

# **Reading Violence: A Zizekian Study of Select Women's Writing**

*Thesis Submitted to*  
**MAHATMA GANDHI UNIVERSITY, KOTTAYAM**



*For the Award of the Degree of*

**Doctor of Philosophy**  
*In*  
**English Language and Literature**

*By*

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*Under the Guidance of*

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**November 2020**



# MAHATMA GANDHI UNIVERSITY

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3.	Name of the Supervisors	Dr. Celine E.
4.	Department/Institution/ Research Centre	Department of English St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam
5.	Similar Content (%) identified	<b>1% (One)</b>
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I further declare that it has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree/Diploma/Associateship/Fellowship or similar title to any candidature of any other university.

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled **Reading Violence: A Zizekian Study of Select Women's Writing** is a record of the original research work carried out by Mr. James Joseph, under my supervision and guidance and that no part of this work has formed the basis for the award of any Degree/Diploma/ Associateship/Fellowship or similar title to any candidature of any other university.

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## **Acknowledgements**

I express my sincere thanks to Dr. Celine E., my research guide and Director of St. Teresa's College, whose timely and thoughtful corrections, scholarly advice, careful reading and sisterly concern helped to shape and complete my thesis. I am also thankful to the Principals, faculty and staff of the research centre. I specially remember Prof. N. Prasantha Kumar, Dr. Priya K. Nair and Dr. Latha Nair R. for their assistance at various stages of writing this thesis. I am grateful to various teachers, who assessed the progress of the study and gave valuable suggestions every year.

I express my sincere thanks to the Management, Principals (former and present), and the staff of my college—St. Mary's College, Sulthan Bathery, Wayanad, Kerala—for their support and encouragement. I sincerely thank my colleagues in the department and specially Dr. Ramesh K. G., for his help from the beginning to the end of my research. I thank other research scholars specially Ms. Elizabeth Renu Joseph, Ms. Liz Mary Antony, Mr. Roby Mathew and Mr. Sebastian A. V. for their timely help and friendship.

I am greatly indebted to my family—Liji, my wife, Brisa, my daughter, my parents, brothers, sister and other relatives—for their constant support and encouragement. I dedicate this work to them. This work would not have come to fruition without these special people in my life. Above all, thanks to God Almighty.

**James Joseph**

## **List of Abbreviations**

<i>FLS</i>	<i>For the Love of a Son</i>
<i>MDI</i>	<i>Mayada: Daughter of Iraq</i>
<i>OL</i>	<i>Origins of Love</i>
<i>PV</i>	<i>Parallax View</i>
<i>V</i>	<i>Violence: Six Sideways Reflections</i>
<i>WN</i>	<i>Witness the Night</i>

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Violence has increased in the world in all areas of life. The discomforts people feel lead them to involve in both overt and covert activities of violence. Instead of trying to suppress the upheavals and civil wars, the leaders of the nations need to address the real cause of such activities. It is in this context, a study on Zizekian understanding of violence becomes relevant. Slavoj Žižek, a Slovenian philosopher, and a staunch supporter of Marxian ideology, in his book *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* classified violence into two broad categories: subjective and objective. Subjective violence is the directly visible violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent. Objective violence has two forms: (1) symbolic violence which is embodied in language and its forms and (2) systemic violence which is often the catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems. According to Žižek, most of the time, the media and the common man focus only on the visible subjective violence and ignore or miss the undercurrents that cause the physical violence. The various forms of systemic violence, such as, capitalism, globalization, fundamentalism, racism and patriarchy caused great damage to many minority groups, ethnic groups, languages and socio-economic cultures. The condition of the weaker sections, especially of women and children in the patriarchal societies, all over the world after the spread of liberal policies of the governments, free trade, and

the implementation of modern technical inventions is irreparably bruised. The writers who have directly experienced or heard from the victims of violence have highlighted the issues pertaining to the various forms of violence in their writings. This study focuses on the representation of violence against women in the select works of Jean Sasson, Nadifa Mohamed, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Kishwar Desai, in the light of Žižek’s discourses on violence.

It is rightly said by Nadifa Mohamed in *The Orchard of Lost Souls*: “Violence was an article of faith nowadays, accepted and rewarded at every level; there wasn’t room for the gentle or thoughtful” (181). Anyone who follows the principles of ethics and morality cannot enjoy a peaceful life. The world has adopted a culture where human rights are safeguarded only through the practice of violence. The “right to humanitarian interference” (a term used by Jacques Ranciere)—a right that some nations assume to the supposed benefit of victimized populations—has caused more human rights violations. In Leninist terms, “what the ‘Human Rights of suffering Third World victims’ actually means today, in the predominant Western discourse, is the right of Western powers themselves to intervene—politically, economically, culturally, militarily—in Third World countries of their choice on behalf of the defense of Human Rights” (Žižek, *PV* 341). The various agencies in support of the defense of human rights function by violence. The systems and structures support and promote a culture of violence. In this context, this study focuses on the camouflage nature of systemic and symbolic violence. The thesis particularly aims at highlighting the violence against women inherent in the social systems

with special reference to the select works of a few women writers. The theoretical foundation for the study is mainly based on the discourse of Žižek about violence as explained in his book *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* and a few other articles. The introductory chapter provides the framework of the thesis and brings out the importance of the discussion on violence against women. The study focuses on the systemic and symbolic violence which are perpetrated through globalization, terrorism, fundamentalism, dictatorship, racism and patriarchy. The repressive state apparatuses such as police and prison, and the judiciary functioning in a militant rule or in a dictatorial rule or even in a democratic rule do not do much to alleviate the pain of women. Media also report only the visible forms of violence and ignore the systemic and symbolic violence. These structural forms of violence, existing in America, Somalia, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Iraq and India are explained through the study of six works of four women writers from Somalia, Nigeria, America and India. *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *The Orchard of Lost Souls* by Nadifa Mohamed, *Mayada: Daughter of Iraq* and *For the Love of a Son* by Jean Sasson, and *Witness the Night* and *Origins of Love* by Kishwar Desai are the works taken for the study.

United Nations Commission on Human Rights defines violence against women as

any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life, and including domestic violence,

crimes committed in the name of honour, crimes committed in the name of passion, trafficking in women and girls, traditional practices harmful to women, including female genital mutilation, early and forced marriages, female infanticide, dowry-related violence and deaths, acid attacks and violence related to commercial sexual exploitation as well as economic exploitation. (UN 2; Wies 2)

According to this definition any violation of women's rights comes under the category of violence against women.

In most of the world nations, patriarchal system and male domination persist. Women are less valued in many of the societies, religions and political ideologies. In *Gender Attitudes and Violence against Women*, Melinda York states: "Gender constructs determine the types of roles that people must fill in their daily lives domestically, economically, politically, socially and religiously" (3). As long as the attitude of both men and women is conditioned by the patriarchal society, even the gravest crime against women does not get its due importance. "Violence against women can become manifest in a variety of ways including physical, emotional and psychological assaults, homicide, and sexual assaults" (2). But unfortunately, many of these categories are not considered as violation of women's rights or dignity. Women themselves ignore many of the atrocities done against them and bear any such violation as part of their life.

The gender biased perspective has contributed a lot to the devaluing of women's identity. In male controlled societies, the system itself favours men, and

the role assigned to women is that of a caretaker of the home and children.

Women are sidelined in political administration both in monarchy and in democracy; in major religions of the world, men are chosen for higher ecclesiastical posts and as performers of rituals; the services and productions of women are ignored and devalued both in capitalism and in communism.

“Capitalism produced oppressive consequences for women in that they were treated as inferior in status even though they supported capitalism through the provision of free labor and the consumption of goods” (York 4). Patriarchal societies are not only male-dominated, but they are male-identified, male-centered, and tend to cause the oppression of women by devaluing the work they do or treating them as though they are “invisible” (14). It is important to recognize the key role that patriarchy plays in creating a climate conducive to the perpetration of violence against women. In a societal structure permeated with patriarchy, violence directed against the least powerful people in society is not only permissible, but it is to a considerable degree encouraged and normalized as a way of preserving “traditions” and protecting an established culture (15).

Beyond the contextual and structural factors influencing violence towards women, the social and cultural acceptance of traditional gender roles plays an important role in the prediction of violence towards women. Gender roles are “normative behaviours and attitudes which are expected from individuals, based on their biological sex, and which are often learned through the socialization process” (Ben-David 386; York 17). The research done in this area strongly suggests that hostile attitudes towards women are strongly correlated with traditional gender or sex role attitudes in regard to the distinctive roles prescribed

for men and women in the family, in the workplace, and in the area of commonplace social behaviours (York 17). The system of maintaining gender role adherence starts early on in life and carries on throughout adulthood. For instance, women who initiate sexual interactions are called “whores,” and those who are aggressive in business are called “bitches”. Similarly, men displaying feminine qualities are taunted with words characterized by female names, female body parts, or other words descriptive of femininity, vulnerability and weakness, or they are accused of homosexuality (19). People who adhere to traditional gender role expectations are more likely to blame female victims of violence more than male perpetrators (20).

People generally tend to attribute gender roles to both sexes and evaluate the behaviour based on the expected norms. When anything out of the way happens from women, the reaction is in the form of physical torture. The main reason for domestic violence against women is the mismatch between the expectation about a woman’s behaviour and her actual behaviour. The social stereotypes of women have to remain in the expected way and no change is accepted or tolerated. In that sense the roots of violence are visible in the hegemonic patriarchy. In patriarchal family, girls are expected to control or fear their desire. Arturo J. Aldama in *Violence and the Body: Race, Gender, and the State* writes: “In patriarchal family systems that mimic the bourgeois or are bourgeois, young women are taught to fear their desire and feel shame at their bodies while at the same time seeking the “validating” gaze of “appropriate” young men. Men are taught to be fearless in their pursuit of desire” (2). In male

controlled families the needs of women are suppressed. When there is suppression, normal personality development does not take place. In many patriarchal societies, women are dependent members in the family and are considered having no intelligence or reasoning power. They have no role in decision-making or even in choosing their husbands. Women are made to fear many things in normal life. Fear functions as a tool to control women. “Fear is both the metanarrative that drives the disciplinary apparatus of the nation-state . . . and the intended effects on the body politic” (Aldama 1-2).

Society has no concern for the demands and desires of women. It becomes a struggle for women to establish their identity. In order to get the rights, they have to legally fight and wait for a long time. In the legal system itself, there are many fractions that consider woman a ‘victim’ rather than a ‘person’. “Fear, the threat of further violence, the shame and stigma attached, and economic dependency are among the factors which prevent a woman from disclosing experiences of violence” (Moane 40).

There are many ways in which violence against women take place in our society. Pornography is one way of violence against human dignity. Claire M Renzetti defines pornography in *Sourcebook on Violence Against Women*:

Pornography is sometimes used to describe all sexually explicit books, magazines, movies, and Internet sites, with a distinction made between softcore (nudity with limited sexual activity not including penetration) and hardcore (graphic images of actual sexual activity including penetration). Pornography is often distinguished from erotica; erotica is

material that depicts sexual behavior with mutuality and respect, and pornography is sexual material based on hierarchy. (134)

The image presented in the books and movies about women is that of an object which arouses sexual desire. This outlook towards women sees women as a commodity to be purchased, used and eliminated, if the desired value is not achieved. The desire to look good and to project the human body as an object of achieving pleasure have devalued the human body into the level of a most coveted commodity. The beauty concept of 'fair is attractive' has done great harm to the black skins.

The media's search for newsworthiness and public attention dictates that certain kinds of rape stories are more likely to receive journalists' attention than other rape stories. "This results in the privileging of rape stories involving extreme forms of violence, stranger attacks and serial rape" (Jordan 274). Those crimes committed against women by their partners, husbands and boyfriends are the least likely to receive media attention. As a consequence, both individual victims as well as the wider truths around rape are silenced (274). Centuries of silencing of women's voices is not easily broken, and just as the speaking out needs to continue, we can also expect to see attempts to silence continuing also (279). Violence is not only silenced, but also it is carried out silently.

In the news-maker—media—controlled society, the mob upheavals, communal riots, bomb blasts, destruction and tortures are highlighted and the causes of these unrests are never addressed or reported. The general tendency of the media and the public to look into the visible reactions of violence as well as



the injuries and destruction caused by these violent actions is something that a few intellectuals of the present day has brought into the forum of discussion and debate. Even though the 'intentional use of physical force or power' is very often executed by the authorized agencies such as the police or the military force of the administrative system, it is not regarded as an act of violence. These agencies which claim to establish peace and order in the society resort to actions of violence, by which they themselves contradict their principles. Now there should be a consensus on the projected peripheral view of violence and the unprojected agents of violence in the form of established systems in the society which are more harmful than the outbreaks of civil wars in the different parts of the world.

Domestic violence is seen as a private family issue rather than as a public and social problem. To read and understand domestic violence as a public issue means that it appears as one of the many manifestations of social violence, rather than as a form of violence which is outside the domain of public awareness and significance. One of the major obstacles in combating domestic violence everywhere in the world is that it is commonly conceptualised as a private issue rather than a public concern. Rebecca Surtees sees the danger of this conceptualisation for three reasons. First, "it suggests domestic violence can be understood in isolation, outside of the social and political context in which it is perpetrated" (Surtees 59). Second, "seeing domestic violence as a private affair permits society to ignore the specific, gendered nature of domestic violence. Women suffer domestic violence because they are women, and they suffer it at the hands of their intimate partners" (59). Third, "seeing domestic violence as

‘private’ implies that the state has no duty or ability to intervene” (60) in private life of the individual. Referring to Oxfam International 2004, Mona Mehta and Chitra Gopalakrishnan in their article “‘We Can’: Transforming Power in Relationships in South Asia” state:

Gender violence is an extreme manifestation of unjust power relations. It stems from gender hierarchies and inequalities that perpetuate and lend legitimacy to violence against women. In South Asia, gender bias and violence against women are institutionalised at all levels: home, family, community, society, and the state. Social, cultural, political, economic, and legal factors in the region combine to leave women vulnerable to community-sanctioned violence. . . .

In South Asia, the cycle of disadvantage and violence begins long before birth and continues throughout women’s lives. Unborn girls are killed through sex-selective abortions. One in six deaths among female infants in South Asia, especially India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan is due to neglect and discrimination. In this region, women endure daily beatings, harassment for dowry, verbal abuse, and acid attacks for refusing to comply with male demands. Every day, their behaviour, appearance, expressions, and movements are monitored and controlled. Many women become targets of extreme forms of violence such as incest, rape, forced marriage, child marriage, being traded to settle disputes and debts, public humiliation, trafficking, ‘honour’ killing, and dowry deaths. (101)

In different cultures, gender violence takes various forms. It is culturally specific and the manner of violence varies from culture to culture. A few examples are ‘acid attacks’ against young women and ‘eve-teasing’ or sexual harassment in South Asian contexts, and ‘jack-rolling’ or gang rape in South Africa. In the technological world, cyber-bullying is a dynamic form of gender violence with new manifestations emerging and evolving (Leach 110).

In “Ethnographic Notes from the Front Lines of Gender-Based Violence,” Jennifer R. Wies and Hillary J. Haldane define gender-based violence as “violence against an individual or population based on gender identity or expression” (2). Gender-based violence can occur in the family or the general community. It includes multiple forms of violence and reflects the political-economic structures that stabilize gender-based inequalities among people and populations. Jennifer and Hillary give a list of areas included in gender-based violence:

Gender-based violence also includes acts of violence perpetrated toward individuals and populations as a result of gender positionality. It includes acts of pedophilia, sexual assault of female and male prostitutes, human trafficking, and violence perpetrated toward people because of their gender expression, including individuals and populations that self-identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer. (Wies 3)

Considering all the categorization of gender-based violence, one can situate it within the global political-economic structures and processes. In that sense, gender-based violence falls under the category of structural violence that

contributes to macro-level patterns of oppression and exploitation. Structural violence, a term introduced by Johan Galtung, refers to the processes, policies, and politics that systemically produce or reproduce “social and economic inequities that determine who will be at risk for assaults and who will be shielded from them” (Farmer 17-18). Anthropologists have employed a structural-violence framework to examine how “various social processes and events come to be translated into personal distress and disease” and how “political and economic forces have structured risk for forms of extreme suffering, from hunger to torture and rape” (Wies 3). A kind of structural violence is inflicted by the police force towards the women who approach the police station with complaints. Women are retained in the police stations for a long time without being given proper help. Most of the women who approach the police are the ones who do not get any help from the family or they are the ones who move against the family. M. Cristina Alcalde writes:

In their interactions with police officers, women receive responses that trivialize the danger they experience. More specifically, women confront attitudes that disregard their welfare, encourage them to uphold the family despite the violence, and blame them for the violence men inflict on them.

Women’s experiences in regular police stations and in women’s police stations make clear that staffing police stations with women has its merits but cannot guarantee female victims the right to be heard or protected from their partner’s violence. (103-04)

There were many nationalist movements for safeguarding the rights of the people. Yet the rules and laws that are formed for and by men ignore the concerns of women. In that sense, even nationalism is in a way a promoter of violence against women. Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman in the introduction of their book *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones* write:

While nationalism may seek to homogenize differences under the unifying discourse of the nation, it nonetheless generates contradictory positions for women as symbols of cultural purity, agents of resistance against Western domination, and “role models for the new nationalist patriarchal family.” . . . Nationalism is not a fixed notion, nor can it claim a unitary subject that bears nationality separate from gender, caste, class, and religious identities. (10)

The visual representations of violence cannot be merely considered as symptoms of a degenerative society, but they are the representations of the Lacanian ‘Real’ in the society. Those images enter and shatter our reality. The ‘Real’, according to Žižek, is reality minus its surface—the ‘real thing’ so to speak. The Real brings out the hidden by peeling off the deceiving layers of reality. Therefore, the representation of violence in media reveals the innate human tendencies and the reflection of these tendencies in social reality (Connor 214).

Louis Althusser in his “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” states; “. . . a social formation which did not reproduce the conditions of

production at the same time as it produced would not last a year” (127). It is in this regard that every institution which has some element of violence at its base has to reproduce this violence for its survival and development. It must therefore reproduce the productive forces and the existing relations of production. The production and reproduction of labour power demand not only the learning of skill but also a learning of the ideology of the ruling class. To put it in Althusser’s words:

I shall say that the reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression, so that they, too, will provide for the domination of the ruling class ‘in words’. (132-33)

A child is forced to learn the rules and ideologies of the capitalism, of the religion and the army. All these institutions teach the children the “know-how”; but in forms which ensure subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its “practice”. In this way, children become part of the exploited and the exploiter. They learn the tasks of the proletarians, the capitalists, the managers, or the tasks of the high priests of the ruling ideology and its functionaries.

