the narrativizations of rape in select texts in the context of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict. Though the characters' post-rape adopt diverse coping mechanisms to regain their self-worth, the label of rape victim ingrained within them haunts their psyche, which never allows them to overcome the trauma. Society often reminds them of their scars and exploits their vulnerability to suit its purposes.

The introduction of the thesis provided a brief detailing of the diverse definitions of rape, the history of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict and stated the methodology initiated in the study. The second chapter of the thesis, "In the Land of Men: About Military Masculinity and Myth Poisoned Nationalism," analysed the psychology of the soldier rapist during the ethnic conflict, focusing on the three primary texts. The male characters taken for study use rape as a strategy in six ways: (1) a way of disgracing her/ her family/ nation through disgracing her body, (2) a way of silencing her, (3) a way of making her speak in custodial rape, (4) a way of appropriating her voice, (5) a way of purifying her blood through impregnating her, and (6) as a way of disseminating terror within the enemy community. The state narratives that are embedded in the societal narrative emphasise military masculinity

as the characteristic of a loyal citizenship, compelling men to choose military service, particularly during times of conflict.

The gender construction in Sri Lankan culture legitimises the act of a loyal citizen's killing to protect their nation against their enemies and feminises those who fail in accomplishing their gender roles. The fear of feminisation, which draws shame upon the male warrior in a society rooted in *Lajja Bhaya*, forces him to choose the battlefield as it is men's space to prove his military masculinity. His label as a protector of his women/nation makes him otherise his enemy women/nation, and the myth of the heroic rapist justifies the act of raping other women to protect his women/nation. As Chulani Kodikaran and Sarala Emmanuel opine, "impunity and lack of accountability for sexual violence have been entrenched features of the war in Sri Lanka" (7). The character, the Female Tiger of Meena Kandasamy's, orders were to rape you: tigresses in the Tamil Eelam struggle states how impunity and lack of accountability have worsened the situation of rape during the ethnic conflict. The second chapter also explains how impunity, along with propaganda movies and museums for ranavirus, made the atrocities committed by both the groups, i.e., the Sinhala army and LTTE, seem justified.

Rather than a crime against women, rape, especially in a war context, is read as a crime committed against the property of men. Drawing the theories of Anna. T. Hoguland and Rhonda Copelin, which asserts rape as a crime committed upon the property of man, the victim is male, humiliated and emasculated by having failed as both warrior and protector (qtd. in Hoguland 353), the study tries to assert that the trauma of men who are considered as protectors of their women are prioritized over

the real trauma of raped women. In this scenario, they are demeaned and disgraced as women who caused trauma for their men, family and the whole community to which she belongs. Even if they are victimised for the crimes that their men commit, women are unfairly blamed for the circumstances that lead to their victimisation, instead of holding the men accountable for their actions leading to their victimisation.

Women characters in the texts, including the militant's wife, the character S, Saraswathi and the female tiger, are utilised by the perpetrator as instruments to exact revenge for the crimes committed by men, aiming to defeat and disgrace his enemy. In this strategy, the act of raping these women is considered more psychologically damaging to the enemy men than physically harming them. The haunting recollection of their women's rape serves as a constant reminder of their emasculation, frequently placing men in a state where they refuse to acknowledge the raped women. Saraswathi's father, Balakumar, rejects her post-rape because his inability to protect her haunts him as a nightmare. As the otherisation of females as enemies or enemy's supporter justifies the act of the soldier, these women are characterised as LTTE supporters, which justifies the act of colonising their bodies as it equates their victory over LTTE and Tamil nationalism. In this context, the third chapter of the study "In (Wo)Men's Land: About Wounds and Scars" examined the notion that rape is perceived to be more dangerous than murder for females and their male counterparts.

The study also analysed how the concept of purity that is deeply ingrained within the female psyche shrinks her socio-cultural and political space and amplifies

her fear of rape. Additionally, the study analyses the post-rape scenario of rape victims where they are stigmatised and blamed by society for their victimhood. Furthermore, the study also analysed the secondary victimisation, agent regret, along with their lost faith in justice, contributing to the enforced silence of the victims.

Conservative societies that restrict women's spaces consider the battlefield as men's space and women as objects for the recreation of the warrior. In a society that gives prime importance to the purity of women, the fear of rape that shapes "women's physicality, behaviour and sense of dignity" (qtd. in Mohan 275) produces within her a "continuing phase of pre-victimhood" (Mohan 281). Sri Lankan society, which is rooted in Lajja bhaya, alienates women who are rape victims. As societal stigmatisation and the victim-blaming attitudes of society add insult upon injury to the victim, the victim stays silent to protect her honour.

The state of women as socio-cultural reproducers of the nation is exploited by the enemy group to degrade them by invading their bodies. Her bodily autonomy is rejected through rape and forced impregnation. Juliet is denied her bodily autonomy by Lion through forcefully impregnating her, and he tries to impregnate Poomani, in which he fails miserably. Drawing on the concept of Stanley Fisher, who equates forced impregnation with genocide, which disrupts the autonomous reproduction of a group, the study analyses the ways through which women are denied their reproductive autonomy to achieve the aims of the perpetrator, ie, ethnically cleansing the enemy group. The body of the female is further used as a ceremonial battlefield for the victor's group to assert their dominance upon the enemy group.

The victim, who was once disgraced by the perpetrator, is again victimised through gossip. The study analysed the role of gossip in shrinking the space of victims and other women who belong to the enemy group. The study further analyses how Saraswathi's space shrinks before her rape due to the gossip surrounding her friend Parvati's rape, and diminishes even more afterwards due to society's victim-blaming. The physical pain of rape is further worsened by the mental agony that results from societal ostracisation and stigma. The external stigma that is manifested as discrimination, prejudice and social exclusion, impels the victim to internalise these negative perceptions and to view themselves through the lens of societal stigma where they place themselves as unworthy.

Linguistic straight-jacketing of the male-centred language that equates the word prostitute to that of an immoral woman who engages in sexual acts outside the marital ties, with or without her consent, worsens her internal stigma, placing her under the title of a prostitute. The external stigma that generates internal stigma within the victims, along with the anticipatory stigma, silences them due to the fear of speaking about their traumatic experience, which might put them in a position of disgrace. The negative connotations of the word *Pattavesi*, through which Lion tries to place Poomani in a subordinate position, instil internal stigma within her that leads her to self-blame. Bearing the blame for Lion's rape, considering it as her act of exchanging "her body in return for her life" (*SAAD* 84), she becomes her own oppressor. The Militant's wife is also a character who has undergone internal stigma and anticipatory stigma along with agent regret, which impels her to suppress her desires of speaking about the traumatic incident.

As per Nancy E Snow, agent regret stems from self blame and she differentiates agent regret from regret by three key features: (1) a person can feel agent-regret only towards her own past actions or actions in which she regards herself as participating, (2) its subject-matter, which is formed by first-personal conceptions of how the agent might have acted otherwise, and (3) the agent is left with the desire to give reparation or restitution to someone who was harmed by the agent's act (379).