The structure of every society is founded on infrastructure and superstructure. Infrastructure is made up of economic conditions and the

superstructure is made up of religio-political ideologies. Since infrastructure is the base, superstructure depends on the former. In other words, ideologies are constituted in order to fulfill the requirements of the influential economic class. The ruling class that represents the state, functions as a repressive system against the labour class. Althusser makes the distinction between Repressive State Apparatuses (RSA) and the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA). While the former includes the police, the army, the prison, the Government, the Administration and the court, the latter includes religions, political parties, family, education system, organizations, trade unions, legal system, media and cultural art forms. Althusser distinguishes Repressive State Apparatus from the Ideological State Apparatuses on two grounds. While there is one Repressive State Apparatus, there is a *plurality* of Ideological State Apparatuses. As a second point, Repressive State Apparatus, belongs to the *public* domain; the Ideological State Apparatuses belong to the *private* domain (Althusser 144). As far as these apparatuses are concerned, as Gramsci has stated, it does not matter whether an institution is private or public; what matters is how it functions. The State is neither public nor private because it is a precondition for the distinction between private and public. Therefore, in one way or the other, all these institutions support the ruling bourgeois and impose dominance over the subordinate class. The basic difference between the Repressive State Apparatus and the Ideological State Apparatuses is that the former functions by violence, while the latter function by ideology. But in reality, all these Apparatuses function by both violence and ideology. The Repressive State Apparatus functions mainly by repression and secondarily by ideology. The Ideological

State Apparatuses function primarily by ideology and secondarily by repression (145). In spite of the differences and diversities of the ISAs, the ideology of the ruling class helps them unify and function smoothly. The liaison of the ruling ideology enhances unity between the RSA and the ISA, and between the different State Ideological Apparatuses. The dominant ISA used by the bourgeois in the earlier times was the Church, which is now replaced by the school and the education system. Children are moulded according to the needs of the capitalist. After a few years of learning, a child becomes part of the system either as a worker or as a boss—the suppressed or the suppressor. Children are practically given the training to serve the society as disciplined professionals with high civic sense and nationalism. Along with these virtues, they learn modesty, submissiveness, and a few other virtues from the religion and the family, and self-confidence, arrogance and cunningness from politics and sports. So, according to the need of the capitalist, it is easy to select an employee in his industry or company.

The ideologies realize and exist in the rituals and the practices of the institutions and in the ISAs. The ideology of the ruling class does not become the ruling ideology automatically, nor even by gaining State power. “It is by the installation of the ISAs in which this ideology is realized and realizes itself that it becomes the ruling ideology” (Althusser 185). However, the ruling ideology goes beyond the limit and becomes uncontrollable in real life situations. Neither the ruling class nor the ISAs can limit the power-play of the ideology. “The ideology that a class in power makes the ruling ideology in its ISAs is indeed ‘realized’ in



those ISAs, but it goes beyond them, for it comes from elsewhere. Similarly, the ideology that a ruled class manages to defend in and against such ISAs goes beyond them, for it comes from elsewhere” (185). The interplay between the ruling ideology and the ISAs cannot be defined and controlled. As a consequence, there is a high possibility of conflict and clash. The realization of it can be seen in internal conflicts, civil wars, youth upheavals and various protests from the exploited classes and minority groups. While Althusser mentions ISAs to highlight the economic aspect of the production and the conditions of production in relation to the ruling class, Žižek uses the ISAs to present them as the agents of systemic violence.

In recent understanding, language is not just a medium to communicate ideas but a powerful means to impose discipline in the society. Language is used by the powerful as a tool to set things in order, according to their interest. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* Deleuze says that the primary function of speech is not the communication of information, but the inscription of ‘order-words’. Through these ‘order-words’ language functions as a tool for a bureaucratic state of mind. He writes: “Rather than common sense, a faculty for the centralization of information, we must define an abominable faculty consisting in emitting, receiving, and transmitting order-words. Language is made not to be believed but to be obeyed, and to compel obedience” (76). This process is historically defined and can be disturbed by a use of language which problematizes the expected use of words and concepts. Deleuze in his work mentions the problem of bureaucracy and its relationship with rationality. The

bureaucrat's language conforms perfectly to the rationality of the state, and thus helps to cement the power relations of the status quo. Speech is an instrument in establishing relations. It is through language people impose restriction; it is through the misuse of language people engage in debates, and in the misunderstanding of a concept or idea, people engage in wars. Ideologies are presented through language and the differences of ideologies are understood through language. Therefore, language forms major part of conflict in any society.

Petar Bojanić in "Gilles Deleuze on Institution and Violence" analyses the views presented by Deleuze and Hume on the relation between revolution and institutions. For Deleuze, revolution and internal clashes are the results of reversal and sudden turning, the perverting of something, that happens within the institution (4). Bojanić's article states:

Revolution is re-institutionalisation (or deinstitutionalisation) which includes different forms of violence. Saint-Just detects two phenomena outside of institutions: terror and corruption. Hume discovers that violence has an advantage over the contract, and that in one way or another gives institutions their dynamic. Thanks to his mixture of these two different registers, Deleuze outlines the transformation of violence into institutions: 1. Institutionalisation reveals the violence that precedes it and that it interrupts (raw violence or terror), as well as the violence opposed to it (corruption). 2. Violence is minimised in the process of institutionalisation because it is performed by all or the largest possible

number of actors. 3. The violence of institutionalisation is violence in the process of conversion; . . . it is subsumed into the coercion of rules, into symbolic or institutional pressure. 4. The revolutionary institution supposes that there is no violence that has not been turned into the “body” of the institution, without remainder, and that therefore there is nothing outside of the institution. (4)

In the process of institutionalization, violence is involved. It manifests in various forms such as terror, revolution or corruption. Therefore, in the very form of institutions, violence is embedded. No institution is formed without adhering to any one form of violence. This institutionalized violence is the systemic violence in Žižek’s view. Bojanić reaffirms the ideas of Hume and Deleuze in the following statements:

When institutions become damaged or perverted . . . when people and human nature sully them, when they become occupied by perversion (another word Hume uses) and corruption, it is then possible to recognise that at the origin of these *establishments* lies that same violence (killing, robbing, etc.) or terror. Violence and terror become visible *elements* of order and the institution . . . when they seem insufficient to prevent the opposition to the process of institutionalization (reversal or revolution). (12)

Žižek’s notion of systemic violence indicates that some social structures and institutional practices, such as political domination or capitalist exploitation, cause people to engage in subjective violence, both individually and collectively

(Linden 5). It refers to the fact that unjust social structures or institutions are founded and survived by forms of violence. In systemic violence, unjust institutional arrangements bring about serious harms, as is the case with subjective violence. Žižek seems to accept the views of Galtung in stating that both personal violence and systemic violence impedes our mental and physical functioning. Systemic violence in the form of social injustice, exploitation, economic inequality, oppression, and the like has the same impact; so, social injustice is structural violence (Linden 5). It is disgusting that crimes of public shootings, mob lynching, merciless murder and looting make the headlines in print and broadcasting media, while unemployment, underpayment, delay in public services, child labour and hike in prices receive hardly any attention (9). Those who fight social injustice consider it systemic violence, and question the morality of those who set or uphold unjust institutional rules with an air of innocence.

In *Women, Violence and Social Change*, R. Emerson Dobash and Russell P. Dobash state that in Marxist analysis of the state, there are several themes including its functional, instrumental, ideological and cohesive nature. But, it stresses that “the state and bureaucratic machinery are class instruments which emerged to co-ordinate a divided society in the interests of the ruling class” (102). In this regard, “no amount of state reforms can truly benefit subordinate groups,” including women and racial minorities, “as the state is viewed as ultimately organized to serve the interests of the dominant economic class” (102).

The state authorities consider violence as a political tool to suppress many of the demands of the citizens. Sanctioned violence carried out to maintain law and order becomes an accepted and approved way of inflicting harm in society (Ralph 4). Violence as a political tool is mainly used to display the ideological domination, both in the construction and reproduction of political ideologies. With domination, the state can mask the social realities. Just as domination need not always be physically expressed, the same can be true for resistance. Both are behaviors that can be expressed actively and passively. Most discussion concerning domination and resistance is focused on the investigation of colonial expansion, cultural encounters, and enslavement. The strategies of the colonial time are continued even in the sovereign republics. As long as the same methods are followed by the state, citizens use violence as a means to assert independence and resist suppression by the state authorities (5). Sanctified violence can offer justification to an individual, or a group, thereby making the violence more acceptable. As Bloch argues, “creativity is not the product of human action, but is due to a transcendental force that is mediated by authorities, and this fact legitimates, even demands, the violent conquest of inferiors by superiors who are closer to the transcendental ancestors” (Bloch 189). Serving as a means to maintain social relations and reinforce cultural messages, violence is used as a tool for maintaining power (Ralph 8). Sanctified violence can be incited by visual imagery. The religious images and relics approved by a particular religion can cause instances of violence. Christian destruction and desecration of images of classical antiquity took place in Late Antique times. In an effort to “Christianize”

the polytheists of the fourth to sixth centuries A.D., the “pagan” architecture, symbolism, and sculpture became the target of violent destruction (9).

The outcome of subjective violence is direct and immediate while that of objective violence is indirect and slow. It is easy to find out the culprit of subjective violence; but the offender of systemic violence is difficult to be identified. The effects of subjective violence are physical injury and psychological trauma caused by force or threat, while structural or systemic violence leads to such a wide variety of harms as social and political exclusion, inadequate intellectual development due to insufficient educational opportunities, harsh and unhealthy working conditions, subsistent wages, lack of free time and recreational opportunities, inaccessibility to legal system, deliberate silencing of the victim through political and economic influence, inadequate housing or no housing at all, lack of basic medical care, hunger, and inadequate access to clean water. Most often people resort to nonviolent methods to encounter social injustice. People address the issue in many different ways, including through institutional reforms from within, nonviolent protests, boycotts, collective strikes, lobbying, and electoral action (Linden 17).

Thus, the first chapter of the thesis, “Introduction,” presents the objectives, relevance and scope of this study, taking into consideration the concepts of various writers and thinkers from other disciplines. It also gives a general idea about the following chapters. The second chapter of the thesis titled “Understanding Violence: Types and Causes” presents the various dimensions of violence. First of all, a few definitions of violence are presented. The different

types of violence and their causes are explained in this chapter. Violence occurs due to various reasons. Violence against women is the main concern of this study. Different types of violence against women take place in the changing world. Even when nations compete with each other in technological advancement, there isn't much progress reported in the reduction of crime against women. Various discourses going on in the society seldom consider women's issues. The psychological harm suffered by women through verbal abuse, hate speech, derogatory remarks and aggressive expressions increase day by day. It will take a long time to see women caring for their own needs and solving their own issues.

Slavoj Žižek's concept of subjective and objective violence, which form the theoretical ground for this study, is explained in the third chapter entitled "Žizekian Understanding of Violence." Behind all forms of subjective violence, there are other two kinds of violence—symbolic and systemic—at work. Symbolic violence is embodied in language and its forms—incitement and our habitual speech forms. There is 'a more fundamental form of violence that pertains to language as such, to its imposition of a certain universe of meaning. Systemic violence is the catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems. The various structures and institutions of the state are part of the systems that generate violence in the society.

The fourth chapter entitled "Systemic Violence of Globalization, Racism and Military Dictatorship in African Context: A study on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and Nadifa Mohamed's *The Orchard of Lost Souls*" presents the facets of violence prevalent in the practice of globalization and in the

rule of a President with military aid. In *Americanah*, the issue of globalization is discussed. The immigrants from Nigeria and other African countries find it hard to survive in America mainly on two grounds—racial discrimination and cultural difference. The implementation of liberal policies and free market gives hegemonic power to capitalist American culture. Žižek, in “Censorship Today: Violence, or Ecology as a New Opium for the Masses” says that the ideology of global capitalism is the “new opium for the masses replacing the declining religion. Capitalism takes over the old religion’s fundamental function, that of putting on an unquestionable authority which can impose limits” (n. pag.). The reach of capitalism restricted the native culture and land. The migrants are forced to adapt the culture of the land where they work. This leads to disorientation of their whole life. In globalization, one culture gets diluted while another culture gains dominance; the ‘small’ culture dissolves into the ‘big’ culture. After the civil wars and economic instability people from Africa moved out of the country in search of job. Those who found shelter in America and Europe had to sacrifice very much of their culture. Those people who remained in their own land, especially women and children, had a hard time fighting poverty, sexual abuse and torture.

Nadifa Mohamed’s *Orchard of Lost Souls* narrates the hardships of women under the President’s rule in Somalia. Using the fictitious character General Haaruun, Nadifa is presenting the ill-fated rule of the President of Somalia. The conditions of refugee camp, the treatment of the military officers towards women and children, the selection of prostitution as a means of income



generation and the extravaganza of the dictatorial rule reveal the systemic violence existing in that country. After the British left Somalia in 1960, the country was mainly ruled by the President with the support of the military. The President was a dictator who cared for the improvement of the military rather than for the wellbeing of the citizens. Under such system of government, people were struggling to live with limited income and resources. A land once rich in resources is turned into a wasteland; people lived in peace and harmony fight for survival; men who supported the family are either taken to the police station or recruited to the police force or are involved in the rebel movement. Thus, the responsibility of running the family rests in the hands of women. Somalia, after the conflicts in the 1980s, has lost its rich culture. Now the nation struggles for survival. Nadifa Mohamed, a forced expeller from Somalia in her childhood, returns to Somalia in her imagination to see the land from the perspectives of three women characters of her novel *The Orchard of Lost Souls*. Reality is viewed from the perspective of the perceiver. The presentation of war and the civil conflicts by male authors or even by some female authors may focus on the visible casualties of bloodshed, bombing and the destruction of the building, nature and other living organisms. The narrator sees what impresses him/her or what he/she wants the reader or the listener to read or listen to. The very narration of events differs from author to author and from men to women. What interests one author may not interest another author and what interests one reader may not interest another reader. The history of Somalia is seen from the points of view of three women. The struggles of the women in the aftermath of civil war in Somalia are narrated in *The Orchard of Lost Souls*.

The fifth chapter entitled “Violence of Fundamentalism, Terrorism, Dictatorship and Patriarchy: Narratives of Women from Afghanistan and Iraq” deals with the struggles of women under the fundamentalist rule of Taliban in Afghanistan as narrated in the biographical memoir *For the Love of a Son* by Jean Sasson. The author’s thirty years of travelling experience in the Muslim world and her interaction with the main character Maryam, authenticate her vivid narration about the cruelties of Taliban. Sasson, now living in United States, had lived in Saudi Arabia for twelve years and travelled throughout Middle East. She has directly experienced the struggles of woman living in Arab world. Fundamentalists have imposed a rule based on religion; they act as agents of the divine in implementing certain morality in the society. Žižek makes a comparison between liberal cynicism and fundamentalism in *Parallax View*:

A fundamentalist does not believe, he *knows* directly. To put it in another way: both liberal-skeptical cynicism and fundamentalism thus share a basic underlying feature: the loss of the ability to believe in the proper sense of the term. For both of them, religious statements are quasiempirical statements of direct knowledge: fundamentalists accept them as such, while skeptical cynics mock them. (348)

Fundamentalism and terrorism propagated by the Taliban not only affected the rulers of that country but also became a threat to the entire humanity. Muslim women of Afghanistan suffered under both patriarchy and fundamentalism. Though initially the emergence of fundamental groups was a resistance against the capitalist monopoly, gradually these groups took control of

the political administration of Afghanistan. Similar was the condition of Iraqi women under Saddam Hussein's regime. *Mayada: Daughter of Iraq*, another biographical memoir by Jean Sasson, narrates the tortures suffered by eighteen women in a cell at Baladiyat Prison. Mayada Al-Askari was assigned to be the translator of Sasson during a trip to Iraq. From her, the author gathers the information about the prison life of eighteen women, including her. All these women were arrested on charges of acting against the government. No one was allowed to speak against the dictator. Saddam made use of some of the religious laws to carry out his restriction upon women. He did not want to displease the religious leaders with regard to religious matters. So patriarchal norms and dictatorial rule made the life miserable for women. Since there were no women interpreters for the Sharia law, the concerns and arguments of women were not given due importance in the court. In family relation, whatever bad happens, it is because of the women in the family. Even the family members do not want to protect their own wife, mother, sister or daughter against false accusations; or rather, they feared to do so to avoid further sanctions from the religious leaders or government officials. Thus, religion and public administrative system work as agents of injustice and violence.

Religions have a great role in imposing restrictions on their believers in the form of abstinence, fasting and flagellation. Certain form of violence on the body is considered virtuous for the spiritual awakening and well-being. So, religious institutions encourage the believers to inflict pain on the body. Believers become the blind followers of what the religious leaders tell them. The reality for

them is what the religious leaders tell. Religions make their own rules which are legally approved in the court, when there is a dispute regarding religious matters. Out of the trust in the religious leaders and of the promise of the heaven or eternal reward, the believers are ready to die or to murder for a religious cause. Religions have such a commanding power over their followers. The religious benefit, promised by the teachings of the religious leaders, encourage the believers to do any kind of violence, which otherwise they may not do. In *Sacred Fury: Understanding Religious Violence*, Charles Selengut asserts this idea; “Max Weber, the great sociologist of comparative religion, explained that the monopolistic claim to provide religious benefits exercises a “psychic coercion” on believers, leading them to undertake acts of self-denial and self- mortification that they would ordinarily never consider” (184-85). Some of the earlier rituals involving pain or torture followed in ancient religions have been dropped or made almost entirely symbolic. Still, Judaism and Islam carry on such practices. The pain and the suffering are the price and reward the believers win for the life after death. For the eternal life, the believers are to give their body; “they have to offer their physical being, their bodies, to be violently acted upon by the religious authorities” (189). The readiness to accept suffering is given a higher meaning in religious terms; the more you suffer, the closer you are to God. All religions interpret human suffering as divinely ordained and exhort the believers to accept the routine and extraordinary pain and suffering inherent in human existence as the will of God. The irony in the teaching is that the same religion that teaches the believers to tolerate pain and loss for the sake of God tells them to unite for a fight or a protest when their religious dogmas are questioned, or the images of

their deity or leaders are cartooned or the property of their religion is settled by court. Religions that teach tolerance and suffering for a greater cause also call for violent attack instead of suffering the loss. The violence released by the religion inflicts suffering to both their believers and the believers of other religion.

Charles Selengut, quoting the interpretation of Peter Berger, sees the element of masochism in the religious response to suffering and pain:

In order to give ultimate meaning and a sacred order to life, its disappointments and tragedies as well as its joys and satisfactions, the religious faithful deny their individuality and freedom and attribute everything to the all-powerful deity. This is, as Berger argues, the typical characteristic of masochism in which the “intoxication of surrender” to the all-powerful “other” reduces confusion and ambivalence as the believers, by their radical self-denial and claim to nothingness, appear to transcend their own suffering and torment. (190)

Religion is not only used by religious leaders but also by political leaders to establish power in the society. The political manipulation of religion is evident in many democratic countries where political parties use the religious sentiments of people to win the elections. The government does not act against the religious extremists when they release violence in the other community. There is strong support from the government for certain religions in many parts of the world. Like other extremists, religious extremists also use massive violence with political support (Haar 11).

Domestic violence and the problems of surrogacy as narrated by Kishwar are discussed in the sixth chapter entitled “Domestic Violence and Surrogacy in Indian Context: A Study on Kishwar Desai’s *Witness the Night* and *Origins of Love*.” Kishwar Desai’s experience in print and broadcast media was helpful in giving a vivid and unflinching detail about the domestic violence faced by women in India. A woman’s body is a commodity for pleasure or income. Woman is a burden for the parents; so they plan female feticide or femicide. A woman is forced to make money with her entire body or with her womb. Women’s sexuality is limited to her body. In *Witness the Night*, Kishwar Desai presents the lives of two girls in a well-to-do traditional family in Jullundur. Both of them survived the early murder attempt only to live a neglected life. One of the girls ended up in mental asylum while the other ended up in jail after killing thirteen members of her family. The killing was planned by someone, who after misusing the girl tried to possess all the property of the Atwal family. *Origins of Love* presents the story of multi-million business of surrogacy and artificial pregnancy going on in the modern world. Fertility clinics are mushrooming in India. The desire of the couples for a child is exploited to its maximum by the doctors. On the other side, the need for money to solve some crucial problems in life drives some young women to lend their wombs for upbringing the child of some other couple. The money minded doctors and the agents, who supply the surrogate mother and the commissioning parents, make the money deal to their maximum advantage. The surrogate mother is forced to continue in this trade because of the money offer. The child-desiring parents can be cheated by the doctors through the manipulation of zygote; to create a healthy fetus doctors may

use egg and/or sperm of some other people. The surrogate mother finds it hard to leave the child and go home empty handed without the child. The child does not get milk from the mother; it may badly affect the health of the child. The psychological emptiness the mother feels is so severe that it may create mental imbalance. All these problems are narrated in the novel *Origins of Love*.

Violence against women is a serious problem happening and being discussed all over the world. Dobash and Russell have identified four sources of conflict leading to violent attacks by men. These sources are “men’s possessiveness and jealousy, men’s expectations concerning women’s domestic work, men’s sense of the right to punish ‘their’ women for perceived wrongdoing, and the importance to men of maintaining or exercising their position of authority” (Dobash 4). Many women are beaten and killed not only due to men’s possessiveness and demands about women’s domestic work, but also due to the demand of dowry from the bride. Though the practice of sati is abolished, there are many “accidental” deaths by burn injuries happening in India. These deaths by “accidents” in the kitchen happen among the young women within two years of their marriage and reveal the problem of dowry deaths. Although the Dowry Prohibition Act has been passed in India the social custom of dowry is still continued. A newly-wed woman undergoes tortures from her in-laws’ parents and relatives and even her husband on account of bride money. When her family fails to meet payments or the husband or his family decides they want more than originally agreed, the bride becomes a victim of the brutalities of the husband’s family. There are many “accidents” in the kitchen due

to “cooking gas leakage,” “gas cylinder blast,” “kerosene stove blast,” “fire caught on the dress” and the like. Women are often harassed and abused until they commit suicide (9).

A danger visible in economically weak societies and conflict areas is the trafficking of women and children for various purposes. With the offer of providing job outside the country, many women are recruited and finally they end up in brothels. The recruiters are generally friends or close relatives whereby the trustworthiness is maintained in the initial stages. The percentage of victims of trafficking who did not know the perpetrator is comparatively low; “traffickers are frequently friends, partners, or acquaintances of the future victim, and thus a high number of victims have been recruited personally” (Ihme 218). The discourse on trafficking shapes the way we counteract this phenomenon. The discourse becomes a practice. “To analyze the way trafficking is debated is crucial if ‘we’ want to develop (institutional) practices and legal frameworks that do justice to victims without harming other women, migrants, and sex workers, and without adding to the discursive violation of people who are already in a precarious position” (221). In *Discipline and Punish*, French philosopher Foucault discussed the human body as an object used by the various systems of power. Body is a “target for the operations of power and the seat of docility, which allows human to be subjected, used, transformed, and perfected by various systems of domination. For him, systems of domination—one of them being patriarchy, as identified by feminist thought—are built upon a set of discourses and a certain political economy of the body” (Fernández-Morales 283). In this



frame of thought, the dominant group—heterosexual men—constructs rules and regulations, moral and ethical principles, tacit agreements, social roles and stereotype patterns of behaviour, and mechanisms of sanction and punishment by which to produce and sustain a determined social order. The operations are obvious in the case of women, “since patriarchal mores have historically controlled female bodies, particularly in their exercise of sexuality and/or motherhood. Together with other explicit prohibitions and forms of oppression, violence has been one of the main strategies used by patriarchy to keep female bodies under control” (283). As Foucault argued, the dominant patriarchal power is global and structural, and it is reinforced by local and intimate operations of control. The exertion of this kind of sexist “micro- power” over women is not unusual; rather, it has become part of the norm, and, thus, has become invisible as a breach of human rights. What may be perceived as an extraordinary state when it is experienced just once can become an ordinary, structural condition through its systematic repetition. Violation of women’s rights happens all the time, and the coercive system that provokes them is maintained through open aggression, and by various discourses that sustain the hegemonic position of men over women. Patriarchal discourse in its different forms such as biomedical, legal, educational, and so on maintains its dominance through mechanisms of regulation and exclusion (284).

The issue of harassment and bullying at workplace is a major concern in recent years (Hoel 394). In workplace, women appear to be more vulnerable to violence than men. Bullying is concerned with exposure to negative, unwanted

acts or behaviour for a continuous period of time. The behaviour can be direct or indirect and harmless or severe. Bullying can be either personal or work related. Thus, “having access to intimate knowledge about a person . . . concerning their sexuality or sexual practices, possibly obtained within the confines of a friendship or even a relationship, could be used as a powerful weapon against an opponent during an escalated conflict” (397). Bullying of verbal nature comes under the category of symbolic violence. Brodsky in *The Harassed Worker* identifies subjective and objective bullying, where the former refers to the individual’s perception of events, while the latter refers to incidents or processes verified or confirmed by others. Hoel and Duncan observe that many of the “commonly reported behaviours associated with bullying and harassment were verbal abuse, jokes and pranks, homophobic remarks, threats of physical abuse and what is referred to as a ‘homophobic culture’ . . . with many of the behaviours directly or indirectly playing on the sexuality of targets” (401). In the new context of globalization of labour markets, bullying of sexual minorities has increased rapidly. Within the minority groups, as in the case with women in lower castes and women in the African communities, there is a double discrimination and bullying. For example gay employees face the prejudices of not only majority groups but also other minority groups (405). Even silence and neglect can act as bullying when the targeted group or individual is “shunned at meetings, not being invited to social events or being ignored during lunch breaks” (407).

The narration of violence in the media sidelines the real problem. As long as the real causes are not addressed by the media, their presentation actually supports and promotes the acts of violence and the people who perpetrate the crime. Referring to Elayne Rapping, Bryan points out that if we consider sexual offenders as “merely and essentially ‘evil’, we relegate gender violence to the realm of the frequently inexplicable or wholly incomprehensible. In so doing, we abdicate much of our collective responsibility for dealing with violence against women” (Bryan 171). Žižek wants the media to concentrate on the real problem by addressing the role played by the structures and the languages in causing violence in the society. He reiterates what was said by Althusser, Galtung and Bourdieu. Though he is a Marxian thinker, Žižek does not hesitate to criticize the liberal leftists who show some kind of leniency towards capitalism and globalization. The wide-spreading problem of terrorism can be reduced provided America moves out of the role as international peace maker. If rules are democratically made by and for women, the patriarchal domination can be controlled. It is easy to see the wounds in the body, but difficult to see the wounds in the mind. The effect of the symbolic violence affects the psyche of the person causing low self-esteem, anger, or revenge. Therefore, it is difficult to measure the intensity of symbolic violence done through the various discourses. In the case of visible expressions of violence also people won't think of the social structures as the real cause of the violence. Our sympathy or terrified outlook towards the gruesome scenes prevents us from seeing the real cause. It is to this problem Žižek turns our attention.

The violence of language and violence through language are rampant in the modern society. Colonization has given advantage to English language over other languages. Later, liberalization and globalization accelerated the spread of English sidelining the interactive power of other languages. Another problem is the various discourses that happen through language. The dominant nature of one language controls the various discourses, and the dominant cultures—the Western and American culture—are propagated. The outcome of the discourse generally highlights the importance of their ideology and knowledge. Reality is distorted to support their ideology and the new version of narration spreads as “truth”. Certain lexicons denigrate the race and caste. The categorization of gender terms, caste names, and use of hate speech reveal the use of violence through language.

The final chapter of the thesis, “Conclusion,” summarises the views presented in the previous chapters. It emphasizes the need to see the objective violence to tackle the problems of women. Žižek awakens the minds of the readers to the reality of violence—violence in its totality. Being a prominent thinker of the modern times, Žižek cannot move around the world without noticing the outbursts of violence—the cry of the oppressed. In the similar passion, many thinkers and writers express their concern over the malfunctioning of the social structures. State, religion, army, police and judiciary act as agents of violence. Other ideological oppressive systems such as globalization, fundamentalism, terrorism, dictatorship and patriarchy functioning within the state add up to the worsening condition. In this study, these structural forms are

analysed with the support of six works by four authors from three continents. Even though the problems faced by women are same everywhere, these three continents represent different forms of structural violence. Apart from the symbolic violence seen in language, the various discourses to establish a structure or a law form the worst form of violence. The isolated words used to denigrate an individual, a caste or a race, later on become a part of the discourse used by the society. An isolated incident of rape or molestation does not become a violent act because it has become part of the common discourse and does not stir the curiosity of the media. Therefore, the insensitivity to the concept of violence has to be changed and one has to check the very fabric of society to see the hidden elements of violence. Thus, this thesis looks into the various aspects of violence and presents the views of Žižek on violence and analyses the instances of subjective and objective violence narrated in the select works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Nadifa Mohamed, Jean Sasson and Kishwar Desai.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Understanding Violence: Types and Causes**

A discourse on violence definitely demands a systemic study on the social, economic, political and psychological aspects related to the issue. What leads to the reaction and expression of violence has to be understood from various angles and the very system that works to eradicate violence from the society has to be questioned. In order to make these tasks completed with certain objectivity, various theories on violence have to be studied. Writers and thinkers have different viewpoints on the concept of violence.

World Health Organization in *World Report on Violence and Health: Summary* defines violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation” (WHO 4; Krug 5). This definition considers physical and psychological discomfort caused by any individual or a group to another individual or group as violence.

Nigel Walker and Mervin Glasser define violence as “the intended infliction of bodily harm on another person” (Perelberg 31). According to this definition violence is the deliberate acts on the body of one person by another person. There is a distinction between aggression and violence. Aggression is a biological reaction to danger, while violence is “the bodily actualisation of

aggression which aims to negate the danger” (31). Glasser makes another distinction between aggression and sadism, where aggression is termed self-preservative violence and sadism is termed malicious violence. The aim of self-preservative violence is to negate the danger and to remove the source of danger, while that of malicious violence is to inflict physical and emotional suffering. The effect the violence produces in the object is irrelevant in the first type of violence, whereas it is crucial in the second, which always includes an object relationship. Self-preservative violence is always accompanied by anxiety, whereas malicious violence is not (31).

Many types of violence are identified by various writers. Criminologists divide violence into two major types: individual violence and collective violence. Individual (or personal) violence is injurious force directed by one person against others. It includes making physical attacks and destroying another's property. Collective violence is defined as the violent form of collective behaviour engaged in by large numbers of people responding to a common stimulus. At the other extreme are the organized forms of collective violence. These include coups, rebellions, revolutions, terrorism, and war. Non-physical violence includes those acts that result from a power relationship, including threats and intimidation, neglect or acts of omission. Such non-physical violence has a broad range of outcomes—including psychological harm, deprivation and maldevelopment. Political violence is a broad term used to describe violence perpetrated by either persons or governments to achieve political goals. Psychological abuse (also referred to as psychological

violence, emotional abuse, or mental abuse) is a form of abuse, characterized by a person subjecting, or exposing, another person to behaviour that may result in psychological trauma, including anxiety, chronic depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder. Interpersonal violence (IPV), including domestic violence (DV) and childhood physical and sexual abuse, is a common problem in our society. Interpersonal violence is associated with numerous long-term health effects, both physical and mental, and increased use of health care services.

There are innumerable studies made to find the cause of violent behaviour. They are broadly clipped into two categories: internal drives and external forces. Ronald Baenninger in *Advances in Psychology: Targets of Violence and Aggression* writes:

Books, empirical and theoretical papers, and monographs on aggressive behavior in the quarter of a century since have focused primarily on possible sources of aggression that stem from internal drives and instincts (as emphasized by certain physiologists, ethologists, and psychiatrists) or on aggression as a response to environmental events, tempered by cultural and individual learning (as emphasized by most anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists). (1)

Many of the outbursts of violence are due to external factors such as economic insecurity, unjust distribution of rights, social negligence etc. Zillmann has opined that most human aggression is either inadvertent, or the result of temporary annoyance, frustration, anger, or irritation. With the possible exception of relatively rare, pathological brain disorders, human aggression appears to be



the outcome or expression of underlying emotional states—such as anger or hostility—in a social and cultural context (Baenninger 2). Rosine Jozef Perelberg in her article “Psychoanalytic Understanding of Violence and Suicide: A Review of the Literature and Some New Formulations” states that “aggression has . . . been seen as a reaction to an experience of danger, such as breaks in attunement, . . . impingement, . . . negative affective experiences . . . or as a defense against threats to the psychological self” (15). Like animals, when there is a discomfort felt, human beings also tend to become aggressive. ‘Frustration theory’ emphasizes that a child is likely to react with aggression when an instinctual wish is not satisfied or is thwarted through interference by the environment. Aggression is here also seen as an ego function (22). So to maintain the balance of the ego, aggression is used as a defense mechanism. The more a person suffers from the deprivation of his/her needs the more will be the chance in him/her to show aggressive behaviour.

According to David Graeber, in *Anthropological discussions*, violent acts are considered as acts of communication. Violence operates largely through the imagination. It functions as an outcome of fear and terror. Acts of violence can be acts of communication of this fear. What is really important about violence is that it is perhaps the only form of human action that holds out the possibility of operating on others without being communicative. “Violence may well be the only way in which it is possible for one human being to have relatively predictable effects on the actions of another without understanding anything about them” (Graeber 48).

Willem Schinkel views violence as a “process” rather than as an “act”. The cases related to physical violence can be considered isolated acts; but in the micro level, especially the “structural violence” has to be treated as a process rather than an isolated act. Violence is regarded as a process because it “consists of actions that recursively follow each other and that cannot be wholly singled out without losing the identity (‘violence’) of the process as a whole. Violence is a process characterized by fluidity” (Schinkel 36). To consider violence as individualized packages is untenable. The situation of violence has the character of a process (36). In the article “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,” Galtung defines violence as “the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is” (Galtung 168). He then distinguishes six dimensions of violence; the first category is physical versus psychological violence. Physical violence is identified by the injury on the body. Another categorization within physical violence is “biological violence, which reduces somatic capability (below what is potentially possible),” and “physical violence as such” (169). Psychological violence, “violence that works on the soul . . . includes lies, brainwashing, indoctrination, and threats” (170). All of these decrease mental potentialities. The second category of violence is “a *negative* and a *positive* approach to influence” (170). Like “negative” and “positive” freedom, one can speak of negative influence and of positive influence as violence. The first includes cases of punishment that lead to decreased potentialities, whereas the second refers to rewards that have that result. Both are called “violence” by Galtung, because in both cases, the effect is decreased potentialities. An example of the somewhat counter-intuitive form of positive violence is the rewards given

to consumers in a consumer's society, which "is reward-oriented, based on promises of euphoria, but ... also narrows down the ranges of action" (170). The third categorization is based on "*the object side: whether or not there is an object that is hurt*" (170). Galtung states that there are cases where no object of violence exists, such as when a group of people throw stones around, or when nuclear arms are tested. However, he does state that such occasions usually create a situation of threat of physical violence, which is a form of psychological violence. The same applies, according to Galtung, to the destruction of material things. The fourth division is based on "*the subject side: whether or not there is a subject (person) who acts*" (170). This distinction refers to the agency of violence. And here, Galtung makes an important distinction: "We shall refer to the type of violence where there is an actor that commits the violence as personal or direct, and to violence where there is no such actor as structural or indirect" (170). Unlike the previous understanding on violence, Galtung's novel concept of structural violence widens the area of research on violence. It enables Galtung to speak of violence, as an avoidable negative influence on a person's potential, even in cases where a performing subject is absent. A major reason for structural violence is the uneven distribution of resources. According to Galtung, structural violence exists when people are starving "when this is objectively avoidable" (171). He therefore also refers to structural violence as 'social injustice'. The fifth distinction between "*intended*" and "*unintended*" violence (171) derives its relevance from the question of guilt, which, in Judeo-Christian ethics and Roman jurisprudence, has been more relevant than the matter of consequence of action. When the distinction between intended and not intended violence is not made,

one is not only unable to distinguish intended instances of personal violence from unintended instances thereof, but one will also have a hard time recognizing structural violence for what it is (Schinkel 38). One may, as Galtung says, “be catching the small fry and letting the big fish loose” (Galtung 172). The sixth distinction is between the two levels of violence—“*manifest*” and the “*latent*” violence. It is a distinction that focuses on the visible nature of violence. Manifest violence is violence that is observable. Latent violence is, however, not simply to be equated to unobservable violence; by latent violence, Galtung intends a situation, “so unstable that the actual realization level ‘easily’ decreases” (172).

Understanding the term violence is a complex process. To understand a violent behaviour one should see a reason that caused this outburst. In civil wars and political upheavals, people resort to violent destructions as a reaction of their frustration for the state apparatus. So, rather than focusing on the visible destruction and punishing the perpetrators, to solve the issue, the underlying frustration has to be addressed.

In the article “Narcissism and Its Relation to Violence and Suicide,” Anthony Bateman made the observation that “recently psychoanalysts have begun to consider violence from a perspective of mental representation, thereby placing a focus on internal processes which may result in violent acts” (93). This has allowed distinguishing between different types of violence such as self-preservative violence, malicious violence, predatory violence and affective violence. The different types of violence are categorized on the use of and the experience of an object both in fantasy and reality. Bateman says: “For example

in self-preservative violence the experience of the object is as a threat which must be either avoided or destroyed whereas in malicious violence the object is controlled and tormented for the subject's gratification" (93). The nature of the object needs further clarification as there is often confusion about whether the object referred to is either an internal or an external object. In considering violence, this is important because someone may be attacked because he or she has become identified with an internal phantasy object. Thus an attack on another person is in fact an attack on the phantasy inside oneself. In the same manner, a suicide attempt or act of self-mutilation may occur if the self or the body becomes identified with a hated other. Taking into account this argument, there can be found a close relationship between violence and suicide; yet little is known about why one should occur rather than the other (93).

In *Aspects of Violence: A Critical Theory*, Willem Schinkel categorizes three forms of violence—private, state and structural:

Private violence will be understood as the reduction of being exerted by individuals or groups without state authority, although not necessarily recognized as illegitimate. The notion of state violence designates all reduction of being emanating, in the end, from the state and backed by its authority and monopoly of legitimate violence. Structural violence concerns all reduction of being not exerted by a locatable agent, but emanating from the differentiation of the social system as a whole. (82)

Here a new definition of violence is given by Schinkel. He defines violence "*ontologically*," and therefore defines "it as *reduction of being*" (45). Private

violence becomes private in the sense that it is committed by individuals or groups affecting another individual or group. The state violence is sponsored by the agents of the state such as police, army, administrators and anyone who works in favour of the government and against a special group. It can include certain policies of the government as well. In the structural violence, the existing social systems, institutions and structures include. The patriarchal system, religious laws, racial issues etc. form the structural violence.