The militant wife and Tamil Tigress are characters who grapple with agent regret. The militant wife's regret stems from defying parental disapproval in her marriage with a man connected to the LTTE, while both characters regret the impact of their rape victim status on their families. The regret of the rape victims, coupled with their desire to recoup their honour, leads them to find solace in the veil of silence. Their lost faith in justice and their fear towards their perpetrator reinforce her belief that silence is the only choice before her to save themselves from the emotional trauma of social stigmatisation post-rape.

The purity myth that is deep rooted within a woman in Sri Lankan society creates within her self-contempt and guilt that necessitate her to find refuge in alternative coping mechanisms postrape to recoup her honour. The victims are forced to choose these coping mechanisms masquerading as absolute freedom from their scars, even though their results are ephemeral. Chapter IV "In No Man's Land: About Coping and Healing" analysed the post-rape responses of rape victims and the coping mechanisms that the characters of the primary texts choose to recoup their

honour. It also analysed why the coping mechanisms that they chose have failed to attain absolute freedom from their scars.

The chapter also explored how the myth of female purity is manipulated by counter-groups like the LTTE to justify their acts of objectifying the female body for attaining their political motives. The raped body of a female is used to garner support, evoke sympathy and to legitimise their cause. The State employ rape as a tool to exert control over enemy men, using it as a tactic to dominate and demoralise. Countergroups, in turn, exploit the raped body as a symbol and tool to assert their dominance over the state. Consequently, women find themselves trapped between the conflicting political agendas of both the State and these opposition groups, with their bodies becoming battlegrounds for power and support.

The post-rape responses of the characters in the primary texts, such as Juliet, Gayathri, Saraswathi, character S, The Militant's wife, are analysed and categorised into four types: (1) Silence, (2) Joining counter movements such as the LTTE, (3) Migration, and (4) Committing Suicide. Characters like Poomani and Sugandhi evolve into survivors and saviours, becoming agents of change by murdering their perpetrators.

Drawing the multi-dimensional theories of silence, such as (1) Silence as cultural censorship, (2) Silence as resistance, and (3) Silence as a coping mechanism, the study has stated that the silence that the characters choose post-rape as a coping mechanism fails to address their post-rape trauma. The characters of the primary texts, such as S and The Militant's wife, find refuge under the veil of silence. While S's silence can be observed as resistance, which later turns out to be a

medium through which she asserts her agency, the silence of The Militant's wife can be read as defensive silence. Her fear of gossip, familial ties and responsibilities obstructs her from speaking about the act of violence that The Militant's wife has undergone, while the silence of character S arises out of her act of possessing her trauma as her own.

Through the "untelling of the act" (Sivamohan 382), she transforms from a victim to a survivor and to a woman who asserts her agency through silence. Through forcing the character S to articulate her traumatic past, the writer Meena Kandasamy engages in an act of violence where S's self-silencing is oppressed by the enforced speech of the writer. This compulsion to articulate her trauma overrides S's choice to remain silent, and the writer disregards her autonomy and her method of coping through silence. This enforced speech strips S of her agency, subjecting her to further victimisation. This act of enforced speech further transforms the writer from a potential ally into another source of oppression, compounding S's suffering rather than alleviating it.

The coping mechanism of silence that the characters choose never serves as a sustainable solution for healing and empowerment, as it avoids and suppresses the issue rather than addressing or resolving it.

The urge of the victims to verbalise their trauma and their revenge towards the perpetrator impels them to choose joining the LTTE as a method of liberation from the image of the polluted other. The rhetorical strategy of the LTTE that narrativises the LTTE as the protector of Tamil women's purity and that of Tamil Eelam draws raped women towards the counter group, which she believes will

reinstate her honour in society. The heroic aura that the LTTE combatants and martyrs enjoyed in the Tamil society also became a reason for raped Tamil women to join the LTTE. But the LTTE controlled female sexuality masquerading as morality, which regulated the personal space of Tamil women.

Portraying themselves as torchbearers of Tamil culture, they justified their act of segregating those women who either leave Tamil areas or criticise their policies, labelling them as fallen women. Executions of those women who dissented with the LTTE were also rationalised, branding them as traitors to theTamil cause. LTTE phrasing of the word rape as *Karpu Azhipu*, wiping out of chastity and in the propaganda literature, instead of *Balatkaram*, sexual act by force (Ramachandran 168), itself illustrates their manipulation of the concept of rape, which they use as a political tool to attract rape victims to the group.

Saraswathi can be observed as a victim of patriarchal and LTTE narratives, where she was forced by her mother post-rape to the LTTE camp in the hope of retaining her family honour. Her strong desire for social acceptance impels her to join the LTTE and to be an agent of violence. Meanwhile, her belief in the patriarchal and LTTE narrative that martyrdom is the only solution to recoup her honour leads her to inadvertent revictimisation. Instead of addressing the mental agonies aroused by the societal concepts of pollution and unworthiness, the rape victim's anger is cultivated against the perpetrator in such a way that killing the perpetrator is the only way to liberate herself from the suffering that she has endured. The LTTE narrative persuades raped women to believe that by committing suicide bombing and negating her *polluted body*, she performs the tasks of (1)

avenging their perpetrators, and (2) engages in the ancient purification ritual- the *agni pravesam* or immolation by fire (Maunaguru 169). The invention of suicide belts by the LTTE, which was perfected for the female body, exemplifies how the LTTE utilises female bodies. The media attraction that a female suicide bomber holds than the male suicide bomber, further highlights the exploitation. Even though Saraswathi considers her joining the LTTE as an act of empowerment, she can be observed as a victim of the LTTE's patriarchal nationalistic agenda.

Loss of agency in their homeland due to their label as a rape victim and the fear of rape during the ethnic conflict impels women to migrate to other countries as a way of reasserting their agency. Character S, the militant's wife and the Tamil Tigress are characters who migrated to other countries in the hope of a secure living. But they are revictimised as their vulnerability as asylum seekers is exploited in the migrant land. The stigma of a rape victim haunts the character S and the militant's wife through gossip in the host country. The gossip that they both endured alienated them from those who helped them, which gradually led to their alienation. The female tigress is a victim of fear in the migrant land, where she fears deportation in Malaysia if she is diagnosed with HIV.

The act of migration, which initially seemed like a way to escape the trauma and stigma of their past, the gossip and the judgment that they encounter, not only strips away their sense of security but also becomes another layer of adversity for these individuals to navigate. Eventhough the characters such as S, the militant's wife and the tamil tigress, initially considered migration as a means of coping or seeking refuge from adverse circumstances, it became a battleground where they faced revictimisation in their label of a rape victim.

The research questions are duly addressed in the chapters of the thesis. Chapter II addresses the first research question and points out the social and psychological factors that impel army men to use rape as a tool of assertion. The second and third questions are addressed in Chapter III, focusing on the psychology of women survivors and their stigmatised state, where they are traumatised. The fourth and fifth research questions are discussed in Chapter IV, where the coping mechanisms of the victims and their subsequent revictimisation are discussed.

The study initiated a reading on some women characters like Poomani, Sugandhi and Juliet who could liberate themselves from the conditioned coping mechanisms in which the majority of women characters were stuck. An intentional effort can be seen in these characters to escape from the passive state of victimhood, where they liberate their mind from the traditional definition of pure woman rooted in chastity.