Examining Walter Benjamin's essay "Critique of Violence," Schinkel sees a sense of urgency there. He notices the presence of the unsettling combination of destruction and constitution of order that is achieved by violence throughout the essay. Violence becomes apparent as the pivot around which law is organized. But his text offers anchor points for yet another theory of violence, a fundamental theory of violence, one that intends to touch upon the eidos (essence) of violence—a theory that recognizes the intrinsic aspect of violence alongside its instrumental uses. Though Benjamin speaks about "violence itself as a principle", and of "the essence of violence", in doing so, he is more interested in the possibility of a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate forms of violence. As such, Benjamin never really arrives at that 'essence'. His critique of violence is synonymous to "the philosophy of its history". The major part of his essay concentrates on the types of violence with its historical origin. The distinction of divine violence from mythical violence is made with the intention of justifying the violence from nowhere. Benjamin's critique of violence unfolds itself as a treatise on law and justice, ending with the pessimistic hope of a

messianism without a Messiah when he speaks of a 'divine violence' (84). Benjamin wants to point out that the violence of the law is neither purely law-enforcing or preserving nor wholly law-establishing. He presents the example of strike as a form of violence that the law allows by way of exception and the violence of war as a law-establishing violence. Any law-enforcement at the same time contains an aspect of law-establishment (87). The modern institution of the police is another example of law-enforcement and law-establishment. The violence of the police is law-establishing because it ordains regulations, and it is law-enforcing, because it engages in the lawful upholding of the goals. All violence, he says, is, as a means, either law-establishing or law-enforcing. Within the law, there is no resolving of conflict without violence (88). All law is contained in a violent circle of law-establishing and law-enforcing violence. No government can come to a non-violent political consensus, since any accomplishments of a parliament in the end amount to juridical decrees which are violent in establishment and enforcement. For Benjamin, even a last unmediated sphere of non-violent conflict-resolution, the sphere of language, has been appropriated by the law (91). There is a similarity between the violence of the myth and the violence of the establishment of law. Law-making is power making and to that extent an immediate manifestation of violence. Justice is the principle of all divine end, making power the principle of all mythical establishment of law (93). In law, violence lingers on. That is why Benjamin says there is something rotten within the law. Benjamin concurs with Sorel's 'metaphysical truth' that all law has always been the law of the powerful. And it will always be that, since, from the perspective of violence which alone can guarantee the law, there is no

equality, only—at best—equally great violence. Violence is the privilege of the powerful (94). To make a difference in this concept, Benjamin proposes the concept of Divine violence, which is distinguishable from mythical violence. Schinkel summarises the distinction between mythical and divine violence made by Walter Benjamin:

Divine violence is neither law-establishing nor law-preserving or enforcing, but it is free of this violent circle of the law; it is law-destroying (*rechtsvernichtend*). And where mythical violence draws borders, divine violence destroys without limitations; where mythical violence bears guilt yet requites, divine violence does away with guilt; whereas mythical violence threatens, divine violence strikes, and while mythical violence may be bloody, divine violence is lethal without blood. While mythical violence is violence informed by a modern vitalism that cares about all individual life for the sake of life itself, a divine and pure violence cares only about the living itself. (94-95)

After analyzing the distinction made by Walter Benjamin, Willem Schinkel questions the divine violence on the ground that Benjamin does not succeed in contemplating a way out of mythical violence in particular and perhaps even violence in general, and he does not find a possible way out of the violence of the law. He further critiques that Benjamin does not succeed in contemplating a pure and immediate violence (96). A similar critique on the purity of Benjamin's divine violence comes from Derrida, who has stressed that divine violence is a pure performative act. Derrida further says that a performative speech act can be



just only when it is based on conventions and other performative acts, which means it is always inherently violent. More directly with respect to divine violence, Derrida questions the possibility of a pure divine violence because the occurrence of which is undecidable. No man can decide upon divine violence; no man can even know it. Divine violence is a means to an end that is an end of all means (97).

Having placed a criticism on Benjamin's divine violence, Willem Schinkel proposes another type of violence—autotelic violence. He states:

If Benjamin seeks a pure, immediate violence that is itself not law-establishing, autotelic violence would appear to be a more realistic category than divine violence. 'Autotelic' is derived from *autos* (self) and *telos* (goal), and thus denotes that which is its own goal. Autotelic violence, therefore, is a violence that is its own goal, of violence in which means and end are conflated. If there could ever be such a thing as a wholly unmediated violence, autotelic violence would have to be that most 'pure' form of violence, perhaps as the most original manifestation of violence. . . . Autotelic violence seeks nothing but its own autopoiesis. Only autotelic violence can possibly be said to be a 'pure' form of violence, since it does not seek to replace the law by a mythical alternative, nor does it seek to inaugurate justice as the end of the law; it only seeks to destroy law, and to destroy justice. (Schinkel 99-100)

Schinkel sees autotelic violence as pure and original. But he states that it does not intend to establish law but rather it seeks the destruction of law:

Autotelic violence does not intend to be law-establishing; it merely seeks the destruction of the law and the simultaneous reproduction of itself. Because of its boundless destructiveness vis-a-vis the law, it is the most threatening violence to 'law and order'. This is mirrored in the responses of the law to cases of violence which appear to be spurred by nothing but the will to violence, where exterior motives, reasons referring beyond violence itself, are absent. . . . Where violence for the sake of itself escapes the grip of the state, the state is threatened most in its autopoiesis. For autotelic violence not only defies the law in recognition of another law, an alternative law; it is at odds with any juridical system, and any such system is threatened by it. Where the law is undermined most severely, law- preserving violence strikes the hardest. Autotelic violence neither seeks to inaugurate an era of justice. It does not care about law or justice, does not recognize the opposition justice–injustice, it does not worry, with Benjamin, about the mixture of justice and the law; it places itself beyond good and evil.

. . . Autotelic violence is indeed immediate violence, a violence beyond the categories of means and ends. But beyond those categories, the 'purity' of violence necessarily gains a different meaning. Exactly how 'pure' can immediate violence be? A 'pure violence' would be a violence that is as violent as possible, in a qualitative, not necessarily a quantitative sense. That means it is a violence that stands out in its destructive aspect. Autotelic, immediate violence is a 'pure' violence in

the sense that it too is doubly violent, since in autotelic violence, both the end and the means are violent. Empirically, autotelic violence is in that sense the most 'pure' form of violence. (Schinkel 100-01)

Even when Schinkel speaks about the purity of autotelic violence, he himself questions its purity. He says that in its 'pure form' autotelic violence does not take place because any pure violence is a paradox: 'pure' violence would violate itself. A violence that destroys indiscriminately would destroy itself to be a 'pure' violence, that is, to be purely violence and nothing else. Any ontic form of autotelic violence is therefore impure. A 'pure autotelic violence' thereby becomes an ontic impossibility. But the idea of a pure autotelic violence can serve as a model for the autotelic aspect of all violence (102).

Willem Schinkel likes to use determinism and formalism as two ways of thinking about and of observing violence (110). Determinism has a kind of structure of tracing reference that is external to the object of enquiry (violence) itself. In determinism, the object is untouched while seeking to explain that object; the enquiry is made without dealing with anything essential to that object. It focuses on factors that are contingent and external to the object. By contrast, formalism has the structure of an aesthetics of its researched object. It places the form as intrinsically meaningful in the first place, and therefore, it deals with any essential characteristics of that object (121). Violence consists of violent acts. "Violence", as a specific set of violent acts, can never be explained as a whole from the "outside", since violent acts, once they appear, often cause other violent acts to follow them. "Violence" is in that case either in part caused by itself, or it

is an inappropriate name used to denote an aggregate of actions that has no empirical basis in itself (110). Much of the research has been done on the external expression of violence. But Schinkel prefers the formalistic approach to the deterministic approach. There are five strands of social-scientific research of violence that are made up of several theoretical perspectives on violence or profiles of violence. A first strand of social scientific theory on violence is anomie theory and the associated frustration-aggression theory. This theory is associated with Robert Merton, though its originator is actually Durkheim (112). A second profile that explicitly seeks to “explain” is Hirschi’s social bond or control theory (113). A third kind of profile is a collection of theories that share a common feature. Their common feature is that they highlight certain aspects of the violent offender’s personal background, and claim (113-14). As a fourth characteristic strand in the study of violence, rational choice theory should be mentioned. The actor’s “free choice” is a central feature of rational choice theory, and it assumes that an individual will undertake violent action if he or she thinks, on the basis of a rational calculation, that such action will be most rewarding (114). Conflict theories offer a fifth way of dealing scientifically with violence. They are really the only kind of theory that is not so much interested in the background characteristics of the single perpetrator, but rather in the contextual features that make for the setting of violence (115). Another concept Schinkel introduces is the frictional violence, “a contemporary form of violence that resides in the friction between ‘fictional’ and ‘real violence’—two opposites of which the relative inadequacy for an understanding of a more general way of experiencing violence is captured by the concept of frictional violence” (110).

In *Violence: A Micro-Sociological Theory*, Randall Collins gives priority to the situations of violence rather than to the violent individuals. What is sought in micro sociological theory is the contours of situations, which shape the emotions and acts of the individuals who step inside them (1). Violence naturally falls into hermetically sealed sections, and “bad” social conditions should be responsible for “bad” violence, whereas “good” violence—which is not seen as violence at all, when it is carried out by authorized state agents—is not subject to analysis since it is part of normal social order (2). Resistance theories frame violence as a local response to subordinate location in large-scale social structure; usually this is class location in the capitalist economy, and sometimes it includes race and gender. Resistance violence is just as hard as any other kind of violence. Even in the instances where violence is most explicitly resistance, as in ghetto uprisings under slogans of rebellion against racial injustice, the violence is almost all local because most of the destruction is in one’s own neighborhood. When an ideologically aroused group invades someone else’s neighborhood, it is less likely to be “vertical resistance to the overarching social order, but rather a lateral assault on some other ethnic group, thus forfeiting the moral legitimacy of being seen as resistance by altruistic onlookers from higher social classes” (23). Macro-cultural approaches to violence become vacuous when they reach the concept of “symbolic violence.” Symbolic violence, a subtype of structural violence as described by Bourdieu, is the gentle, hidden form of violence which takes place when overt violence is impossible”. Bourdieu’s “symbolic violence,” is smooth, tension-free, non-confrontational, highly repetitive, and without situational contingencies (24). “Symbolic violence is mere theoretical word play; to take it

literally would be to grossly misunderstand the nature of real violence. Symbolic violence is easy; real violence is hard” (25). It is the tension and the fear emerging out of the situation that form the chief feature of micro-situational interaction on which pivot all the features of violence when it does occur (25).

Symbolic violence is a kind of violence that takes place with the (silent) consent of those to whom it befalls (Schinkel 188). Symbolic violence, for Bourdieu, is indeed related to the schemes of perception, of knowing, that people are endowed with. The theory of symbolic violence must start with the processes of socialization that produce the durable dispositions Bourdieu terms *habitus*. Symbolic violence manifests itself in the acceptance of domination by those dominated. For Bourdieu, symbolic violence comes with the very organization of the social field as a play of power between dominant and dominated positions. Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic violence therefore shows how structural violence can become incorporated, embodied even in a person’s *hexis* (the arrogant distinction of the aristocrat, the self-indulged prudence of the bourgeois, the other-worldliness of the religious person, the contemplative detachment of the intellectual and the humbleness of the lower-class worker in the presence of any of these others). Symbolic violence is a violence one accepts while one suffers it (Schinkel 189).

Structural violence is a term commonly ascribed to Johan Galtung, which he introduced in the article “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research”. It refers to a form of violence wherein some social structure or social institution may harm people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs. Symbolic violence is

the kind of gentle, invisible, pervasive violence that is exercised through cognition and misrecognition, knowledge and sentiment, often with the unwitting consent or complicity of the dominated. Compared to symbolic violence, structural violence can be a more severe form of violence, since its severe forms are directly related to means and ends of life. Marx's remark that he did not see people, only workers, civilians and intellectuals, reflects a situation of symbolic violence insofar as people accepted their fate as natural and thereby reduced themselves to agents of their own reduction (Schinkel 190). Symbolic violence is a form of incorporated or embodied structural violence, in which subjects are structurally violated but accept the legitimacy of the structure from which this violence emanates. Structural violence is a form of reduction of being emanating from the macro-organization of social life as such, while symbolic violence is the self-reduction through which people accept the legitimacy of structural violence. Once violence is seen as a reduction of being, and once symbolic violence is defined as pertaining to a tacit agreement to undergo violence, the "stuff" of symbolic violence is located in the self-reduction that is the result of a structural reduction and that tacitly condones this structural reduction of being (191).

Schinkel makes a distinction between private violence and personal violence. Private violence is a form of violence, the executive agency of which can be located at the level of one or more individual agents. Individual agents can be organizations as well, which is why "personal violence" is not equal to "private violence". While state violence concerns a self-maintenance of the state by means of a negation of the difference between active and reactive state

violence, private violence concerns the self-maintenance of an individual (or a group or organization) over against one or more other individuals by means of the negation of the being of the other (Schinkel 175). Schinkel makes the difference clear:

Where state violence is related to the self-reproduction of the state by means of a negation of the difference between two forms of state violence (active and reactive), and where private violence in itself, as a negation of the being of an other, serves the self-maintenance of the individual(s) whose agency it emanates from, structural violence contributes to the self-maintenance of the social system in which it occurs as a whole by means of a negation of its violent character. Structural violence exists, in Foucault's terms, as a normalized state of affairs. It is the way things are. (186)

Structural violence runs through various social systems and pertains to the social distribution of means and ends of life. Even though it emerges from the social systems, it cannot be controlled by any of these systems. In that sense, it becomes hard to recognize such a violence happening in the society (Schinkel 188).

The interplay among the different types of violence makes it difficult to identify one from the other. The mix between them is so perfect that while some elements of one type are found, some elements of the other can also be identified. So in certain context, it becomes difficult to identify structural violence from private violence or symbolic violence. One form of violence assumes the executive shape of another form without having its essential character and agentic



or non-agentic origin (Schinkel 197). Structural violence takes the shape of private violence. Individuals may make use of structural or symbolic violence in order to further their interests. While their doing so is in fact part of what is contained in the concept of structural violence, it may take the shape of private violence each time they do so to their advantage (200). Symbolic violence is private violence because it is self-inflicted as in the case of suicide. This can be said to be a private execution of a structural violence of a highly competitive social system where the sense of individuality and of the importance of the individual person is less developed. “In the absence of an individualized morality, suicide is structural violence turned inward by means of the executive shape of private violence” (201). In the political system, when the corrupted politicians make use of their power for personal interest, private violence takes the shape of state violence.

Structural violence generates frustration in people leading to direct violence. Much of the physical violence by the mass can be reduced provided exploitative conditions are reduced. The dominating systems in the society—a religion, a political party or a community can function as an agent of structural violence. Every system has an ideology which is opposed to another ideology. In a heterogeneous culture, there will be a section which has to sacrifice its ideology or to tolerate the ideology of the dominant culture. There is a limit for people to suffer any anomaly. The end result will be a letting loose of the pent-up feelings in the form of violence.

Dictionaries and encyclopaedia pin down violence as something destructive made of physical force. In the system of law, the ideology of violence is strengthened by means of the specific programmes existing in this system. By definition, the law only deals with violence as *violentia*. Social science, by researching violence only in the restricted sense, very often appears to contribute to the reification of the intellectualist notion of violence (Schinkel 217).

Worldwide terrorist movements have become a primary challenge to many state authorities. Through their ideologies and activities, the terrorists can challenge the mightiest state, and this puts the state under pressure because it becomes painfully obvious that the state's monopoly of legitimate violence is really not a monopoly of all violence. When people question the powerlessness of the state against the terrorists, the strategy adopted by the state is to declare a war on terrorism, which is a contradiction in terms. Globalization has been hailed as the solution to problems of inequality, that is, of structural violence. For the moment, however, it seems to provide just as many possibilities for structural violence to occur. Structural violence is the violence that exists by virtue of the breaches between social systems and of their internal differentiations. Since world-society is increasingly complex, such breaches are only multiplying, for complexity in social systems is related to functional differentiation (226).

Rajni Kothari makes a distinction between institutionalized and non-institutionalized violence in the following manner:

Institutionalization of violence generally refers to the process by which acts of violence or force are undertaken by an official group on behalf of,

or at least with the tacit approval of, the society as a whole. Examples of such actions might include violence carried out by the society's police against criminals, warfare by the armed forces against external enemies, and repressive measures by security forces against the society's internal opponents, real or perceived. In this way institutionalized violence is typically contrasted with non-institutionalized violence; i.e., violent actions by individuals without any authorization or acceptance by the larger society, such as serial killings, gang violence, or spousal and child abuse. (223)

The state perpetrated violence consists not merely of police violence, but also of the force of law in general, and of the procedural violence that is inherent to the proper functioning of the state (Schinkel 166). Violence is at the core of the state's origin and this is expressed in theories of the origin of the state, whether in a positive or negative sense. The Marxian theory of the state sees in the state a perpetual violence in the form of a legitimization and juridification of bourgeois interests. Either way, violence is of foundational relevance for the state (170). A similar viewpoint is found in *Power* by Foucault, where he relates the state's "institutions of subjugation" (82) to a subjectification of the people to the smallest detail. In an all-inclusive level, according to Foucault, the prison, the school, hospital and workshop take on their role in the atonement of the subject in accordance with juridical and anthropological forms, which became entirely appropriated by state power during the Middle Ages. "With Foucault, one could say that the violence of the state can be experienced everywhere as the fabrication

of *subjects* according to a juridico-anthropological form which, is seen in a Marxian-influenced perspective of discipline of the worker in the workshop, according to capitalist logic” (Schinkel 171).

A form of symbolic violence often happening in the society is the linguistic violence. Language is a powerful tool used to confront and belittle the opponent in many social groups. Most often, there is a tendency to highlight the personal insult, rather than the role of the lexicon used by the society in creating more chances of insult to a group or caste. A distinction can be made between personal covert violence, such as a verbal insult, and institutional covert violence, such as the socially sanctioned use of demeaning terms to refer to specific social groups. The governments refer to their adversaries as a “peril,” and within the society demean the politically less powerful. Those less powerful in society are not always less numerous, as is typically the case with women (Gay 305). Language that harms us is termed “oppressive”. The offensive and oppressive language is found on all levels of the continuum of linguistic violence that includes subtle, abusive, and grievous forms (305-06). Within a particular country, the linguistic violence of an official language seems less important to those who have mastered it than to those who have not. The declaration of one language as official language is another unfortunate legacy of colonialism. In international level, alien languages, along with alien governments, were imposed onto indigenous people. People are forced to follow a language for their official transaction. There are abusive forms conspicuous in racist, sexist, heterosexist, and classist discourse. Abusive forms rely on offensive terms and frequently aim

to hurt the individuals to whom they are directed. Both the practitioners and victims are more likely to be aware of the degrading intent of these forms of communication. When a heterosexual man calls a lesbian a “dyke” both individuals know that the man aims to hurt the woman’s feelings. Many abusive terms recur within warist discourse in demeaning references to the enemy or even members of one’s own military who are judged negatively. In warist discourse, nuclear discourse, totalitarian language, and genocidal language there are many expressions that are derogatory. In nuclear discourse, “collateral damage” refers to the thousands or even millions of civilians who would be the victims of nuclear strikes against military targets. Nazis used “special treatment” instead of “execution,” while in Bosnia “ethnic cleansing” referred to genocidal practices. Grievous forms often have the intent to silence or even eliminate an entire social group. Unfortunately, warist discourse represents one of the most globally intractable practices of linguistic violence. Warist discourse in its multifarious and nefarious manifestations leads to the killing of large numbers of people by organized groups, such as the state, subnational political organizations, and religious, racial, and ethnic groups (306). In linguistic violence, most people who are subjected to physical coercion are conscious of the violence being done to them. In the case of linguistic manipulation, the harm done can escape those subjected to it unless they can find an independent and explicit basis for the distortions to which they have been subjected. Some of linguistic manipulation in warist discourse is unintentional and involves self-deception on the part of the governmental and military officials. In many cases, euphemism is used as a shield to reduce the impact of the negative feeling experienced by the victim. A

linguistic alternative to the horrors of war is created in order to think, speak, and write about these events in an abstract or indirect way, since it would otherwise be difficult to visualize graphically or justify logically what is actually taking place. Likewise, when the public hears and reads these euphemisms, they often do not realize what is really occurring. Gay sees the language of war being manipulated by the government to reduce the impact it creates on people:

Scholars who have analyzed discourse about war, such as Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, and Haig Bosmajian, contend that language is corrupted in ways that make the cruelty, inhumanity, and horror of war seem justifiable. Language becomes a tool employed by political and military officials to make people accept what ordinarily they would repudiate if the true character were known. The language of war hinders civilians from recognizing that human beings are being mutilated, tortured, forcibly removed from their villages and hamlets, wounded, and killed. (Gay 307)

Linguistic misrepresentation used by the nations against the enemy nation is deliberate. Propaganda and brain-washing seek to manipulate the minds and behaviours of the citizenry. In times of war, each of the nations involved presents its adversary as an evil enemy and itself as the embodiment of good (308). Within the nation, political parties employ linguistic misrepresentations of themselves and their adversaries. In political murder, the social reality of its intent and consequence are kept hidden from the public.

Hate crimes are forms of symbolic violence. Other name most commonly employed to refer to hate crime is “*bias crime*”, perhaps because it accurately

emphasizes that such offenses often arise out of prejudice towards another group of individuals. In addition, Howard Ehrlich, director of the Prejudice Institute at Towson State University, has coined the term *ethno-violence* to include acts that do not rise to the legal standard of a crime, but contain an element of prejudice” (Levin 90). Thus, like acts of terrorism, hate crimes are about messages.

Offenders use a criminal event to put the members of an entire group on notice, by example, that they are not welcome in a community, in a work-place, on a college campus, at school or a particular area (92).

Jan Horsfall has opined that whenever there is the co-occurrence of conflict and violence, it can be due to the fact that there is a conflict of interest as well as a struggle for dominance and control. In *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Family Violence* Renate C. A. Klein affirms: “While the conflict of interest could be resolved amicably, the struggle for dominance thrives on the use of coercion. Although violent attacks in the family may appear to be out-of-control events, feminists have argued convincingly that male violence against women is not an indication of loss of control but rather a means of establishing control” (4). Support of women in domestic violence against other female members in the family, or their neglect to protect the victim, gives male members additional force to continue doing the crime. Women are threatened or silenced when they raise voice against domestic violence. Social psychologists Tedeschi and Felson suggested that, in aggression and violence, there is a deliberate decision by the aggressor to use force against the victim to punish the victim for perceived transgressions or to retaliate against perceived wrongdoing. Accordingly, both the

feminist and the social psychologists find two implications related to the conflict and violence in the family. First implication is that “the use of force is a matter of choice within the individual’s control, not outside of it” (4). Second, they imply that the aggressor interprets the family events according to his version or constructs a minor event into a grave one as though it required the use of force. This viewpoint “concur with Sorensen’s arguments that men beat their wives ‘in order to’ coerce or punish them rather than ‘because of’ alcohol intoxication or loss of control” (4).

Gender system in the different parts of the world cannot claim a universal nature as “formulations of gender show rich diversity from culture to culture;” but “everywhere a dominance of men/masculinity is pervasive” (Cockburn 28). Gender power plays a significant role in the dynamics of every site of human interaction—from the domestic to the international arena. It has expression in physical appearance. The way men and women look after their bodies, the different types of physical training, and the vulnerability of women’s body to attack, express the existing power play of gender. “It has expression in economics: how money, property, and other resources are distributed between the sexes” (28). The discrimination shown at home causes dissatisfaction among women and social tensions become a cause for the increase of domestic violence in men. Domestic violence “increases as societal tensions grow and is more common and more lethal when men carry weapons” (32).

Men express different types of behaviour, like “threats and intimidation, humiliating and controlling behaviour, withholding of finances, deprivation,



isolation, belittling and constantly criticizing” (Hester 22), physical assault, sexual abuse and rape, which can be included in domestic violence towards women. “Perpetrators may use any one of these behaviours . . . to achieve control” (22). Domestic violence is a global phenomenon and it is not limited to any particular class, ethnic or social group. Depending on the biological and mental condition of the women who faces domestic violence, the impact varies greatly for each woman. The impact of domestic violence “can be similar regardless of whether there is physical violence or more emotional or psychological abuse” (26). But the severity of the violence cannot be judged on the basis of the severity of the physical injury because it is often the emotional and the psychological abuse that leaves the greatest and longest lasting impact on women. There is a lasting impact on the psyche of the woman if she undergoes the suffering for a prolonged time. Hester observes that the psychological effects are even more difficult to deal with than physical injury because they are so hidden and therefore difficult to prove and to have taken seriously. Although physical injuries and “broken bones fade and mend, the emotional impacts, especially the sense of worthlessness and fear, can be very long-lasting and much more difficult to overcome” (27). The physical and emotional effects of the domestic violence have a detrimental impact on the relation of the mother with her children. Many mothers express symptoms of aggression towards their children as a direct effect of the domestic violence. Mothers seem inconsistent in their parenting due to the abuse and negligence they experience from their partners. The abuse prevents mothers from giving proper care to their children and children are considered a burden in their life. The expected joy of child

caring turns out into a stressful experience. Studies show that mothers who experience domestic violence lose self-confidence as mothers, feel their emotions as mother draining out and experience a distancing in their relation with children. These effects could be compounded by the difficult behaviour of the children at a time when they too could be trying to come to terms with the violence they were witnessing and experiencing (30). Referring to Liz Kelly, Hester says:

. . . the impact of domestic violence on mothering might include women being forced to make difficult choices, such as leaving without the children in order to protect themselves or their children. Violence against the children from mothers can at times be understood as a means of protecting the children from harsher treatment from their male partners or because of their own sense of frustration or distress. (30)

Family violence is explained by researchers from three levels of analysis such as micro level, meso level, and macro level. In the micro level of analysis, researchers attempt to explain the social problem by analyzing the behaviour of the individual(s) involved. This level of analysis has also been referred by Richard J. Gelles as “the intra-individual level of analysis” (Gelles 10). The meso level of analysis studies social problems from the group level. This level has also been referred to as the social/ psychological level of analysis. Finally, the macro level of analysis views social problems in terms of the larger societal structures and organizations that affect it. Thus, family violence is understood through socially structured variables, including cultural values of different societal organizations, differing socioeconomic status groups, and so forth. Gelles has

referred to this level as the sociological/sociocultural level. These three levels of analysis are used to examine the four major theoretical models of family violence. These four theoretical models are the psychiatric/psychopathological model, the sociological/ sociopsychological model, the sociocultural model, and the multidimensional model. Kurst-Swanger explains the field of study under each theory:

The psychiatric/psychopathological model involves theories about family violence that focus on the individuals involved and thus is a micro level model. The sociological/sociopsychological model, under a meso level of analysis, approaches family violence through an expanded version of the psychiatric/psychopathological model. This model looks beyond the individual and takes into account the relationships between the individuals involved in the violence and the environmental factors that affect the family and its organization, structure, and everyday interactions. . . . The socio-cultural model, which is a macro level model, further enhances the other two research models by viewing family violence in terms of the cultural contexts in which it occurs. Thus the theory looks at socially structured variables such as gender inequalities and cultural norms and attitudes surrounding violence and family relations. . . . Finally, the multidimensional model, using all three levels of analysis, augments all the research by attempting to account for many of the other theoretical viewpoints and factors involved in the first three models . . . (Kurst-Swanger 32-33)

All these models are interconnected and we cannot draw a line of separation between them.

Domestic violence is seen in every society all over the world. It is understood that such violence increases in societies where people face poverty, war and political or other commotions. There is a “correlation between other human rights violations and the gender-based violence” (Susskind 17). Women are at a greater risk of experiencing violence from their male partners, family members and other men in areas where people face human rights violations (17). In principle, women “are rendered the right to political participation, legal redress, economic and social resources, and personal development; but in practice, women’s realization of these rights is curtailed by their race, age, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, or because they are indigenous people” (Bong 32). These categorisations “may deny women their full humanity and partnership with men in gender equitable relations” (32). Patriarchal perceptions of gender and sexuality privilege “heterosexual masculinity to the detriment of females and members of the LGBT community” (Rajan 46). Hence masculine privilege is “premised upon the normalization of a wide range of violence against women and non-heterosexuals through numerous strategies, including rape, domestic violence, economic repression, and representational violence” (46). The devaluation of women in patriarchy in general lends their subjugation to intense forms of violence.

The gender division as male and female has neglected the homosexuals and their concerns. Nowadays violence against homosexuals is a major social

problem in many parts of the world. The law enforcement officials of the state suspiciously watch the movements of the gays and lesbians and restrict their movement in the public places. The cases of torture against the homosexuals are ignored by the police. There are innumerable cases of violence against the homosexuals documented in institutional settings such as prisons, militaries, and schools and within families. “Forms of victimization include assault, beating, rape, torture, and murder” (Franklin 139). The most frequent victims are generally men who assume the dress or characteristics associated with women. Due to their visibility and their violation of traditional gender norms, such men become easy prey to public humiliation and alienation (139). “The increasingly transnational nature of local cultures has contributed to the spread of Western notions of gay and lesbian identity throughout the globe” (Franklin 141). As a result, many people came forward to reveal their sexual orientation openly. The emergence of gay and lesbian groups has been accompanied in many places by widespread violence against men and women suspected of homosexual behaviour or identity (141). Even though there are more number of violence against lesbians than those against gay men, it is less well documented due to “the social invisibility of lesbians within both the dominant culture and homosexual subcultures” (142). In many societies, women are not permitted to form groups or move freely in public space, and worse the condition of lesbians: they are denied their very existence. Lesbians are often victimized when their behaviour interfere with male privileges or property rights. The primary targets of anti-homosexual violence are individuals who are perceived as gay men or lesbians because of their appearance, mannerisms, interactions with a same-sex partner, or presence

in gay-identified settings. Thus, “victims include not only gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals, but also heterosexuals who attend gay events and establishments or who fit popular stereotypes of a homosexual” (142). Compared with gay men, lesbians appear to experience fewer beatings and attacks with weapons but higher rates of sexual harassment, rape, verbal abuse, and victimization by family members.

In the name of sexuality many people suffer in the modern society. Peter M. Nardi and Ralph Bolton in “Gay-Bashing: Violence and Aggression Against Gay Men and Lesbians” highlight “fag-bashing” or “gay-bashing,” which is the violence, threats of physical harm, verbal abuse, and other types of aggression directed against individuals because of their sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation (349). Many gay men and lesbians face aggression and discrimination because of their sexual orientation, “while millions of others live with the fear and knowledge that they, too, are at risk of being the targets of hate crimes and of discriminatory actions such as the loss of a job, of housing, and of child custody rights, without legal recourse in many jurisdictions” (Nardi 350). Violence against gays and lesbians take many forms from “the physical attacks, insults, and vicious jokes, to the subtle but equally pernicious forms, such as the refusal to recognize the existence and legitimacy of the gay community and gay culture” (351). Violence, threats of physical aggression and verbal abuse are significant risks in the lives of many gays and lesbians. The inability of the gays and lesbians to fit into the stereotype patterns of social life keeps them away from the mainstream life. Their unusual pattern of behaviour makes them a laughing

stock by others. The rejection and neglect they face start from the families of origin of gays and lesbians. Most often, gay youths are rejected and abused by parents, siblings and other kin because of their homosexuality. At the marriageable age, they are pressurised to get married to a woman against their wish. Many such youths even fear disclosing who they are to parents because of the possibility of rejection. Thus, where other minority youth generally do not face problems with racism and religious intolerance within their own families, for gays and lesbians often abuse begins at home. They are expelled from the family or forced to leave the family because of excessive mental torture. In many cases, “aggression against gay youths takes the form of expulsion . . . and a severance of ties and financial support by unsympathetic parents. These young men and women then end up on the streets where they are targets for further violence and exploitation” (354). They are thrown to the streets because of an unrecognized and unaccepted identity.

Violence against women increases in the society because there is no serious punishment or there is no punishment at all. Police officers compel the women victims to neglect the crime and move in harmony with the husband or the husband’s family. The complaints by women registered against men do not get due importance and the investigation moves at a slow pace. Moreover, all women do not have the same opportunities to register a complaint to the higher authority. Many societies discourage women to approach the police with a complaint. The general tendency of women is to suffer or hide the crime rather than to complaint to the police. The chances of women registering a complaint

against the perpetrator depend on various factors like race, class, and economic standing. Women in a developed society and women with economic independence are bold enough to register a complaint in the police station or in the court. Yet these systems do not take adequate measures to provide immediate justice to the victim.

There are many theories that Sociologists put forward to explain the violence against women. Helen Jones explains the differences in the various theories put forward by the sociologists:

Conflict theory differs from structural-functionalism because instead of understanding society as striving for equilibrium, society is seen as in competition and subject to change. Resources (not merely material resources but also things such as power and influence) are limited and some social structures have more resources than others and so have higher status and greater ability to maintain their position. Where the structural-functionalist approach struggles to explain change in society, conflict theory argues that society is constantly in change and conflict over resources. (184)

Competition over resources is visible in all social relationships. Due to competing interests, change occurs in the society and it creates inequality in the social structures. Feminism as a social movement took conflict-theory approach to the issue of social discrimination while Marxism used the conflict theory to explain the exploitation of the working class (184). Symbolic interactionism understands human action and interaction within society as symbolic expression of control.



“The symbolic meanings relating to gendered language mean that when we speak of ‘a woman’ or ‘a man’ a tidal wave of meanings, assumptions and understandings are brought into play. The meanings we give to these words are bigger than mere biological categories” (Jones 184-85). One’s sense of self develops from one’s interactions with others.

Even though there are different studies to explain men’s violence to women, none of the theories can completely give a satisfactory explanation. Biological explanations may emphasize “hormonal patterns” and “aggression”; Sociobiology may conceptualize violence in relation to “territory” and its “defence”; Psychology may introduce “personality types” or “disorders” and “personal constructs”; Psychoanalysis may hypothesize “projection” and “displacement”; Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science and Economics tend to use concepts that are grounded in interpersonal, collective, institutional, structural or societal processes which include “poverty”, “stress”, “alienation”, “sub-culture”, and so on. “While it is quite possible to identify individual, family, cultural, economic, structural and other causes or explanations of violence, the search for a final or original cause may be futile” (Hearn 17). Social theories give priority to the concept of “culture” and “system” while explaining the notion of violence. Violence is “produced and reproduced through learning, socialization, modeling and imitation” (29). So, it becomes part of the culture or the system creating an environment of violence that operates over time across generations, and beyond individuals through social relationships. This “environment” can be thought of as “a ‘culture’ with its particular norms and values (as in the idea of

sub-cultures) or ‘system’, with its particular systemic characteristics as in the idea of family system” (29). Feminist studies have emphasized how men’s violence to women can be understood “as part of the system of structured power and oppression that constitutes patriarchy and patriarchal social relations” (31). Patriarchal control includes state control and so the actions of male members are secondary and subordinate to that control. It can be compared to the capitalist control overriding the interests of individual capitalists, though not the class interests of capitalists (201). In most social theories, “violence is not understood as a *characteristic* or *pervasive* form of interpersonal or structural relations” (204). Violence is seldom understood as “integral, embedded or immanent in social relations, and social relations are rarely characterized by or as violence, actual or potential” (204). Even in discussions of gender and power, violence is not understood as fundamental. Men’s violence to women is a structure, a process, a set of practical actions and an outcome of men’s societal domination—of “patriarchy”. Man carries this domination through hierarchic heterosexuality, fatherhood, and the state and maintains and intensifies it by violence (209).

Media plays a great role in promoting violence. The means of communication that reach large number of people include newspapers, magazines, radio, television, films, and electronic communication. Media are used in reporting, presenting and screening news about crime and violence and in creating violent scenes. While bringing information and entertainment to millions, the media also depict many acts of violence. Wars, terrorist attacks and heinous crimes occupy the lion share of the news media. In the entertainment

media, many of the adventure and suspense stories that people read, see on the screen, or interact with in computer games contain violence. Many of the video games children play both in the computer and mobile phone encourage them to choose a path of violence. Even in music industry, there is “a cult of violence, with songs about crime, shootings, police confrontations, and the mistreatment of women” (Kittleson 70). When violence in movies and television becomes part of public discussion, the focus is laid on its impact on children. Suggestions are given how to restrict children watching television and nothing is discussed on the adults watching crime movies or violent attacks on human beings or animals. Adults are allowed to watch adult-rated videos. But exposure to any kind of violence affects all ages, all ethnicities, and both genders. By focusing on just one group, the nation will not resolve the larger issue. Violence becoming a part of everyday life, or even of enjoyment, has a negative effect on a society. Exposure to violence reduces the capacity for tolerance and promotes interest towards violent acts. People can also become insensitive to acts of brutality in real life. “This desensitization may make people less likely to take a stand when they experience a violation of their own rights or see someone else’s rights violated” (129). Apart from these effects, there is a social cost associated with any violent act. Karl Larson defines social cost of violence as the price a society pays for crime and other violent behaviours. This cost includes financial in the form of damage to property or loss of something and human in the form of injury, mental suffering or death. There are also attempts by taxpayers to prevent and punish crimes (Kittleson 103). Restricting the chances of exposure to violence is a better approach that the government can adopt.

There is a wide use of sexual violence in the movies. What was part of the porn industry has easily become part of the mainstream cinema. The acts of sexual violence seen in a private space with a sense of shame are viewed by a large population. The acts of sexual violence had been moved “from the sphere of solitary, unadmitted fantasy into the domain of shared experience” (Ballinger 313). Joan Smith also shares the same view in this regard:

The viewer is no longer alone, those acts which he may have imagined privately, perhaps with a degree of shame, have also been visualised by the screenwriter, the director, the special effects man, and the hundreds of other people involved in the making of a film. And here, sitting in the seats that stretch in front and behind, are dozens of other men who have, like him, paid money to see them. (18)

Liz Kelly observes that as the revival of feminist campaigning for sexual equality increases, there is an increased public sexualisation of women in mass media. The increasing demands from women for greater autonomy and equality will increase attempts of violence from men as they reassert their dominance (Kelly 30). Through internet, pornography has spread violence and sexualisation of women. A culture has emerged by which women are considered as mere body and flesh. Natasha Walter comments on the new culture of young women: “Through the mainstreaming of pornography and the new acceptability of the sex industry, through the modishness of lap and pole-dancing, through the sexualisation of young girls, many young women are being surrounded by a culture in which they are all body and only body” (125).

In all what we see in the media is the reaffirmation of the power relationship within which women are subordinate, objectified and dehumanised. In this way, hypersexualisation “reinforces the dominant heteropatriarchal social order by eroticising male power and female subordination” (Ballinger 324). The new trend among the teenagers and the youth to engage in internet chatting has opened up room for exploitation. David Shannon opines that “girls are exposed to online sexual solicitation to a much greater extent than boys, and boys and men are responsible for the vast majority of the online contacts” (Shannon 354).

Referring to Zizek’s argument of the need of standing back from the “fascinating lure of . . . directly visible ‘subjective’ violence”, Gabrielle Murray in “Post-9/11 and Screen Violence” criticizes the media for their obsession with the crime stories:

Just as Sontag claims that the hysteria over the images of Abu Ghraib becomes a kind of smoke screen for the ‘true horror,’ which ‘lies in the real thing,’ the critical debate around ‘torture porn’ also functions as a ‘ruse.’ It draws our attention away from thinking about the ‘real thing’; it places blame on a surrogate object, and it fails to develop a thoughtful, objective analysis of ‘symbolic’ and ‘systemic’ violence. (9)

The mass media can downplay or intensify a message by providing little or extensive coverage to an event or story. The adjectives such as “ruthless”, “maniac”, “mentally ill” and “depressed”, used to describe the perpetrators of violence may serve to indirectly excuse violence. Moreover, “they can hide the political nature of violence and reduce it to some psychological deviance or

illness. The adjectives used for victims, such as ‘poor’, ‘fateless’ or ‘pitiful’, can also similarly contribute to hide the social and political roots of violence” (Bek 41). After reading or seeing the news in the mass media, individuals can amplify or attenuate signals by attaching social values and meanings to the information which give it greater or lesser significance. This perspective thus provides a framework for understanding the range of factors that may increase or decrease perceptions of the importance of events related to a risk (Arikan 46). Less dramatic or non-physical harassment cases are often undermined in the media. Serial killings, multiple deaths or injuries, arson attacks on the house or business places, child and woman victims, as might be expected, get more media attention and create more panic in the society. It has been found that “the media tend to disproportionately represent violent accounts of crime” (49). The media cover events which are “intense, exciting, arousing, or extreme” (49). Interest in crime news has increased greatly in recent years. The media all over the world have a fixation on the topic of crime, especially violent and sexual crime. This leads people to believe that there is more crime than there actually is, and makes people more fearful (49). Some socio-cultural and political measures stimulating cultural tolerance must be taken into account to ease the fear of crime. Mass media must act more responsibly by neither downplaying nor exaggerating violent incidents (53).