Poomani establishes her independent state as a woman by killing her perpetrator, thereby announcing a change. Juliet could escape from the stigmatised state as a rape victim by using her sexuality, where she gains her identity as a woman. She could protect herself from the continuous denials of society and family through a return, which, to her, is the use of her female sexuality. Her later life after Lion’s death reflects the revolutionary spirit in her, where she rejects the conditioned definitions of womanhood. Her association with Peter Jeevanandam reasserts her determined self, where she uses her sexuality for her cause. Though the emotional bondage that she develops in the later stage places her in a state of in-betweenness, she could prioritise her cause over her emotions.

Sugandhi stands as an epitome of an absolute woman who liberates herself completely from the traditionally inflicted patriarchal definitions of women. She remains as the symbol of protest, assertion and resistance throughout her life where physical tortures inflicted on her by the dominant men never subjugates her thoughts, action and spirit. Though wounded, amputated and tortured brutally, she continues her life for a cause where she is symbolised as Devanayaki.

The study investigated the victimised state of women characters in the context of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict. Male characters assuming themselves as protectors and fighters of their nation indulge in the act of raping their enemy's women. He deliberately uses raping as an act to prove his military masculinity and loyal citizenship. The enemy man, along with his women, is placed in fear of victim blaming and stigmatisation, where they consider death less challenging than rape. As the protection of female purity is bestowed upon women along with their men, the inability to do so places both of them in a state of dilemma. A woman who violates honour is treated as an outcast, and her man hides his fear of emasculation and repentance by outcasting her.

More than a violation of the female body, rape is used as a strategy to assert dominance over the property of men, thereby asserting their influence on their enemy’s object. Women, being the socio-cultural reproducers of a nation, are revictimised for the loss of their honour. This places the responsibility of upholding the community's honour solely on women, depriving them of agency and protection. The fear of societal stigmatisation and victim-blaming impelled her to be silent about the trauma that she had encountered. She is not even recognised as a victim. The urge to verbalise the act forces the victim to rely upon diverse coping mechanisms.

The self-imagined coping mechanisms, such as migration, joining counter-movements like the LTTE, and adopting silence, fail to provide complete relief to all characters. In some cases, these survival strategies become oppressive, ultimately reinforcing their victimised state rather than alleviating it. These coping mechanisms reassert the victimised state, as rather than healing the root cause of trauma, these strategies provide additional burdens on the individual. While migration offers a physical escape, the characters face stigma and cultural disconnection, and their memories haunt them even in the new land. Joining militant organisations like the LTTE, while initially appearing empowering, ultimately fails to fulfil their desire for recognition and acceptance as heroes. Joining the organisation after experiencing rape and becoming a suicide bomber, she hopes to reclaim her agency.

However, even after completing her mission, society refuses to view her as a hero. Instead, her act is seen as a form of purification, erasing her *polluted* body through self-destruction. When the coping mechanism of silence is a way of agency assertion for the character S, The Militant's Wife's silence cannot be observed as an empowering act. The strategy of defensive silence, due to fear and societal pressures, suppresses her voice and erodes her agency.

The study initiated an intense analysis of the plight of rape victims, focusing on their post-rape trauma and the attitude of society towards their victimised status. The close reading of the characters observes how they are conditioned by the societal construct, which reinstates their identity as victims, providing no choice for change. Their apprehension of themselves as a social construct reinforces their dilemma, where they succumb to the state of victimisation.

Further Avenues for Enquiry

The study has examined the state of raped women, their coping mechanisms and the psychology of the male rapist during the ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka that spanned twenty-six years, from July 23, 1983, to May 18, 2009. The study that states rape as a biopolitical tool of the State to regulate the bodies of minority women in Sri Lanka also delineates the liminal space of life and death that the raped body is placed in the socio-cultural and political space of the country, which degrades them as *abjects.* The trauma that they face due to their abject position and the coping mechanisms of silence, joining counter movements like the LTTE and migration also has become a subject of study.

As the study concentrates mainly on the sufferings of raped women victims, as discussed in its narrations, the cinematic and documentary representations are not addressed in this work. The film *In the Name of Buddha* (2002), directed by Rajesh Touchriver, and the documentary No Fire Zone: The Killing Fields of Sri Lanka (2013), directed by Callum Macrae, discuss the issue.

The topic of male rape victims of the conflict and their suffering is also not mentioned in the study. Even though the stigma related to rape has led to underreporting as in female rape, “Legacies and Lessons: Sexual Violence against Men and Boys in Sri Lanka and Bosnia & Herzegovina," published by the All Survivors Project and “Unsilenced: Male Survivors Speak of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Sri Lanka" by the International Truth and Justice Project (ITJP) gives insights into the topic.

The state of rape victims in Sri Lanka during the ethnic conflict, in comparison with victims in other South Asian countries during times of conflict, is a significant area for exploration. The condition of rape victims during the Bangladesh Liberation War shows a notable similarity to the experiences of raped women in Sri Lanka during the ethnic conflict and India during Partition. In Bangladesh, these women were initially elevated to the status of *Biranganas* (war heroines). However, over time, the term became equated with *Baranganas* (a term synonymous with prostitutes), reflecting the stigmatisation they endured. This course of events is similar to the experiences of raped women in Sri Lanka during the ethnic conflict and India during Partition. The traumatic experiences of *Biranganas* are powerfully narrated in works like Dilruba Z. Ara's *Blame* (2015) and Dr Neelima Ibrahim's *Aami Birangana Bolchi* (1994), translated into English as *A War Heroine, I Speak* by Fayeza Hasanat (2017). Similarly, the literature of the Partition, including Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988), Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975), provides harrowing accounts of rape and the societal aftermath faced by survivors. This comparative study could reveal patterns of victimisation, stigmatisation, and societal responses across different South Asian conflicts, offering insights into the intersections of gender, war, and culture in the region.

Exploring autobiographies of former members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), especially women, will provide valuable insights into the personal experiences of Tigresses. Works like *In the Shadow of a Sword: The Memoir of a Woman Leader in the LTTE* (2016) by S. Thamilini, *Tamil Tigress*

(2011) by Niromi de Soyza and *A Fleeting Moment in My Country: The Last Years of the LTTE De-Facto State* by N. Malathy (2012) provides their experiences as women combatants in the war and their key motivations to join the movement and struggles that they have undergone.

A study on prison narratives is possible as imprisonment was used as a tool of war during ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka by both the groups - the State and the LTTE- to suppress dissent, punish opposition, and instil fear. The works such as *A Long Watch: War, Captivity and Return in Sri Lanka* (2016) by Commodore Ajith Boyagoda and *Holding Out: Memoirs of a Political Prisoner in Sri Lanka 1986-1988* (2017) by Pulsara Liyanage provide firsthand accounts of such experiences. While the former delineates captivity under the LTTE, the latter highlights political imprisonment by the state. A study on narratives like this will give a broader understanding of the socio-political dynamics of the conflict, the use of imprisonment as a tool of war, and the human cost of ideological divides.

Appendix I

Excerpt from the transcript of my interview with Ms Sumathy Sivamohan, writer, award-winning filmmaker, performer and academic of Sri Lanka, dated 14 March 2023.

SWAPNA. In what ways are you personally connected to the war?