Human beings have inflicted harm not only to their own species but also to the entire nature. Other animals and plants have suffered a lot due to human activities. The very move to establish a community and settle in a particular place

by the humans have destroyed the ecological balance and done much harm to the “other species belonging to the animal kingdom” (Baenninger 5). A defensive strategy once adopted by humans was carried over and continue to exist even when there is no need for such a self-defense. Now the violence done by the humans against the nature and other beings is due to greed and possessiveness. Slavoj Žižek in “Censorship Today: Violence, or Ecology as a New Opium for the Masses states: “In our exploitation of natural resources, we are borrowing from the future, so one should treat our Earth with respect, as something ultimately Sacred, something that should not be unveiled totally, that should and will forever remain a Mystery, a power we should trust, not dominate” (n. pag.). The ecological violence done by human beings has become so crucial that the nature has begun to pay back in the same manner; cyclone, tsunami, earthquake, flood and draught are increasing year after year. Even among the human species, the law of the jungle is followed: the powerful exploits the weak; violence against the voiceless and the weak is continued. The wars between the major world civilizations and religions not only killed precious lives but also destroyed glorious achievements of men and the nature’s rich resources.

Out of the violence that caused death, the major part was contributed by political and religious wars. Apart from the direct violence in the form of war, civil war, democide and riots, structural violence also inflicted much harm to the human society (Sheikh 6). In the discussions of the phenomenon of power, there exists a consensus among political theorists that violence is nothing more than the most flagrant manifestation of power (Arendt 35). “All politics is a struggle for

power; the ultimate kind of power is violence,” said C. Wright Mills in *The Power Elite* (171). Power is part of the political communities and violence goes along with power (Arendt 52). In the modern form of bureaucracy there is nobody left with whom one can argue, to whom one can present grievances, or appeal for justice. In bureaucratic form of government “everybody is deprived of political freedom, of the power to act; for the rule by nobody is not no-rule, and where all are equally powerless we have a tyranny without a tyrant” (81). The present tendency to glorify violence comes from severe frustration of the people in the modern world. The recent riots in the streets and rebellions on the campuses are indications of this reality. The feelings of nationalism which united various ethnic groups in the past to act as a nation against the “big other” now take individual turns to form an ethnic nationalism. This type of nationalism begins to threaten with dissolution the oldest and best-established nation-states (83-84). What the people in power decide becomes the law; let it be the case in a democracy, in a monarchy or in a fundamentalist state. The hegemonic patriarchal system, which controls many other systems in the society, aggravates the sufferings of women in many parts of the world. It is in this context, a discussion on the subjective and objective violence carried out by the ruling systems against the rights of women gets prime importance.



## Chapter 3

### Zizekian Understanding of Violence

Slavoj Žižek explains his understanding of violence in the book *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*. He critically analyzes the common tendency of the human mind to see the “obvious signals of violence” such as “the acts of crime and terror, civil unrest,” and “international conflict” (Žižek, V 1). Instead of focusing on these outward expressions of violence, he exhorts us to “learn to step back, to disentangle ourselves from the fascinating lure of this directly visible subjective violence, violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent” (1). We need “to identify a violence that sustains our very efforts to fight violence and to promote tolerance” (1). He builds his point in this statement: “subjective violence is just the most visible portion of a triumvirate that also includes two objective kinds of violence” (1)—symbolic and systemic. According to him, first, there is a symbolic violence embodied in language and its forms, what Heidegger would call ‘our house of being’. There is a more fundamental form of violence still that pertains to language as such, to its imposition of a certain universe of meaning. The second type, there is what he calls systemic violence, or the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems (2). In other words, for the smooth functioning of the economic and political system a certain amount of violence is carried out by the state apparatuses. There is an operant form of violence embedded in the state

apparatuses. Žižek further explains the difference between subjective and objective violence:

Subjective and objective violence cannot be perceived from the same standpoint: subjective violence is experienced as such against the background of a non-violent zero level. It is seen as a perturbation of the “normal,” peaceful state of things. However, objective violence is precisely the violence inherent to this “normal” state of things. Objective violence is invisible since it sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent. Systemic violence is thus something like the notorious “dark matter” of physics, the counterpart to an all-too-visible subjective violence. It may be invisible, but it has to be taken into account if one is to make sense of what otherwise seem to be “irrational” explosions of subjective violence. (2)

In order to bring out this idea clearly Žižek presents the reports of the media about the deaths in the Republic of Congo. There were only a few newspapers that brought out the news of the civil wars in that country, though more than four million people died in the civil wars. Žižek sees this as a vested interest of the dominant culture: “The death of a West Bank Palestinian child, not to mention an Israeli or an American, is mediatically worth thousands of times more than the death of a nameless Congolese. Do we need further proof that the humanitarian sense of urgency is mediated, indeed overdetermined, by clear political considerations?” (3).

The presentation of violent incidents blinds our vision of facing the real problem related to violence: “the over-powering horror of violent acts and empathy with the victims inexorably function as a lure which prevents us from thinking” (4). It is in this connection that Žižek wants to discourse on the importance of systemic and symbolic violence. He tries to see the interaction of three modes of violence: subjective, objective and symbolic (11).

It is not possible to present a “dispassionate conceptual development of the typology of violence” (4) as it will lack reality and ignore traumatic impact. The person who undergoes the trauma cannot give the exact wordings as what he/she really experiences. The witness who is able to offer a clear narrative of his experience would disqualify himself by virtue of clarity. The one who dispassionately narrates the incident may not have the real experience. Therefore, the representation of violence that we receive from the media may not be ‘true’ or ‘real’ in its full sense. The only appropriate way to present the incident is to keep violence at a distance out of respect towards its victims. Instead of brooding over the content of the media, Žižek invites us to see the reality of the incident. The experiences cannot be shared with clarity and accuracy. “Poetry is always, by definition, ‘about’ something that cannot be addressed directly, only alluded to” (5). As the old saying goes on, “music comes in when words fail” (5). It is the same with the narration of the victim. When clarity is maintained, feelings are lost and when feelings are put in, clarity is lost. Žižek urges us to respond to the descriptions of violence in a befitting manner: “Does this recourse to artistic description imply that we are in danger of regressing to a contemplative attitude

that somehow betrays the urgency to “do something” about the depicted horrors?” (6). He also cautions us against the “left-liberal humanitarian discourse on violence” which usually is “a hypocritical sentiment of moral outrage” (6). When such pseudo-urgency is created, the practical solution to the problem is to wait: ““Do you mean we should do nothing? Just sit and wait?’ One should gather the courage to answer: ‘YES, precisely that!’ There are situations when the only truly ‘practical’ thing to do is to resist the temptation to engage immediately and to ‘wait and see’ by means of a patient, critical analysis” (7). Citing the example from the life of Lenin, Žižek tells us to “learn, learn and learn” before we act out on any news about violence: “Is this not exactly what Lenin did after the catastrophe of 1914? He withdrew to a lonely place in Switzerland, where he “learned, learned, and learned,” reading Hegel’s logic. And this is what we should do today when we find ourselves bombarded with mediatic images of violence. We need to “learn, learn, and learn” what causes this violence” (7).

Even when someone appreciates and encourages the humanitarian works carried out by the “post-industrial rich,” there is a room for critical evaluation of the very life they live. Their attitude to help the poor and the normally benevolent and sincere nature is criticized by Žižek. According to him,

. . . such an attitude betrays a breath-taking insensitivity to the *systemic* violence that had to go on in order for such a comfortable life to be possible. We’re talking here of the violence inherent in a system: not only direct physical violence, but also the more subtle forms of coercion that

sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence. (9)

When Leninism broke out in Russia, the rich did not know the reason for the outbreak. They perceived the signs of a catastrophe emerging from nowhere “as signals of an incomprehensibly malevolent new spirit” (10). But “what they did not understand was that in the guise of this irrational subjective violence, they were getting back the message they themselves sent out in its inverted true form. It is this violence which seems to arise ‘out of nowhere’ that, perhaps, fits what Walter Benjamin, in his ‘Critique of Violence,’ called pure, divine violence” (10).

The main preoccupation of the tolerant liberal attitude that predominates today is to oppose all forms of violence from the direct physical violence to ideological violence carried out by the gangsters, terrorists, anti-socials and state disciplinary agents. Žižek’s main concern is to question this attitude of the liberals. He expresses his doubt regarding their attitude to this issue:

Is there not something suspicious, indeed symptomatic, about this focus on subjective violence—that violence which is enacted by social agents, evil individuals, disciplined repressive apparatuses, fanatical crowds? Doesn’t it desperately try to distract our attention from the true locus of trouble, by obliterating from view other forms of violence and thus actively participating in them? (10-11).

The tendency to blame the other for what is happening in the society is critically questioned by Žižek. The easiest way to find an escape from the problem of violence is to “change the topic”. One should resist the fascination of subjective violence and move to do something against the cause of violence. In the modern world, capitalism and its subsequent byproducts such as globalization, liberalization and free-market play a major role in promoting violence. The concept of objective violence needs to be thoroughly evaluated and historicized because it took on a new form with capitalism. Along with Marx, Žižek says; “the mad, self-enhancing circulation of capital, whose solipsistic path of parthenogenesis reaches its apogee in today’s meta-reflexive speculations on futures” (Žižek, V 12). Speaking on the danger of the widespread of capitalism, Žižek writes:

It is far too simplistic to claim that the spectre of this self-engendering monster that pursues its path disregarding any human or environmental concern is an ideological abstraction and that behind this abstraction there are real people and natural objects on whose productive capacities and resources capital’s circulation is based and on which it feeds like a gigantic parasite. The problem is that this “abstraction” is not only in our financial speculators’ misperception of social reality, but that it is “real” in the precise sense of determining the structure of the material social processes: the fate of whole strata of the population and sometimes of whole countries can be decided by the “solipsistic” speculative dance of

capital, which pursues its goal of profitability in blessed indifference to how its movement will affect social reality. (12)

Taking into account the views expressed by Marx, Žižek condemns the material production and social interaction of the capitalist, which ignore the social reality and the environmental hazards. According to him, “it is the self-propelling metaphysical dance of capital that runs the show”, and “that provides the key to real-life developments and catastrophes” (12). It is to this form of violence Žižek draws our attention; “Therein resides the fundamental systemic violence of capitalism, much more uncanny than any direct pre-capitalist socio-ideological violence: this violence is no longer attributable to concrete individuals and their ‘evil’ intentions, but is purely ‘objective,’ systemic, anonymous” (12-13).

Žižek here brings in the distinction of “reality” and the “Real” presented by Lacan. Reality is the actual experience of the people in relation to the process of production, “while the Real is the inexorable ‘abstract,’ spectral logic of capital that determines what goes on in social reality” (13). One can feel the difference of these two terms when one makes a visit to a country where one notices the dilapidated and the unhygienic condition of the people and the “ecological decay and human misery”. Yet, when one reads the report of the economist, “the country’s economic situation is financially sound”; no matter what the reality is; “what matters is the situation of capital”. The virtual capitalism that is going on in the world points towards the futuristic “reign of the ‘real abstraction’ at its purest, far more radical than in Marx’s time” (13). The

highest form of ideology resides “in pretending directly to address real people with their real worries” (13) and not in forgetting its foundation in the real people. The direct reign of the abstract universality imposes its law on the ordinary people. Žižek uses Hegel’s concept of ‘fundamental rule’ which speaks of “objective” excess, which is the “direct reign of abstract universality that imposes its law mechanically and with utter disregard for the concerned subject caught in its web” (14). The objective excess “is always supplemented by ‘subjective’ excess—the irregular, arbitrary exercise of whims” (14). The interdependence of the subjective and the objective is provided by Etienne Balibar, who distinguishes two opposite but complementary modes of excessive violence: the “ultra-objective” or systemic violence that is inherent in the social conditions of global capitalism, which involves the “automatic” creation of excluded and dispensable individuals from the homeless to the unemployed, and the “ultra-subjective” violence of newly emerging ethnic and/or religious, in short racist, “fundamentalisms” (14).

The normal way of finding fault with the doer of the crime does not solve the problem of violence, injustice and the violation of human rights. The Communists are blamed for creating trouble in many of the countries. We easily identify the subjective evil and even the ideological sources of the crime such as totalitarian ideology or *The Communist Manifesto*. No one sees a ‘capitalist manifesto’ behind the tragedy of Belgian Congo Holocaust where millions of people died as a result of capitalist globalization. All these tragedies happened as



an automatic and objective process, which nobody planned or executed. So there is nobody to blame and the vicious acts go on unchallenged or unquestioned (14).

Even though Žižek is all against capitalism, he has reservations about the communist ideology. He is skeptical about liberal communist policies. Liberal communists are pragmatic and no longer concentrate on old ideologies. Quoting Thomas Friedman, a leading exponent of Liberal Communism, Žižek states that “nobody has to be vile in order to do business; collaboration with and participation of the employees, dialogue with customers, respect for the environment and transparency of deals are nowadays the keys to success” (Žižek, V 17). Olivier Malnuit, another liberal communist, gives some laws for the followers. He tells them to give everything free of cost and to be caring, responsible, creative in design and technology; there shouldn't be any secret and all the dealings should be transparent; there must be collaboration and interaction with all humanity. Work hours have to be flexible. One should work not only for the market, but engage in new forms of social collaborations. There can be the partnership of companies with the state. These kinds of practices very well support the capitalist ideology and this link promotes globalized capitalism. The liberal communists “give away with one hand what they first took with the other” (21). They hate doctrines; they encourage people to solve the social problems in front of them: starvation in Africa, the plight of Muslim women, religious fundamentalist violence, apartheid in South Africa, student issues and such various problems (18). Charity is the humanitarian mask hiding the face of economic exploitation (22). Žižek negates the notion of the “general economy” of

sovereign expenditure by Georges Bataille, and supports the notion of “restrained economy” of capitalism’s endless profiteering proposed by the German post-humanist philosopher Peter Sloterdijk. The capitalist’s “sovereign self-negating gesture of the endless accumulation of wealth is to spend this wealth” (23) for the society: for education, health, scientific research and for poverty eradication. This “sovereign” gesture makes the capitalist break out of the tenacious cycle of endless reproduction, of gaining money in order to earn more money. By contributing the accumulated money the capitalist acquires the title of a humanitarian and gains meaning for his life. “The capitalist thus accomplishes the shift from *eros* to *thymos*: from the perverted ‘erotic’ logic of accumulation to public recognition and reputation” (23). The distribution of wealth “re-establishes balance—a kind of redistribution of wealth to the truly needy—without falling into a fateful trap: the destructive logic of resentment and enforced statist redistribution of wealth which can only end in generalised misery” (23). From this view point, Žižek concludes that capitalism cannot sustain by its own in today’s world: “it needs extra-economic charity to sustain the cycle of social reproduction” (24).

The blame of polluting the environment or creating violence in the society is generally attributed to the consumers or the general public. Narrating the scenes from M. Night Shyamalan’s *The Village*, Žižek wants to show the real monsters, known to the villagers as “Those We Don’t Speak Of.” The capitalists keep the people away from the woods and they live in such woods enjoying the fresh fruits and the air. They, “while fully engaged in creating conditions for such

universal devastation and pollution, buy their way out of their own activity, living in gated communities, eating organic food, taking holidays in wildlife preserves, and so on” (27). Now the world is governed not by the totalitarian bureaucrats, but by the intellectual democratic administrators. The tyranny of the twentieth century has changed and the new form of tyranny in the twenty-first century is called the tyranny of “democracy” (28). Another movie Žižek uses to portray the neglect of the modern man towards other human beings is Alfonso Cuarón’s *Children of Men*. The infertility that the film mentions is not biological, but the attitude of the uncompassionate man who cares no one else but himself. The solipsism of the western world and the capitalist bourgeoisie is looked with contempt. Though the capitalist society claims to be the guardian of human rights, “what increasingly emerges as the central human right in late-capitalist society is the right not to be harassed, which is a right to remain at a safe distance from others” (41).

Our inclination towards subjective violence and disinterestedness towards objective violence are explained by Žižek using the defense of Sam Harris:

His defence is based on the distinction between our instinctive abhorrence of witnessing the torture or suffering of an individual with our own eyes, and our abstract knowledge of mass suffering: it is much more difficult for us to torture an individual than to sanction from afar the dropping of a bomb which would cause the more painful deaths of thousands.

We are thus all caught in a kind of ethical illusion, parallel to perceptual illusions. The ultimate cause of these illusions is that although

our power of abstract reasoning has developed immensely, our emotional-ethical responses remain conditioned by age-old instinctual reactions of sympathy to suffering and pain that are witnessed directly. This is why shooting someone point-blank is for most of us much more repulsive than pressing a button that will kill a thousand people we cannot see. (Žižek, V 42-43)

Žižek brings into notice the attitude followed by certain people that seems to be contradictory in nature. He asks how are “the very same people who commit terrible acts of violence towards their enemies can display warm humanity and gentle care for the members of their own group” (48). Our narrow mindedness to ethical concerns goes against the spontaneous insight that we are all human beings. Refusing the basic human rights to the outsiders of our community does not come naturally to human beings. Žižek sees it as “a violation of our spontaneous ethical proclivity” and something that “involves brutal repression and self-denial” (48). After seeing many violent acts, if a person feels no remorse and continues watching such acts, there is a process of psychological negation going on in that person. Žižek explains this process:

Would the watcher be able to continue going on as usual? Yes, but only if he or she were able somehow to forget—in an act which suspended symbolic efficiency—what had been witnessed. This forgetting entails a gesture of what is called fetishist disavowal: “I know, but I don’t want to know that I know, so I don’t know.” I know it, but I refuse to fully assume

the consequences of this knowledge, so that I can continue acting as if I don't know it. (53)

Though all the religions in the world speak of universal brotherhood and love, they avoid believers of other faiths from their brotherhood and love. The fear of the over-proximity of the other compels them to deprive the other of his/her “raw substance of *jouissance*” (58). The local issues get primetime importance due to global communication. Thus, a minor case of violence reaches to an international level as a result of information spread-out. People who speak for globalization as a better means to unite the world fail to see this dark side of globalization. Since a neighbour is an intruder—as stated by Freud—his way of life, the way of *jouissance* materialised in its social practices and rituals, disturbs us. His presence throws the balance of our way of life off the tracks, and gives rise to an aggressive reaction aimed at getting rid of this disturbing intruder. Žižek uses the statement of Peter Sloterdijk; “More communication means at first above all more conflict” (qtd. in Žižek, V 59).

In language, words get meaning through the process of signification. In order to refer a signified, many signifiers are excluded. Therefore, signification includes a process of negation. While giving meaning to a word, many exclusions are made and in defining an object, the object is reduced to mere features and its essence is kept outside the definition. For example, defining a culture is possible only by delineating it from other cultures. So, one culture by its very nature, declares war with another culture. In that sense, language becomes a raw material for violence.

In order to explain further the role of language and image in spreading violence, Žižek illustrates the caricature controversy created by a Denmark daily. The Muslim world did not react to the caricature as such; their reaction was against the attitude of the West. What exploded in violence was a web of symbols, images, and attitudes, including Western imperialism, godless materialism, hedonism, and the suffering of Palestinians, and which became attached to the Danish cartoons. In this manner, the hatred expanded from the caricatures to Denmark as a country, to Europe at large, and to the West as a whole. A violent flow of humiliations and frustrations were compressed into the caricatures. This condensation is a basic fact of language, of constructing and imposing a certain symbolic field of violence (60). Using the statement of Hegel, Žižek consolidates the violent nature of language:

. . . there is something violent in the very symbolisation of a thing, which equals its mortification. This violence operates at multiple levels.

Language simplifies the designated thing, reducing it to a single feature. It dismembers the thing, destroying its organic unity, treating its parts and properties as autonomous. It inserts the thing into a field of meaning which is ultimately external to it. When we name gold “gold,” we violently extract a metal from its natural texture, investing into it our dreams of wealth, power, spiritual purity, and so on, which have nothing whatsoever to do with the immediate reality of gold. (Žižek, V 61)

Lacan has condensed this feature of language with the term “Master Signifier”. Referring to Lacan’s theory of four discourses, Žižek states: “human

communication in its most basic, constitutive dimension does not involve a space of egalitarian intersubjectivity. It is not ‘balanced.’ It does not put the participants in symmetric mutually responsible positions where they all have to follow the same rules and justify their claims with reasons” (62). Lacan’s notion of the Master as the first form of discourse is that “every concrete, ‘really existing’ space of discourse is ultimately grounded in a violent imposition of a Master-Signifier which is *stricto sensu* ‘irrational’: it cannot be further grounded in reasons” (62). To end the endless regress, one has to say; “It is so because I say it is so!” (62). Here, Žižek makes use of the argument of Levinas as well, in order to emphasise the same idea. According to Levinas, intersubjectivity is fundamentally asymmetrical in character: “there is never a balanced reciprocity in my encountering another subject. The appearance of *egalite* is always discursively sustained by an asymmetric axis of master versus servant, of the bearer of university knowledge versus its object, of a pervert versus a hysteric, and so on” (Žižek, V 62).

Žižek makes a terminological distinction between aggression and violence. For him aggression is a life force, while violence is a death force. Violence is an excess of aggression that disturbs the normal rhythm of life. Therefore, to repudiate violence, one has to get rid of the excess (63).

According to Žižek, “language . . . is the first and greatest divider, it is because of language that we and our neighbours (can) ‘live in different worlds’ even when we live on the same street” (66). So for him “verbal violence is not a secondary distortion, but the ultimate resort of every specifically human

violence” (66). The same principle is applicable to every political unrest. When workers and employees protest their exploitation, they do not protest a simple problem or reality; their protest comes from the experience of their “real predicament made meaningful through language. Reality in itself, in its stupid existence, is never intolerable: it is language, its symbolization, which makes it such” (67). Žižek places here the concept of “essence”, to which Heidegger gives a different meaning: “For Heidegger, ‘essence’ is something that depends on the historical context, on the epochal disclosure of being that occurs in and through language. He calls this the ‘house of being.’ His expression ‘*Wesen der Sprache*’ does not mean ‘the essence of language,’ but the ‘essencing,’ the making of essences, that is the work of language” (Žižek, V 67).

Thus, “a fundamental violence exists in this ‘essencing’ ability of language: our world is given a partial twist, it loses its balanced innocence, one partial colour gives the tone of the whole” (68). In this connection, Žižek agrees with Ernesto Laclau, a political thinker, in saying that hegemony is inherent to language (68). “The essence of violence has nothing to do with ontic violence, suffering, war, destruction, etc.; the essence of violence resides in the violent character of the very imposition/founding of the new mode of the Essence–disclosure of communal Being–itself” (70). There is thus a direct link between the ontological violence and the texture of social violence (of sustaining relations of enforced domination) that pertains to language (71). It is this process of essencing that actually gives meaning to many of the socially constructed



dichotomies. The play of the language in the division of the opposites operates in the racial discrimination as well. Žižek writes:

. . . the “being” of blacks (as of whites or anyone else) is a socio-symbolic being. When they are treated by whites as inferior, this does indeed make them inferior at the level of their socio-symbolic identity. In other words, the white racist ideology exerts a performative efficiency. It is not merely an interpretation of what blacks are, but an interpretation that determines the very being and social existence of the interpreted subjects. (72)

There is no difference in the essence of any human being; the concept of “inferior” and “superior” is only a construct of the dominant class or race. Whether it is a white or a black, a rich or a poor, “humanness” is the same for everyone. “Blacks are not inferior but merely ‘inferiorised’ by the violence imposed them by white racist discourse. That is, they are affected by an imposition which does not affect them in very core of their being, and consequently which they can (and do) resist as free autonomous agents through their acts, dreams, and projects” (73).

According to Žižek, what should be resisted when faced with the shocking reports and images of violence is the “hermeneutic temptation: the search for some deeper meaning or message hidden in these outbursts” (76); what is unacceptable is the meaninglessness of the violence. More than a form of protest, as Lacan called, “it is a *passage a l'acte*—an impulsive movement into action which can’t be translated into speech or thought and carries with it an

intolerable weight of frustration” (76). The protesters “lack what cultural analyst Fredric Jameson has called ‘cognitive mapping,’ an inability to locate the experience of their situation within a meaningful whole” (76).

Many of the violent outbursts cannot be explained or given a specific meaning. The perpetrators of violence are unaware of the reason for their actions. As the language has a phatic function, violence also becomes a meaningless act. During the emergence of structuralism, Roman Jakobson used the term “phatic” function, which he obtained from Malinowski's concept of phatic communion. Malinowski explains the term as “the use of language to maintain a social relation through ritualised formulas such as greetings, chit-chat about the weather, and related formal niceties of social communication” (78). Most often, our communication is only a prolongation of words which are repeatedly used by both the addresser and the addressee. This prolonged communicative contact suggests the emptiness of such contact (78). The trouble makers in the society intend to create a problem; they signal that they are a problem that could no longer be ignored. Thus it becomes necessary for them to create violence.

The strong reaction of Žižek towards capitalism also falls in the same line as this ideology causes the depriving of a large majority of people of any meaningful cognitive mapping. Capitalism is not global with regard to the meaning; “it is the first socio-economic order which *detotalises meaning*” (79). There is “no global ‘capitalist world-view’; no ‘capitalist civilization’ proper” (79); the globalization that capitalism brings in is that it can accommodate itself to all civilizations, all religions and all the cultures of the East and the West; its

global dimension is formulated at the level of truth-without-meaning, as the “Real” of the global market mechanism (79-80).

Both the conservatives and the leftist liberals are equally responsible for the violent actions carried out by them; actions of both of them are bad. The conservatives who clamour for the preservation of traditional culture fight against the immigrants. The immigrants should not feel so much freedom to exploit the hospitality provided by the natives. They are the guests, who should respect the native customs. The natives have the right to safeguard their culture and way of life. There cannot be any excuse for crime and violent behaviour by the immigrants. What young immigrants need is not more social help, but discipline and hard work. On the other hand, the leftist liberals speak about the neglected social programmes and integration efforts, which have deprived the younger generation of immigrants of any clear economic and social prospects: so the only way to articulate their dissatisfaction is a violent outburst (80). Thus, Žižek sees ideological violence inherent in both conservative and liberal ideologies.

Scientific discourse also does not escape the critical preview of Žižek’s ideology. Science has taken the place of religion, which provided certainty and security in the past. Now people turn to science for hope and certainty. The authority of science is unquestioned. Science functions as a social force, as an ideological institution. It is a point of reference on which one can rely. New scientific inventions will help us combat illness and prolong life. In this sense, “science is what Lacan called ‘university discourse’ at its purest: knowledge whose ‘truth’ is a Master-Signifier, that is, power” (81). Science gives the

security religion once guaranteed. This inversion has made religion one of the places of resistance. It is in this context Žižek agrees with Hegel in finding a link between science and capitalism:

The “worldless” character of capitalism is linked to this hegemonic role of the scientific discourse in modernity. Hegel had already clearly identified this feature when he noted that for us moderns, art and religion no longer command absolute respect: we can admire them, but we no longer kneel down before them, our heart is not really with them. Only science—conceptual knowledge—deserves this respect. And it is only psycho-analysis that can disclose the full contours of the shattering impact of modernity—that is, capitalism combined with the hegemony of scientific discourse—on the way our identity is grounded in symbolic identifications. No wonder modernity led to the so-called “crisis of sense,” that is, to the disintegration of the link between, or even identity of, truth and meaning. (82)

According to Žižek, fundamentalism of a particular section of Islam is a reaction against the modern trends in the world, especially happening in the capitalist and the western world. As a result of modernization, in European countries, there emerged new modes of narration and myth to cope with the changing society. But there was no preparation in the Muslim communities to accommodate the new changes. The impact of modernization was so direct that the people could not accept it without any hesitation. Muslim societies were exposed to this impact directly, without a protective shield or adequate delay.

Thus, their symbolic universe was disturbed much more severely. In order to stand up to the time and to keep up their identity, they have to resort to an immediate reaction:

They lost their (symbolic) ground with no time left to establish a new (symbolic) balance. No wonder, then, that the only way for some of these societies to avoid breakdown was to erect in panic the shield of “fundamentalism,” that psychotic-delirious-incestuous reassertion of religion as direct insight into the divine Real, with all the terrifying consequences that such a reassertion entails, and including the return with a vengeance of the obscene superego divinity demanding sacrifices. (82-83)

The recent split between anaemic liberals and impassioned fundamentalists is described by Žižek using the lines from “Second Coming” of Yeats: “The best lack all conviction, while the worst / Are full of passionate intensity” (qtd. in Žižek, *V* 85). The liberals, claimed to be “The best”, are no longer able fully to engage, while the terrorists, “the worst”, engage in racist, religious, sexist fanaticism (85). Terrorists are not fundamentalists in the strict sense of the term. What the terrorists lack is “the absence of resentment and envy, the deep indifference towards the non-believers’ way of life” (85). The new ideology propagated by the modernism poses a challenge to the traditional belief system of certain religions. Unlike the true fundamentalists, the pseudo-fundamentalists are deeply bothered, intrigued and fascinated by the sinful life of the non-believers. The terrorist fundamentalists lack true conviction—their violent outbursts are proof of it (86).

Dealing with the problem of injustice, Žižek sees the instinctual nature related with it. Taking the Lacanian concept of desire of the other, desiring to be desired by the other and the desire for what the other desires, Žižek argues that the idea of justice as equality is based on the feeling of envy. The cry for justice is a demand that the enjoyment of the other should be curtailed in order to equalize everyone's access to the *jouissance* (89). Thus, giving justice to someone is a process of levelizing the area of enjoyment or distributing the objects of enjoyment; both of them cannot be practiced in the society. An evil person and an egotist have certain things in common: an evil person primarily thinks about creating injury to others while the egotist is too preoccupied with himself to cause harm to others. The egalitarian notion of justice is sustained by envy and relies on the inversion of the standard renunciation accomplished to benefit others. Instead of an ascetic practice, people choose the opposite, a generalised superego injunction, the command "Enjoy!" (89). But the person will be happier if through his renunciation he can deprive the happiness of the other person. Thus instead of being opposed to the spirit of sacrifice, evil becomes the very spirit and essence of sacrifice (92).

Narrating the incidents that happened in the New Orleans, Žižek tries to show the racist attitude towards the black all over the world. The projected media coverage about the looting and the rape done by the blacks after the natural calamity of the hurricane Katrina, was not all true. Even though there were a few cases of looting, the police reports, as quoted by the media, were untrue. The hatred towards the blacks was the main reason for projecting them as "violent

barbarians under the thin layer of civilization” (100). The same case is applicable to the anti-Semitic movement in Germany during the Nazi regime:

The cause of all social antagonisms was projected into the “Jew,” the object of a perverted love-hatred, the spectral figure of mixed fascination and disgust. Exactly the same applies to the looting in New Orleans: *even if ALL reports of violence and rape were to be proved factually true, the stories circulating about them would still be “pathological” and racist,* since what motivated these stories was not facts, but racist prejudices, the satisfaction felt by those who would be able to say: “You see, blacks are really like that, violent barbarians under the thin layer of civilisation!” In other words, we would be dealing with what one can call *lying in the guise of truth*: even if what I am saying is factually true, the motives that make me say it are false. (99-100)

The identity given to the blacks as the “subject to loot and rape” prevents them from entering another country even in the wake of globalization.

Globalization is not favourable for the ghettoized category of people; the walls and boundaries of the country are broken for the privileged ones. The free movement of commodities is possible in globalization while that is restricted to the blacks and the immigrants. The liberals’ policy of breaking down the walls and letting free is not a solution to the problem of migration. The true wall of separation is a socio-economic one. People try to move out of their own country because of the insecurity they feel there. So, a true solution to the problem of

migration is to change the society so that people will not try to escape their own world (102).

Speaking on the attitude of one religion towards another, Žižek questions the intolerant nature of each religion. Much blood has been shed in the name of religion and gods. Even if every religion proclaims love as its fundamental principle, when it comes to the possession of a territory like Jerusalem or regarding a blasphemous statement about a deity, a saint or a god, there is no tolerance left to include the other with his difference. According to Žižek, the actual enemy is not any external force but the internal force of fundamentalist attitude. There needs to be an internal purification; the fight should be against one's own moral failure and weakness (126). The coalition between the politics and the religion all the more complicates the issues, and the war between religions transforms into a war between nations. Every religion offers freedom of choice to its believers. But, ultimately this freedom is a forced choice. Freedom of choice is given on condition that you make the right choice; you are given freedom on condition that you will not really use it (129). Referring to the ideas of Gilles Deleuze, Žižek explains:

. . . there are not only right and wrong solutions to problems, there are also right and wrong problems. To perceive the problem as one of the right measure between respect for the other versus our own freedom of expression is in itself a mystification. No wonder that upon closer analysis, the two opposing poles reveal their secret solidarity. The



language of respect is the language of liberal tolerance: respect only has meaning as respect for those with whom I do *not* agree. (Žižek, V 129)

It was difficult for all religions to respect other religions, which proclaimed a faith different from theirs. The failure to unite all religions proves that the only way to be religious is to unite under the banner of the “anonymous religion of atheism” (132). The intolerance towards other religion soon or later turns into an inner split and the fight against the inner enemy. Earlier times, people relied on religion for morality and religion kept the sceptre of ethics and morals. It was believed that without religion, people would turn into egotistic animals. Now, “as religion emerges as the main source of murderous violence around the world, one grows tired of the constant assurances that Christian, Muslim, or Hindu fundamentalists are only abusing and perverting the noble spiritual message of their creed” (133). It is in this context, Žižek argues for atheism, which offers us a chance for peace. Most often, it is the violent or “terrorist” political agent who “misuses” a noble religion. Therefore, to segregate the mix between religion and politics is often a difficult task. Here, Žižek proposes a solution to end up this tie: “What if, then, instead of renouncing violence, one were to renounce religion, including its secular reverberations such as Stalinist communism with its reliance on the historical big Other, and to pursue violence on its own, assuming full responsibility for it, without any cover-up in some figure of the big Other?” (134).

Even though religion exhorts its followers to follow the path of peace, there is at times a negative message conveyed to them to fight for a greater cause.

Followers of a particular religion may indulge in violent acts for a 'greater cause'. Majority of people find it difficult to involve in torturing and killing. Since our hegemonic ideology calls on us to enjoy life and to realise our own selves, killing another human being is deeply traumatic for most of the people. The fundamentalist outfits of religion find a larger "sacred" cause which makes petty individual concerns about killing seem trivial. In many cases, religious or ethnic belonging fits this role perfectly. A sacred cause, in the name of religion or ethnicity, is formulated to "anaesthetize" certain members in the organization against the elementary sensitivity to the other's suffering (Žižek, V 136). These members serve as faithful suicide bombers or ardent terrorists. The terrorist activities of blowing up hundreds of innocent civilians are justified on the name of God. Terrorists act on behalf of God; they are the instruments of His will. Violation of any human considerations is negligible as they have a direct link with God. The same idea is practiced by "the 'godless' Stalinist communists" as "everything was permitted to them since they perceived themselves as direct instruments of their divinity, the Historical Necessity of Progress towards Communism" (136). On the pretention of loving God, one can do anything; but one cannot do evil as this is a proof that he does not love God. However, there is an ambiguity in this statement. Since there is no guarantee, external to your belief, of what God really wants you to do, even evil things cannot be decided as evil. "In the absence of any ethical standards external to your belief in and love for God, the danger is always lurking that you will use your love of God as the legitimisation of the most horrible deeds" (137).

According to Žižek, the religion of atheism is safer than theistic religions in tackling violence in the world. The radical followers of religion do a good deed for the sake of pleasing God and secure salvation while an atheist does it just for doing a right thing. The act of doing something good need not depend on anything external for its morality; the validity of the act or the morality of the act should depend on the act itself—the intrinsic nature of the act itself confirms its moral validity. “A moral deed is by definition its own reward” (138). Žižek agrees with the view of David Hume, the eighteenth-century economist-philosopher in this regard: the only way to show a true respect for God is to act morally while ignoring God’s existence. As there is no theological or ideological explanation attached to a good or bad deed, the possibility to fight in defence of these explanations is absent in atheist belief. Since there is no higher order to regulate and watch our actions, we are responsible for the future. This awareness makes the atheist formulate creative ideas for the future and to find joy in his everyday life. Thus, he does not escape from reality, but rather faces it with utmost care and caution. The atheist feels that he is not the “master of the universe, but just parts of a much larger whole exposed to contingent twists of fate, with a readiness to accept the heavy burden of responsibility for what we make out of our lives. With the threat of unpredictable catastrophe looming from all sides, isn’t this an attitude needed more than ever in our own times?” (138). A true atheist has no need whatsoever to boost his own stance by way of shocking the believer with blasphemous statements. Respect for others’ beliefs can mean only one of two things: “either we treat the other in a patronising way and avoid hurting him in order not to ruin his illusions, or we adopt the relativist stance of

multiple ‘regimes of truth,’ disqualifying as violent imposition any clear insistence on truth” (139).

Globalization and multicultural interaction has created a new problem which has ignored the major basic problems of ordinary people. Now-a-days the problem of intolerance, rather than the problems of injustice, exploitation and inequality, is spoken of. The suggested remedy is tolerance rather than emancipation or political struggle. Žižek uses the multiculturalist’s term “culturalisation of politics” to refer to this change in politics of culture. Political differences, conditioned by political inequality or economic exploitation, are naturalised and neutralised into “cultural” differences. These cultural differences are considered as ways of life that cannot be overcome but can only be “tolerated” (140). Political scientist Samuel Huntington proposed the most successful formula of this “culturalisation of politics” by identifying the main source of today’s conflicts in the “clash of civilisations,” usually referred as the Huntington’s disease of our time. As Huntington puts it, after the end of the Cold War, the “iron curtain of ideology” has been replaced by the “velvet curtain of culture” (qtd. in Žižek, *V* 141). This idea is contrary to the Francis Fukuyama’s pseudo Hegelian idea of the “end of history” which considers the capitalist liberal democracy as the ultimate formula of the best possible social order. Here “there is no space for further conceptual progress; there are only empirical obstacles to be overcome” (141). But for Huntington “clash of civilisations” is the main political struggle in the twenty first century? (141). Žižek differentiates two categories of people based on the culture to which they are associated. One

category is the people “who are ruled by culture, totally determined by the lifeworld into which they are born, and those who merely ‘enjoy’ their culture, who are elevated above it, free to choose it” (141). Using this idea, Žižek shows the paradox of the term “culture”: the ultimate source of barbarism is culture itself; one’s direct identification with a particular culture renders one intolerant towards other cultures (141). Culture, by definition, is collective and particular, parochial and exclusive of other cultures. These features are not found in a liberal capitalist world. Žižek writes:

In liberalism, culture survives, but as privatised: as a way of life, a set of beliefs and practices, not the public network of norms and rules.