SUMATHY. My family was politically conscious. My sisters, Dr Rajani Thiranagama and Ms Nirmala, were also part of the activities. We are Tamils from Jaffna. As a family, we were concerned about social issues, not nationalism...but social issues. As a person living in Jaffna, where you are surrounded by riots, the army, and suffering, it is quite common that you are part of it.

SWAPNA. There are so many instances of sexual violence documented in the work ofyour sister, Dr Rajani Thiranagama. What is your stand on the issue?

SUMATHY. That particular chapter is more about the IPKF.

SWAPNA. Was Jaffna like a separate state ruled by the LTTE?

SUMATHY. The LTTE became dominant after 1985. LTTE was not the onlygroup. There were six-seven dominant groups (EROS, EPLF, TELO, etc.) who fought for the Tamil Land. The LTTE killed the other groups and became dominant. When the IPKF came to Lanka, India asked them to come together for a settlement. The groups other than the LTTE accepted this. The LTTE

was not happy as they were not ready to share power. In 1990, when the IPKF left, the LTTE became the only dominant force.

SWAPNA. In Meena Kandasamy's work, *the orders were to rape you*, she calls the IPKF a rapist army. What is your stand on it?

SUMATHY. I won't agree with the statement. Tamil Nadu sensationalised the whole thing. Yes, I agree the IPKF was horrible. They came with the hope ofpeace, but there was no peace. They became part of the warring faction. I was living in Jaffna during the period of the IPKF. They were everywhere. You wake up, brushing your teeth, look out of the window, and you see a soldier standing by the window. They were in check posts, in our gardens, everywhere.

SWAPNA. Was rape a strategy in the war?

SUMATHY.I think rape is used. Ya, you can say it was a strategy to frighten people. But it was also a strategy that came easily to men with arms. A strategy that they won't really question. Army... they are killing with license, so rape is nothing.

SWAPNA. Isn't it an easy tool to control women in conflict zones?

SUMATHY. It is an easy tool. You become your own enemy when you are raped because you are psychologically traumatised. Even your neighbours turn against you, as you are raped. There is so much trauma that comes with rape.

SWAPNA. What is the present state of women who were raped? Are they still living with the stigma?

SUMATHY. Some have moved on due to counselling, but you never forget the instance, right? We also found during the time that there is also a lot of abuse within the community. We had a shelter, a home, “Poorani” in which Rajani was involved. There were many women who took refuge there, and what we found was that most women were abused within the community, within the family. It is more traumatic when it happens within your own home. I did a play (just before Rajani died), “An Old Wife’s Tale” in Jaffna. Rajani acted as one of the rape victims. In that, we spoke of the trauma, the double trauma due to the ostracisation of society. The trauma of being raped is one. But the trauma of howsociety treats the woman is greater. Stigmatisation is part of trauma. It will never allow you to come out of trauma.

SWAPNA. Do you think moving from the place (immigration) will be a coping mechanism for the woman?

SUMATHY. For different people, it means different things. For some people, it might be helpful.

SWAPNA. Do you think the LTTE has used the sentiments of women like this for their political motives?

SUMATHY. Yes, very much. They say, if you are raped, you have no life, so be a suicide bomber, something like that. More than rape, they have exploited helplessness and poverty for their benefits.

SWAPNA. In a way, can we say that those who hold power (the army and the LTTE) have exploited the bodies of women?

SUMATHY. In the last phase of the war (from 2008), there were lots of rape and sexual violence happening. It was part of a terror campaign, not a policy. The war has gone on for almost thirty years, and the male establishment within the army was very angry at the challenge posed by the LTTE. Women LTTE cadres were challenging male authority. LTTE cadres were captured at the end of the war, and there were stories that women cadres were made to dress in bikinis, bras, etc., and were made to serve food to army officials. It was not even rape; it was some other spectacle. If it is true (and I think some of them might be true), comes out of anger against women who challenge their armed masculinity. There were female suicide bombers for the LTTE at that time. People were so curious about female suicide bombers compared to male suicide bombers. During wartime, if it is a female suicide bomber, the media will post pictures of them and will create a story of their own about the woman, like she was raped, etc.

SWAPNA. What about the possibility for these women to approach the law?

SUMATHY. It was war; there was no law. There was a huge case in which the army was involved, the Krishnathi Kumaraswamy case. The soldier was convicted in that case because it was in Jaffna and there was a Tamil judge. At that time, the government also wanted fair play.

SWAPNA. Why was the LTTE unhappy with Dr Rajani Thiranagama in the later stage?

SUMATHY. LTTE doesn't like criticism. They don't have a culture of political conversation. Rajani's book "The Broken Palmyrah" criticised the way in

which the LTTE is acting. They got the work in manuscript form, and they were not happy with the work. Even in Tamilini's case, the same happened. She was an intellectual in the LTTE, and she was shifted from the political wing to the women's wing as they felt that she was asking too many questions.

SWAPNA. What was the intention behind Dr Rajani, while writing this work, as she herself might be aware of the dangers of documenting the narratives of raped women?

SUMATHY. The work published after her death, they were in its writing stage. I think she wanted to make people known about the things that are happening. People committed suicide because of societal stigmatisation. They didn't commit suicide immediately, but after three to four days, which means they needed family or friends' support, but they didn't receive it.

SWAPNA. What was the importance of "Poorani" during the period?

SUMATHY. It was established for women who couldn't find solace in their homes. But the LTTE took it over. We left to different places after Rajani's death. I was on the board of Poorani. But I left for Colombo, and my elder sister, Nirmala, was not in the country. My younger sister, Vasuki, was part of Poorani. I used to go and sleep there sometimes, as they were scared due to the presence of the IPKF. It was a place for women, but when men with arms came to the place, they were afraid. They come there because it is a place for women, and they were always suspicious of places like that. After the departure of the IPKF, the LTTE began to enter the space, asking for money.

When they began to pressure us for money for the second time, all board members resigned. There was only one woman who had not resigned, and she came to Colombo, pledging her brother to the LTTE and told me that she couldn't return to Jaffna without money. As I felt sorry for her, I didn't resign and signed the cheque. "Poorani" dispersed before the end of the war itself. When we all left, "Poorani" was led by three women: Jayanthi, Reji and Viji. They all left afterwards, because they couldn't live in Jaffna because of the LTTE. There were also women like Selvi and Sivaramani. They were in the age of twenty-three to twenty-four. Selvi acted in my play with Rajani. She was killed by the LTTE. Before that, Sivaramani committed suicide. They are all involved in Poorani. Selvi had some political connections. She was doing drama and theatre. She had one more semester to go. So she didn't leave the university, even though there was pressure on her to leave. She was acting in a Palestinian play. The LTTE was unhappy, and they arrested five to six people. Selvi was so close to Rajani. After a long time, the LTTE informed her family that she was dead. Sivaramani also couldn't leave, as her mother was pressuring her for marriage and she had a boyfriend. But the LTTE also arrested her boyfriend around the same time. Later, she committed suicide.

SWAPNA. Is it a must that the LTTE should be given money? Was it the norm?

SUMATHY. You have to give gold, money or a child. Something you have to give. There are people who are friendly with the LTTE (powerful people like University lecturers); they don't have to give their child to the LTTE. From

one family, you have to give a child. At the end of the war, they took every child. A child above the age of ten won't get a pass from Jaffna. My son was living in Jaffna with my parents. As the war started, the LTTE didn't allow a pass for him, even though he was small. My son was sent to Colombo through my Poorani friends.

SWAPNA. Did the LTTE use rape as a strategy to control women?

SUMATHY. Now there are stories of rape. Earlier, they said there is high sexual control, and I think that is also true. But in the last phase of the war… now we are getting stories. They had a marriage committee. The marriage of two LTTE members should be approved by the LTTE.

SWAPNA. What is the state of children born out of rape post war?

SUMATHY. It was not a big phenomenon. If you had a baby and were married, the LTTE won't recruit women like that. Due to that, women wanted to get married and have children. I know people like that. As the marriage was an arrangement to escape from recruitment, there were also many divorces. I have never listened to the traumas of children born out of rape.

SWAPNA. Was rape a strategy in Sri Lanka?

SUMATHY. Rape happened at the end of the war. They are regiments. If the commanders were not strict, the army might have gone for rape. There was no strategy (from the headquarters to the rape). It might be a terror tactic. It isnot written anywhere, but it might be in their minds.

SWAPNA. Was there impunity for soldiers during the war?

SUMATHY. Oh! Yes…Isai Priya, the LTTE media person…her body was naked at the time of her death. We don't know whether she was raped, but her body was naked. We assume she was raped. The soldiers took pictures of her and shared them with the media, international agencies, etc.

SWAPNA. What is the end of the war like for the LTTE?

SUMATHY. LTTE people surrendered to the army, but they disappeared. The army came and arrested, and later, there is no record of it.

SWAPNA. Are they innocent or a part of the LTTE?

SUMATHY. As the LTTE recruited everybody at the end of the war, there is no point in categorising them as innocent or not. (In a sense, they are all innocent. They are innocent, that doesn't mean they are not LTTE. There was one or two orphanages run by the LTTE. I spoke to a person from the orphanage (later he was arrested by the army, and I spoke to him from the army camp), and he told me that if you are a member of the orphanage, you will also be a member of the LTTE. Once, a school was bombed by the army, suspecting that it was a training camp of the LTTE. The sad reality is that it was both a school and a training camp.

SWAPNA. Did fear rule the minds of Tamil women in Sri Lanka?

SUMATHY. Now, army battalions are there. State aggression is there. After the war, women are scared because they feel very powerless. When they pass through army camps, some stories will be created about them. Sometimes, when a woman is going to work, an army man might speak to her, and others

will see it and spread gossip that the woman is speaking with the army. It was a much tensed period. Now it is not so. Now, people live in poverty.

SWAPNA. What is the state of those who migrated during the conflict?

SUMATHY. They won't come back. Some of them are helping people here in Jaffna. They come back for a holiday.

SWAPNA. There are diverse works of literature that portray the trauma experienced by people during the war. Do you believe there has been suppression by the government in allowing these stories to be told?

SUMATHY. So many former LTTE cadets are writing literature. I don't think the State takes literary works so seriously; they never consider it as a challenge, I think. Journalists get attacked, killed and disappeared. If it is films, especially Sinhala films that criticise the army, the State won't allow it. Army people were considered heroes. The Army was glorified.

Appendix II

The transcript of my interview with Ms Meena Kandasamy, writer, translator and activist, dated 21 January 2025.

SWAPNA. The book *the orders were to rape you: tigresses in the tamil eelam struggle* highlights the intersection of war, oppression and patriarchy. How do you see these forces shaping the lives of women in conflict zones?

MEENA. In Sri Lanka, we can refer to it as Tamil Eelam…right? Because it is a separate homeland. In the homeland, there is a long history of sexual violence, and there is a huge interplay of that. The book talks about what happened in2009. In 2009, the genocide happened, and after the genocide, they captured the territory, and these women were taken. The women who were suspected as Tigers were taken to camps known as Ramanathan camps or Manik Farm camps. They were repeatedly raped. A few of them escaped. They were former tigers; I met and spoke to them. The liberation struggle goes back to the 1980's. In the 1980s, the Sinhala army raped these women. They raped at checkpoints, they went to their houses and raped them. One of the Tigers revealed to me that her mother was raped in front of her. Another kind of rape that happened in Sri Lanka was the rape by the IPKF. The rape was so extensive that it is often said by many people that the scale of it was immense, something like one in three women inJaffna got raped. That was the reason why these women came to the conclusion that if they didn't take weapons, they couldn't protect themselves. There are many movements that fight for the liberation of the land, like Hamas in Palestine. But they don't

have female fighters; the Al-Qassam Brigades are entirely composed of men. In the Tigers, one-third of the fighting force was women, and there are many groups like this around the world that include women in their force. One of the reasons for women to join forces like these is rape, even though the primary motivation is fighting for their land. If you look *at the Sandinistas (Sandinista National Liberation Front), a socialist political and military organisation in Nicaragua or the* FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), you can see that these groups had a lot of women fighters. The LTTE too had many women fighters. Our understanding of rape as something that happens to women and is used as a strategy of war against them has now shifted, due to the widespread perversion of armies around the world. If you look at Palestine, the Israeli army was raping Palestinian men. There are Palestinian fighters and even doctors who have been raped and died as a result of the rape. This happened in 2024. So I think we have gone beyond the paradigm of viewing rape solely as something that happens to women, as men are also subjected to rape and even killed as a result.

SWAPNA. Do you think literature and narratives like this can play a role in reconciliation and justice in post conflict societies?

MEENA. I think there is a history to this reconciliation and justice project, which largely emerged from what happened in South Africa. After the end of Apartheid, there was a whole committee of peace and reconciliation. In that, people come and say whatever happened to them. There was public sharing in the idea of public amnesty. Nobody was going to be punished, but

everything was going to be documented. There are two aspects of this; one of them is whether writing a book like this will lead to reconciliation. I don't think so. But will it lead a lot of people to understand the horrors that the Tamil people faced? Will this lead to understanding why Tamil people had to fight? I think that is very essential because it is a very specific and extreme case. When we write about this rape, I don't think we can only look at it in isolation. Because the rape happens under occupation, rape happens under militarisation. In the case of Jaffna, there was one soldier for three people. It was an absolute militaristic state that was operating there. We have to understand that these stories take place in the specific context of occupying forces, and the question of reconciliation and justice never comes out of storytelling. Reconciliation and Justice, at the end of the day, will have to come from recognising your homeland. It should come from recognising the right of the people to get their homeland. It has to come from, in the case of Tamil Eelam, from an independent Tamil Eelam, in Palestine, from a free Palestine. Wherever people are fighting for their rights, from their land, the problem is actually the question of the land, and if you don't hold the land, you will be stateless, you will be homeless. And I think -all our work, all our expressions, all our fight- are fundamentally linked to the fact that people should have the land for which they are fighting.

SWAPNA. Very few books address the topic of sexual violence. What has your experience been with reading or learning about it?

MEENA. There are some reports regarding it.

SWAPNA. In your book, you mention that asking victims to speak about their experiences feels like another form of violence against them.

MEENA. Ya... You cannot force them to come and talk about violence…Right? It is very cruel. Even if it is a community, even if it is only women, why does she want to tell me about violence? I have to earn that space in her life. She should feel the need for that. If she feels that it happened years ago and it never defines her, why should she talk about it? Women don't have to talk about itbecause it never defines them.

SWAPNA. If they are reluctant to speak about it, will it be possible for them to come out of the trauma that they endure?

MEENA. I think that this works in two ways. I have to caution you …We cannot force American ways of looking at the world in place of understanding the world. The American way may get more publications and more peer reviews. We cannot simply say that if they have trauma, they have to talk about it. Every community processes trauma differently. Can we go and say to a mother, I think my father was not good to you, let us talk about the trauma? The mother might be more traumatised if they talk about it, so they don't talk about it. They might talk about it when they are angry. They decide when to talk about it. Maybe they don't want to talk about it. We cannot force people into what we hold as a scientific, philosophical, judgemental or analytical category. So many talk about trigger warnings. They say that if you read about rape, you need a content warning, you need a trigger warning. But people who are actually on the battlefield, who see blood every day, who see

people getting killed, do they need a trigger warning to talk about what is happening to them? For them, they want justice, they want dialogue, and they want to talk about it. So we can't take the role for ourselves and say that because these women don't talk, their trauma is not addressed. Because they might be having ten or fifteen, or maybe two methods of fighting and healing the trauma. Maybe for some women, if she is raped, her response to it may be fight, take a weapon, maybe for another, it might be talk, maybe for another, it is to stay silent. We can't say you all should go to therapy, as you are in trauma. These days, everybody has the idea of agency. On the one hand, we have to be very supportive, and on the other, we have to chronicle what is happening. But, as a writer, I don't want to say this woman has not solved her trauma. That statement is too judgmental, and I don't want to be judgmental. If she has trauma, she knows what she is going to do. She will seek help if she needs it. And I want that space to exist for me.

SWAPNA. Did the LTTE have the practice of controlling female sexuality? Did they kill their women critics by claiming that they are sexually loose women?

MEENA. I have never read that the LTTE killed anybody for their sexuality. They want more people to join. If they start killing people, only less people will join. If a group is a small group and if the group wants to hold state power, it will need more people. If they control and kill them, do you think people will join the guerrilla force? It tactically and strategically doesn't make any sense to me, and I have not read about it. Even now, a lot of people are stating that

Hamas is not standing for women's empowerment- they are anti-women. The question is not whether Hamas is feminist or not, the crucial question is whether Hamas fight Israel and manages to save the land. The question is not whether Hamas allow women to wear short dresses; the question never saves them from bombing. Can we say, just because it is a hundred per cent male force, it is against women? Only because of their fight, so many women's lives were saved. Israel also criticises Hamas with claims such as they rape women. It was written in the New York Times and later spread. I once spoke to Arundathi Roy, who told me that once the case of rape starts to be discussed, it is like a scorched-earth policy. We cannot discuss any other dimension after that. I think all resistance movements around the world are affected by this propaganda, the propaganda that they are raping women. If I want to start a resistance movement, I don't do this to women. I want to get land, I want to capture power, I want to get more arms, and I smuggle weapons for my fight. If you are in a movement, how will you spend your time? You will spend your time defending your land, trying to get more power, develop your recruits.

SWAPNA. Why is the title of the book all in small letters? Was it an intentional effort?

MEENA. It is just designing.

SWAPNA. What has been the response from survivors or their families to your work?

MEENA. I think one or two of them got asylum in Europe. The problem is that when they become asylum seekers, they have to work in some grocery stores; their whole life is gone. I mean, they are safe. But they do not have the kind of life that they used to know. The survivors cannot do much in the struggle. The struggles still have to be done by the people in the homeland. Now also people are fighting for their right to even remember 2009. They are not allowed to conduct Remembrance Day meetings or Heroes' Day meetings by the army. Another thing is that there were a lot of writers in the LTTE; many of the fighters were writing. The second section of my book includes the poems of those writers. There is a male poet whose name is Puthuvel Rathnadurai. He carried a white flag and surrendered in May 2009, and till today they have not shown his dead body, but they have not released him alive either. There were hundreds of people in the movement who were theoreticians, teachers, poets, intellectuals who were taken by the army (possibly they might be killed), and they just disappeared, and there is no information about them till today.

SWAPNA. What is the state of disappeared people like this?

MEENA. People like us should ask what has happened to people such as Puthuvel Rathnadurai. Even after fifteen years, they have not released his dead body or sent him back.

SWAPNA. Do you think rape was really a strategy implemented by the Sri Lankan government?

MEENA. The problem lies in the fact that occupying nations learn from one another. They share intelligence techniques and tactics under the head of counterterrorism—strategies refined over time. These include methodsfor subduing populations, coercing compliance, executing military propaganda, and deploying embedded journalism. These are some standard techniques they use. Most of these techniques were developed during the Vietnam War, and they were subsequently used everywhere globally. [Crucially, these strategies are never formally documented.] Any military manual would never explicitly state, “If you find a female Tiger, rape her.” [or the equivalent: "If you encounter a female combatant, rape her.”] These are the things that they do very carefully, never leaving behind a trail of evidence. It is an unwritten strategy. There will never be a manual where you can turn to a page and see the rule saying “control the women by rape”. But what they tell is what you are allowed to do, whatever you want to do. You can interrogate until the person breaks down. See, what happens in Guantanamo Bay, where America has kept suspects of terrorism on an island where they will be faced with all kinds of torture. You can say it is for extracting information, but it is never for extraction. It is for some perverse reason. So there is a strategy that never gets written down. But we know it is a strategy because no one who commits rape gets punished; there is complete impunity. How do they get legal impunity for what they have done? It is because it is policy. [These acts are not rogue crimes—they are de facto policy, shielded by institutional silence and tacit approval.]

SWAPNA. What is the state of raped women in Sri Lanka? Are these war crimes addressed? Are they getting support from the government?

MEENA. No… There has been no justice. Right now, Sri Lanka has a so-called communist government. We have to see. The government may not punish everybody. At least they are listening. But the interesting thing that happened is that Sri Lanka understands that these stories will reach other countries. These women who are raped and men who are tortured are going abroad. What Sri Lanka did was they wanted to give diplomatic impunity to those who perpetrated violence (to the high-ranking officials). If you appoint one as an ambassador to another country, you will get diplomatic immunity. You can't be arrested by any other country. So these horrible men were appointed as diplomats in other countries. Another thing is that, as they are abroad, they can go and lobby. He can do counterpropaganda easily as he is the representative of the country. He (the high-ranking military officer who has been appointed as a newly minted diplomat) can do counterpropaganda easily, as he is the representative of the country.

Appendix III

The transcript of my interview with Mr T.D. Ramakrishnan, writer, dated 26 January 2025.

SWAPNA. In most of your works, the female body is depicted as a site where any kind of violence is possible. Why is it so?

TD. Controlling women and their sexuality has been a practice since the very beginning of human existence, with multiple layers to its manifestation. Throughout history, women and children have often been the primary victims of wars. Acts of violence against women's bodies frequently serve as an extension of the hatred directed toward the enemy.

SWAPNA. The character Sugandhi in your novel *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki* is a woman caught between the Sinhala army and the LTTE. Was this character created out of your belief that this character can reflect many women in Sri Lanka who were caught in the crossfire between these two forces?

TD. More than a belief, there is clear evidence. From 80’s itself I am working as a railway employee in Tamil Nadu at Salem. I started learning Tamil out of an interest in reading something. In 1983, a mass massacre happened in Sri Lanka called Black July. The most discussed topic of that period in Tamil Nadu was this massacre. As there was a kind of brotherhood between Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils, the Tamil problem in Sri Lanka was a much-discussed topic in Tamil literature and Tamil groups during that period. The

time when I started reading, this was the topic of most of the articles in journals, poems, novels and fiction. The things that I read and the experiences that were shared by writers like Shobha Sakthi, who are personally connected to me, made me change my perspective towards the issue. At first, I, too, considered the movement under Mr Prabhakaran a revolutionary one. But later, the experiences shared by those who are in Sri Lanka, and also when I started to understand the issue in depth, I understood that the issue is more complicated. The method of violence they practised—whether by the LTTE, the state and military opposing them, or the IPKF, which promised peace to the land… The wars that they fought in the guise of bringing peace to the land are fundamentally anti-human. The presence of victims of these inhuman attacks is increasingly reflected in literature. Some writings reflecting these themes gain wide popularity through mainstream publication, while others remain confined to their specific communities. I have been in contact with them, and they have shared the immense suffering they endured—pain that is beyond our imagination. Having experienced such hardships, they gradually became perpetrators of violence themselves. As a result, they justify violence. For instance, if a person belongs to a Tamil radical group, they will rationalise their group's violence as a reaction to the violence inflicted by the opposing group. Similarly, if a person belongs to the Sinhala group, they will justify their violence as a response to the violence inflicted by the LTTE.

SWAPNA. Was that the reason you called this ethnic conflict ‘a war between equally corrupt forces’?

TD. We can’t use the word ‘equally corrupt’, but they are equally responsible as perpetrators of violence.

SWAPNA. How can the LTTE's actions be viewed as equally corrupt when their struggle is rooted in the fight for a homeland?

TD. When we look at Nepal as a case study, the situation becomes clearer. The country experienced a major Maoist movement led by Mr Prachanda, which initially employed violence. However, when the opportunity arose, they shifted toward peace and democracy. Following the path of violence should not lead us into never-ending cycles of violence. But in Lanka, the situation was different. There were opportunities for peace two or three times, but unfortunately, they didn’t utilise these chances effectively. To understand why these opportunities for peace were not utilized by the LTTE, we need to delve deeper into the complexities of the situation. The idea of the UN being the keeper of world peace is merely a myth. In reality, world peace is controlled and manipulated by forces that operate behind the scenes, hidden from plain sight, working underground. These hidden forces are arm traders and manufacturers. It is controlled by countries that claim to be peace preservers. While they may act as mediators of peace on one hand, on the other, a significant portion—perhaps 36%—of their GDP might come from arms exports. They will even sabotage the chances of peace. There is always a war; only the battlefield changes. The LTTE's funding largely came from

foreign countries. A Tamil individual living abroad was required to contribute eighty dollars, and if they refused, the LTTE would resort to threats. They used this money to purchase weapons. Arms-trading nations are particularly eager to sell weapons to groups like the LTTE because it is three to four times more profitable than selling them to other countries. These countries will always undermine peacemaking attempts. There was a peace initiative called the Thimpu Talks that came very close to achieving peace. In Sri Lanka, one side consisted of the Sinhala majority and the other of the Tamil majority. They almost reached an agreement to establish two independent units coexisting within Sri Lanka. They could have stopped there, but the arms-trading countries encouraged them to continue the war until they achieved a fully independent nation. The international interactions of the LTTE were controlled by Mr Anton Balasingham. The main reason behind the LTTE's setback was his death due to cancer. Even though Prabhakaran was a great leader, the effective management of the LTTE's international relations became a headache for Prabhakaran after the death of Balasingham. These arm traders trap them into big troubles… Revolutionary organisations like the LTTE, striving for an independent land, have been reduced to mere puppets controlled by arms traders. Let us look at the present scenario of Sri Lankan politics. Mr Anura Kumara Dissanayake is now the President of Sri Lanka. Formerly a revolutionary leader of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), he is currently supported by a US ambassador of Korean origin. Why is he supported by the US ambassador? This support is likely driven by the need to counterbalance the significant

Chinese influence in Sri Lanka, which was prominently encouraged during the Rajapaksa regime. I am not implying that the current president is a poor administrator; in fact, he is far superior compared to many of his predecessors. However, international politics is inherently complex, filled with undercurrents which are difficult to analyse with lighter logic.

SWAPNA. Did the LTTE use the trauma of raped women as a propaganda tool to attract Tamil women to the group? Did they manipulate their conscience in such a way that being a suicide bomber is the only way to escape from the trauma that they experience?

TD. It is said that these incidents have occurred. I don't have firsthand information about them. But naturally…such things could have happened. There are countless women in the country who have fallen victim to rape and other types of violence. Tragically, the perpetrators of these kinds of violence were those who came to the land with the mission of reinstating peace. So, naturally, it is plausible that individuals could be brainwashed or manipulated into such situations.

SWAPNA. The character called Lion in the novel is depicted as an agent of the Statewho employs violence, especially rape, as a tactic to silence politically motivatedwomen. Was there a practice of silencing women through inducing violence on the female body?

TD. LTTE's women's wing was very strong. They respond fiercely. What differentiates the LTTE from other groups is its high emphasis on female security. They stood firmly for women. There won't be sexual violence

within the group. They might be brainwashing them and using them as suicide bombers. We can't say that it is a good thing done to them. But they were the protectors of morality. But women who come or question their interests will be killed. Rajani Thiranagama is an example of that.

SWAPNA. Did the LTTE use the myth of female purity as a means to control women within their ranks? In the novel, it is narrated that Sugandhi marries Stalin as part of Iyakkam's disciplinary actions for speaking against the authority. Could this policy within the Iyakkam, forcing women into marriages as a means of silencing them, be interpreted as a way of suppressing dissent?

TD. This strategy is a common practice in many guerrilla organisations. Women who raise dissent are often forced into marriage and pushed toward having a family. Such organisations justify these actions by claiming that any measures they take are justified in pursuit of their ultimate goal.

SWAPNA. Was there a practice of the LTTE killing women who spoke out against their policies or actions, labelling them as women with loose morals to justify such acts?

TD. Yes, there was such a practice. There is a story by Shobha Sakthi that illustratesthis. The protagonist of the story is a painter who works in Eelam. One night, while the painter is lying drunk, three LTTE members come to his home, demanding that a board be written. When the painter is unable to comply, the son agrees, as the LTTE threatens to kill his father if they refuse. The next day, on the street, a woman is tied to a tree and shot dead. The boy,

horrified, rushes to the scene and realises that the board he wrote the night before is hanging around the woman's neck. The board reads: 'I am a prostitute. I deserve this punishment.' When I asked the writer, who is a friend of mine, whether this was based on a real incident, she told me that the actual situation was even more tragic. The woman was speaking for peace; she was not a prostitute.

SWAPNA. Didn't Rajani Thiranagama speak in support of the LTTE before?

TD. She was killed simply because she was a spokesperson for peace. I must admit that even I initially thought the LTTE had only good intentions. However, as we began to understand the working procedures of the LTTE, it became evident that their methods were somewhat dangerous. The same holds true in Rajani's case. Rajani's elder sister, Nirmala, continued with the LTTE. But Rajani couldn't agree with their policies. One of the reasons for her disagreement might have been the insights she gained from her discussions on the matter with her husband, Dayapala Thiranagama, a member of the JVP. Later, Rajani, along with three other doctors, authored *The Broken Palmyrah*. This work documented real-life instances of violence. This was how she voiced her opposition to the LTTE.

SWAPNA. The raped women often adopt coping mechanisms such as silence, joining a revolutionary organisation, or migration. But can we say these methods are completely successful?

TD. They don't have any other alternative. Why do they migrate? They believe that through migration, they can move to a safer place. The theme of the movie

Dheepan addresses this issue. Sobha Sakthi plays a lead role in the film, which was showcased at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival. It tells the story of a refugee family and their struggles. As refugees, they migrate to different countries and face numerous challenges, especially in places like France, where obtaining refugee status is a long and difficult process. Those who eventually gain refugee status, including victims of violence, often live together. They all know they have suffered atrocities, including rape. Despite this shared pain, they continue forward because they have no other option.

SWAPNA. What was the state of women in rehabilitation centres like Manik Farms?

TD. The Sri Lankan government's rehabilitation centres were a deliberate effort to neutralise resistance among former LTTE members. One of the characters in the novel, Thamizholi, is the leader of the women's wing. She is based on a real-life figure, Thamizhini, whose name is altered in the novel. Women like her raised critical questions, challenging authority and the status quo. The trainer of the women's wing, Adele Balasingham, was a French citizen. Rumours circulated that she was an agent of arms dealers, though there is no concrete evidence to support this claim.

SWAPNA. What do you think is the significance of white vans in the political climate of Sri Lanka?

TD. Leena Manimekalai's documentary, *The White Van Stories*, sheds light on the enforced disappearances that took place during the Rajapaksa regime. During this period, resistance and criticism against the government were systematically suppressed. Dissenters were abducted in white vans without

number plates, and after their disappearance, no further information about them was ever found. One of the most well-known victims was journalist Lasantha Wickrematunge, who was abducted and later found dead. However, for many others, even their bodies were never recovered. These operations were carried out under the directives of Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the brother of Mahinda Rajapaksa. Gotabaya, who was a soldier, later became the President of Sri Lanka.

SWAPNA. Based on the reports I've read, only the rape case of Krishnathi Kumaraswamy resulted in justice, and even in that case, only low-ranking officers were convicted. Does this reflect complete impunity for crimes during the war?

TD. Yes, there was complete impunity. They had the license to do anything during the war period. There won't be any evidence. You can read the report "We Will Teach You a Lesson." As per the information shared by people during and after the war, the military was entrusted to do anything.

SWAPNA. Was the violence state-sanctioned, or were individual soldiers solely responsible? I read that it was not officially a state policy, but rather a result of weak leadership within the army, leading to unchecked crimes such as rape. Do you think this interpretation is accurate?

TD. I think this is just a justification. Can a state issue a written order for such actions? Will there be evidence? Obviously not. But isn't this just a justification? There won't be direct evidence, yet oral instructions are given. Gonzeke, who was the head of the army and later contested elections, followed directives passed down from Gotabaya. The strategy was clear. If

there are three or four revolutionaries, eliminating forty people to capture them is acceptable. ‘You should not fear human rights violations or resistance—eliminate the LTTE entirely.’ Gotabaya was the key proponent of this theory, which he passed on to Gonzeke. Any revolutionary movement can be crushed using this method. They showed no regard for innocent people—they even bombed schools.

SWAPNA. They justify the bombing of schools by stating that it was the military training centre of the LTTE. Isn’t it so?

TD. This is how the State justifies its actions. There might have been a training centre operating within a location—I am not denying that. But it was also a school. Imagine a school with 400 students, where training sessions for 40 people take place at night. The State killed 400 people to target those 40. Among them were innocent children and civilians who had no connection to any militant activity. If a State employs such methods, any counter-movement can be easily crushed. However, a responsible government should prioritise the safety of innocent people. The lives of those 400 civilians, including the children, are as important as those of the 40 being targeted—they are citizens too, not militants. For instance, the State bombed the main hospital in Jaffna, killing 64 people, including doctors and nurses. Nearly 300-350 others were severely injured. The justification given was that the hospital was treating an LTTE cadre. Governments always defend such actions, claiming necessity. They avoid issuing written orders but provide unwritten assurances that no action will be taken against those who carry out these atrocities.

SWAPNA. Despite the widespread occurrence of rape, why do you think there is a scarcity of literary and artistic works addressing the issue?

TD. It is absolutely certain that it has happened. I wrote this work after listening to the experiences of nearly fifty people. Yet, I have only written less than ten per cent of what they shared with me. Some writers even urged me not to disclose their location, fearing for their safety. After the war, I lost email contact with them, and it took almost a year for them to respond. They were living in extremely rare and difficult circumstances. For those observing from the outside, the situation might appear different. However, governments across all eras and nations will always find a way to justify it.

SWAPNA. Are those fifty people rape victims? What is your experience of talking to them? Are they speaking about the trauma that they have gone through?

TD. Not all of them are rape victims, and not everyone is willing to open up. Some choose to conceal parts of their experiences. I am closely connected to people, especially writers. A 22-year-old writer who received the PEN award was killed, just because she wrote against violence. Why was Rajani killed? For the same reason, she spoke out against violence. Even my book was not widely accepted in Tamil Nadu because it opposes violence. I do not support any form of violence, regardless of the agency behind it. If you criticise the violence of the LTTE, the State will support you, and if you speak against State violence, the LTTE will back you. But if you take a firm stand against all violence, no one will stand with you. The reason is simple—any movement, no matter its cause, can sustain itself by negating violence.

SWAPNA. Do you believe the actions of the characters- Sugandhi's protests, Poomani's act of killing, and Juliet's use of sexuality as resistance- highlight assertiveness as the primary coping mechanism? In your view, is this the right way for women to reclaim power against their oppressors?

TD. If a woman finds herself in such a situation, how could she resist it? That was my primary concern, rather than my personal feelings about it. I tried to think from their perspective. How would Poomani or other characters have responded in such circumstances? For human beings—or any living creature on earth—the most fundamental instinct is survival. When faced with the threat of losing their life, they will react fiercely. I do not believe that women willingly sacrificed themselves in the ritual of Sati. In many cases, they were likely forced into the fire. No living being voluntarily chooses death. Suicide is a different matter, but for someone leading a normal life, the natural choice is to find any possible way to survive. Sometimes, they escape strategically. At times, considerations of morality may not obstruct their decisions, because the ultimate goal is to stay alive. Life is too precious, and that is why they respond in this way. When power exerts pressure on women, their first instinct is always to save their life—"First, Save Life." Their survival instinct compels them to resist. Most of the characters in such situations (in the novel) are simply trying to preserve their lives. However, their responses vary depending on the era they live in, their environment and their personal circumstances—all these factors influence their decisions.

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