Culture is thus literally transubstantiated: the same sets of beliefs and practices change from the binding power of a collective into an expression of personal and private idiosyncrasies. Insofar as culture itself is the source of barbarism and intolerance, the inevitable conclusion is that the only way to overcome intolerance and violence is to extricate the core of the subject's being, its universal essence, from culture: in her core, the subject has to be *kulturlos*. (142)

As long as one refers to one’s culture, there is a tendency to perceive it from a subjective point of view. Reflecting upon the ethnic roots, one engages in a limited and private use of reason, constrained by prejudices and contingent dogmatic presuppositions. One acts as immature individual; not as free human being who dwells in the dimension of the universality of reason (143). Referring to the Kantian passage “What is Enlightenment?,” Žižek makes the distinction

between public and private: “‘Private’ is not one’s individual as opposed to communal ties, but the very communal-institutional order of one’s particular identification; while ‘public’ is the transnational universality of the exercise of one’s reason” (143). One participates in the universal dimension of the public sphere only as a singular individual extracted from or even opposed to one’s substantial communal identification; one is truly universal only when radically singular, in the interstices of communal identities. The liberal notion of tolerance seems problematic because it is not universal. In our societies, a gendered division of labour still predominates which confers a male twist on basic liberal categories such as autonomy, public activity and competition. This division of labour relegates women to the private sphere of family solidarity. Liberalism itself, in its opposition of private and public, harbours male dominance. In modern Western capitalist culture, autonomy and individual freedom stand higher than collective solidarity and the duty to respect the customs of one’s community. Thus liberalism itself privileges only the modern Western one. With regard to the freedom of choice, liberalism is biased. It is intolerant towards issues such as “clitoridectomy, child brides, infanticide, polygamy and incest happening in other cultures while it ignores the plastic surgery, cosmetic implants, and Botox injections in order to remain competitive in the sex market” (145). Certain religious practices followed by the members change completely when they exercise a free individual choice. When they practice a custom based on the free choice of their will, it is then no longer a sign of their belonging to the community, but an expression of their idiosyncratic individuality. What this means is that the “subject of free choice” in the Western “tolerant” multicultural

sense can emerge only as the result of an extremely violent process of being torn out of a particular lifeworld, of being cut off from one's roots (146).

Postcolonial critics attack liberalism on its insensitivity to its own limitation of defending human rights. Liberalism tends to impose its own version of human rights onto others. The liberalists who speak against child marriage, incest, dowry, and child labour and child abuse which are practiced in other cultures are silent towards painful plastic surgery and cosmetic treatment. The Western situation is worse because, in it, oppression itself is obliterated and masked as free choice (147). Human rights constitute a false ideological universality because they mask and legitimise the concrete politics of Western imperialism and domination, neocolonialism and military interventions (148). Postcolonial critique denounces false universality of showing one culture, religion, race or gender superior. The concept of "man" is generated by a set of political practices, which gives man the power of citizenship. In capitalist world, universal human rights are effectively the rights of white male property owners to exchange freely on the market and exploit workers and women, as well as exert political domination. Borrowing the Marxian term "commodity fetishism," Žižek explains the influence of the objects people encounter in their daily life:

In a society in which commodity exchange predominates, individuals themselves, in their daily lives, relate themselves, as well as to the objects they encounter, as to contingent embodiments of abstract-universal notions. What I am, my concrete social or cultural back-ground, is experienced as contingent, since what ultimately defines me is the abstract

universal capacity to think and/or to work. Any object that can satisfy my desire is experienced as contingent, since my desire is conceived as an abstract formal capacity, indifferent towards the multitude of particular objects that might—but never fully do—satisfy it. (149)

What a person becomes depends on the interplay between the contingent social circumstances and his free choice. This interplay decides the profession of the individual and he is identified by that profession. He is an engineer or professor or driver. But this was not applicable in medieval time; a serf was not a peasant by profession. In certain specific social conditions of commodity exchange and global market economy, “abstraction” becomes a direct feature of actual social life. It impacts on the way concrete individuals behave and relate to their fate and to their social surroundings. Hegel and Marx have the same opinion that universality becomes “for itself” insofar as individuals no longer fully identify the kernel of their being with their particular social situation. Žižek writes:

Individuals experience themselves as forever an “out of joint” situation in this universality: the concrete, effective existence of universality produces an individual without a proper place in the global edifice. In a given social structure, universality becomes “for itself” for those individuals who lack a proper place in it. The mode of appearance of an abstract universality, its entering into actual existence, thus produces violence: it violently disrupts a preceding organic poise. (Žižek, V 150)



The key moment of any theoretical, ethical, political and aesthetic struggle is the rise of universality, out of the particular lifeworld. Therefore, “universality-for-itself is not simply external to or above its particular context: it is inscribed within it. It perturbs and affects it from within, so that the identity of the particular is split into its particular and its universal aspects” (151). This concept is applicable to art and literature. A text should be both particular and universal in its application. Perhaps the basic hermeneutic test of the greatness of a work of art or literature is its ability to survive being torn from its original social context. In the case of truly great art, each epoch reinvents and rediscovers it. Multiple layers of meaning make a text meaningful and survive the test of time (152). However, in the globalised world, universality is attributed to a text based on its commercial circulation. The more a book is advertised the more it gets universality. In reality, the content and the context of the text may not have any universal appeal. Economic-politic considerations discern the value of a text. This disparity can create a condition for literary rebellion between the writers of the first world countries and those of the third world countries.

Žižek clearly states the stand of capitalism in the modern world and its relation to the European world:

Capitalism is not just universal in itself, it is universal for itself, as the tremendous actual corrosive power which undermines all particular lifeworlds, cultures, and traditions, cutting across them, catching them in its vortex. It is meaningless to ask “Is this universality true or a mask of

particular interests?” This universality is directly actual as universality, as the negative force of mediating and destroying all particular content.

This is the moment of truth in liberalism’s claim to *kulturlos* universality: capitalism, whose ideology liberalism is, effectively is universal, no longer rooted in a particular culture or “world.” This is why Badiou recently claimed that our time is devoid of world: the universality of capitalism resides in the fact that capitalism is not a name for a “civilisation,” for a specific cultural-symbolic world, but the name for a truly neutral economic-symbolic machine which operates with Asian values as well as with others. In that sense, Europe’s worldwide triumph is its defeat, its self-obliteration. Capitalism’s umbilical link to Europe has been cut. The critics of Eurocentrism who endeavour to unearth the secret European bias of capitalism fall short here: the problem with capitalism is not its secret Eurocentric bias, but the fact that it really is universal, a neutral matrix of social relations. (Žižek, V 155-56)

The rules and norms of the society have an implicit element of violence in them. It is not possible for an individual to obey all the rules in a society. Every rule has to rely on a complex network of informal rules, which tells us how we are to relate to external norms. These norms tell us how we are to follow them; to what extent we are to disregard them. These informal rules form the domain of habit. In order to know the habits of a society, one has to know the meta-rules of how to apply its explicit norms: when to use them, when not use them, and when to violate them (158). Our identities are made of habits. In habits, we enact and

thereby define what we effectively are as social beings, most often in contrast with our perception of what we really are. They are the medium of social violence in their very transparency (165). People who violate the rules are not given the deserving punishment. In a corrupt society, rules and norms are followed by the sincere and obedient members, while the influential people enjoy maximum benefit using the exemptions and loop holes of the law. According to Žižek, it is not the outcome of our good deeds that we are able to live peacefully but it is out of the mercy of the powerful that we are able to lead a peaceful life:

Here we have an overlap of potential total culpability (whatever you are doing may be a crime) and mercy (the fact that you are allowed to lead your life in peace is not a proof or consequence of your innocence, but a proof of the mercy and benevolence, of an “understanding of the realities of life,” of those in power). This acts as further proof that totalitarian regimes are by definition regimes of mercy: they tolerate violations of the law, since, in the way they frame social life, violating the law, bribing, and cheating are conditions of survival. (159)

In a politically corrupt country, where the normal legal systems fail to implement justice, criminal groups take up the charge of safeguarding justice in the society in their own way: “one of the functions of organised crime was to provide a kind of ersatz legality” (160). Wherever the state legal system was inefficient, people would turn to the mafia for an immediate solution. Whenever there was a delay in repayment of loan or any breach of contract, the mafia protector, would deal with the problem. So, now people know whom to approach

for an immediate settlement and how to navigate the complexities of social interactions (160).

The deepest beliefs of people are all out there, embodied in practices, which reach up to the immediate materiality of the body. All the notions of good and evil, of pleasant and unpleasant, of funny and serious, of ugly and beautiful, people's taste in books, food, clothes and the sense of honour, table manners, accent and even the movements of the body, are all matters of habit. To this category, smell can be added. Now-a-days, the key difference between lower-class and middle-class concerns lies in the way they relate to smell. According to the middle class, the lower class people do not wash their bodies regularly and it causes bad smell. Based on this parameter, a neighbour is defined as someone who smells. This is why today perfumes and soaps are crucial in human relations—they make neighbours at least minimally tolerable: one is ready to love one's neighbour, provided he does not smell too bad (167). It leads to the conclusion that the socially constructed habits play a major role in dividing people. These habits are the latent carriers of violence in the society.

Žižek now analyses the embarrassing paedophilic scandals in the church. He does not want to put the blame on the priests. They were forced to act in the way because the Church has created an opportunity for doing the crime. The Church was not cooperating with the investigating agency. In defending itself, the Church was actually defending its innermost obscene secret. The Church as an institution should itself be investigated with regard to the way it systematically

creates conditions for such crimes (168). By examining this incident, Žižek criticizes Church as an institution propagating systemic violence.

The invasion of Iraq by American forces in search of weapons of mass destruction was a ruthless attempt. The captured Iraqi prisoners underwent brutal torture and the scenes were shown on the media. As Žižek puts it: “The clash between the Arab and American civilizations is not a clash between barbarism and respect for human dignity, but a clash between anonymous brutal torture and torture as a media spectacle in which the victims’ bodies serve as the anonymous background for the grinning , ‘innocent American’ faces of the torturers themselves” (176). In this context, Žižek paraphrases the dictum of Walter Benjamin; “every clash of civilisations really is a clash of underlying barbarisms” (177).

Another area Žižek wants to highlight is the concept of Divine violence introduced by Walter Benjamin. Losing His neutrality and brutally intervening, God has “fallen into” the world, in order to deliver justice. Such brutal intrusions of justice beyond law are called Divine violence. Benjamin’s understanding of “divine violence” had nothing to do with the terrorist violence executed by today’s religious fundamentalists who pretend that they are acting on behalf of God and as instruments of the Divine Will, even though media coverage would induce us to leap to such an association. The most obvious expression of divine violence is the violent explosion of resentment, which finds expression in a spectrum that varies from mob lynching to organised revolutionary terror. One of the main tasks of today’s “post-left” is to refer to this type of violence in order to

denounce the very idea of revolution (185). In the western tradition, “rage” was used in the beginning of its founding text *The Iliad*; Homer appeals to the goddess to help him sing the song of the rage of Achilles and its dire consequences. While in ancient Greece, rage is allowed to explode directly, in Judeo-Christian tradition what follows is its sublimation or postponement or transference: not we, but God, should keep the books of wrongs and settle accounts in the Last Judgment (186). But in the modern times, this idea of Judgment Day is taken over in secularised form by the modern leftist project. Here instead of God, people function as the agent of Judgment. Leftist political movements collect rage investments from people and they are like “banks of rage.” They promise the investors large-scale revenge and the re-establishment of global justice. As there is never enough rage capital, it is necessary to borrow from or combine with other rages: national or cultural. In fascism, the national rage predominates while Mao’s communism mobilises the rage of exploited poor farmers. Fascism is a secondary variation of and reaction to the properly leftist project of emancipatory rage. When the globally acclaimed forms of rage have exhausted their power, various forms of rage emerged in the present times. The rage from the Islamist countries was the reaction of the victims of capitalist globalization. To the list of modern forms of rage, one can add the irrational outbursts by youth, Latin-American populism, cry of the ecologists and anti-consumerists, and other forms of anti-globalist resentment (187-88).

To explain the concept of divine violence, Žižek borrows the ideas of Walter Benjamin from his “Critique of Violence”. Benjamin makes a distinction between mythical violence and divine violence:

Just as in all spheres God opposes myth, mythic violence is confronted by the divine. And the latter constitutes its antithesis in all respects. If mythic violence is law-making, divine violence is law-destroying; if the former sets boundaries, the latter boundlessly destroys them; if mythic violence brings at once guilt and retribution, divine power only expiates; if the former threatens, the latter strikes; if the former is bloody, the latter is lethal without spilling blood. . . . Mythical violence is bloody power over mere life for its own sake, divine violence is pure power over all life for the sake of the living. The first demands sacrifice; the second accepts it. (Benjamin 297; Žižek, *V* 197)

From this base, Žižek gives his explanations about the concept of divine violence. The domain of pure divine violence is the domain of sovereignty, in which killing is neither an expression of personal pathology, nor a crime, nor a sacred sacrifice. It is neither aesthetic, nor ethical, nor religious. Those annihilated by divine violence are fully and completely guilty of leading a mere (natural) life. Divine violence purifies the guilty not of guilt but of law, because law is limited to the living. Divine violence is an expression of pure drive, the excess of life, which strikes at “bare life” regulated by law. It is mythical violence that demands sacrifice, and holds power over bare life; whereas divine violence is non-sacrificial and expiatory. Divine violence may have its manifestation in a

true war as it does in the crowd's divine judgment on a criminal. As Divine violence is the sign and seal of sacred dispatch, it may be called "sovereign" violence (Žižek, *V* 199). Žižek clarifies that

the opposition of mythic and divine violence is that between the means and the sign, that is, mythic violence is a means to establish the rule of Law (the legal social order), while divine violence serves no means, not even that of punishing the culprits and thus re-establishing the equilibrium of justice. It is just the sign of the injustice of the world, of the world being ethically "out of joint." This, however, does not imply that divine justice has a meaning: rather, it is a sign without meaning, and the temptation to be resisted is precisely the one which Job resisted successfully, the temptation to provide it with some "deeper meaning."  
(199-200)

The distinction between mythic violence and divine violence is explained by Žižek using Alain Badiou's words:

. . . to put it in Badiou's terms, mythic violence belongs to the order of Being, while divine violence belongs to the order of Event: there are no "objective" criteria enabling us to identify an act of violence as divine; the same act that, to an external observer, is merely an outburst of violence can be divine for those engaged in it—there is no big Other guaranteeing its divine nature; the risk of reading and assuming it as divine is fully the subject's own. (Žižek, *V* 200)



When someone from outside the structured social field strikes blindly, demanding immediate justice and enacting vengeance, this is divine violence. Divine violence strikes out of nowhere, a means without end. In “From Democracy to Divine Violence,” Žižek explains the relation between power and divine violence:

So what is divine violence? Its place can be defined in a very precise formal way. Badiou already elaborated the constitutive excess of representation over the represented: at the level of the Law, the state Power only represents the interests, etc. of its subjects; it is serving them, responsible to them, and itself subjected to their control; however, at the level of the superego underside, the public message of responsibility etc., is supplemented by the obscene message of unconditional exercise of Power: laws do not really bind me, I can do to you WHATEVER I WANT, I can treat you as guilty if I decide to do so, I can destroy you if I say so. . . . This obscene excess is a necessary constituent of the notion of sovereignty—the asymmetry is here structural, i.e., the law can only sustain its authority if subjects hear in it an echo of the obscene unconditional self-assertion. And the people’s “divine violence” is correlative to this excess of power: it is its counterpart—it targets this excess and undermines it (116-17).

Žižek concludes that the ultimate cause of violence is the fear of the Neighbour, and it is founded in the violence that inheres to language itself, the very medium of overcoming direct violence. At the end, he gives three lessons of

this book. “First, to chastise violence outright, to condemn it as ‘bad,’ is an ideological operation par excellence, a mystification which collaborates in rendering invisible the fundamental forms of social violence” (Žižek, *V* 206). The Western societies, which show so much sensitivity to different forms of harassment, are insensitive to the most brutal forms of violence—to the very form of humanitarian sympathy with the victims. The second lesson: “it is difficult to be really violent, to perform an act that violently disturbs the basic parameters of social life” (207). The third lesson of “the intricate relationship between subjective and systemic violence is that violence is not a direct property of some acts, but is distributed between acts and their contexts, between activity and inactivity” (213). Depending on its context, the same act can count as violent or non-violent; “sometimes a polite smile can be more violent than a brutal outburst” (213) and “sometimes doing nothing is the most violent thing to do” (217). The silence and passivity of the people is more dangerous than any kind of violent outbursts from their part because the government or the people in power can take action if there is any upheaval. So in order to avoid the passivity of the people, they are engaged with dialogues. These dialogues are just pseudo activities to keep the people away from passivity.

Žižek explains in “Language, Violence and Non-violence,” the inherent nature of language in promoting violence:

When we perceive something as an act of violence, we measure it by a presupposed standard of what the “normal” non-violent situation is—and the highest form of violence is the imposition of this standard with

reference to which some events appear as “violent.” This is why language itself, the very medium of non-violence, of mutual recognition, involves unconditional violence. So, perhaps, the fact that reason (*ratio*) and race have the same root tells us something: language, not primitive egotistic interests, is the first and greatest divider. . . . What this means is that verbal violence is not a secondary distortion, but the ultimate resort of every specifically human violence. Take the example of anti-Semitic pogroms, which can stand in for all racist violence. What the perpetrators of pogroms find intolerable and rage-provoking, what they react to, is not the immediate reality of Jews, but to the image/figure of the ‘Jew’ which circulates and has been constructed in their tradition. (2)

People use language to voice their resistance towards unwanted events in the society and in their personal lives. The symbolic meaning associated with a word makes the event intolerable. The medium of language is used to communicate and at the same time man as a “subject is caught in and tortured by language” (4). Not only does man dwell in the “prison-house of language,” he dwells in a torture-house of language (4). In the process of speaking the truth, language gets distorted and the subject’s active intervention is suspended. Language “should be twisted, denaturalized, extended, condensed, cut and reunited, made to work against itself. Language as the ‘big Other’ is not an agent of wisdom to whose message we should attune ourselves, but a place of cruel indifference and stupidity” (4).

Use of language is a passive but dangerous form of violence. One cannot remain impartial while using and supporting a particular concept or ideology. In “From Democracy to Divine Violence,” Žižek explains the ways by which modern ideologies get the support of the people to engage in violent activities and how people become part of the oppressive system. Many of the rebel movements promise large scale revenge to establish justice in the society. Revolutionaries wait patiently for a brief period of time before they find that the system openly malfunctions or collapses. In the context of inequality and injustice, a revolution emerges and the like-minded people who were waiting for a chance support the revolution. The revolutionaries grab the power, which at that moment lies on the street and then fortify their hold on power, building repressive apparatuses. Once the moment of confusion is over, the majority is disappointed by the new regime, and the state of injustice still continues (112). The new global class of people who are in power becomes rich. People who advocated socialism withdraw to a private life; they dine privately, shop privately, view art privately—everything is private. They are thus creating a lifeworld of their own to solve their hermeneutic problem (113). The basic life-attitude of these gated superrich is fear—fear of external social life itself. The highest priorities of the “ultrahighnetworth individuals” are revolved around security risks affecting their social life. Žižek equals these “global citizens” living in secluded areas to those living in slums and other “white spots” of the public space. For him, they are the two faces of the same coin, the two extremes of the new class division (114). Both these classes are insecure in their own life situations and afraid of each other. They have to use violence as part of self-defence. The desperate acts of violent popular self-

defense can emerge at anytime from anywhere. These acts of violent outbreak is what Benjamin called “divine violence”: they are to be located “beyond good and evil” in a kind of politico-religious suspension of the ethical. In an ordinary moral consciousness, though these acts appear as “immoral” acts of killing, one has no right to condemn them, since they replied to years—centuries even—of systematic state and economic violence and exploitation (115). Emphasizing the statement of Hegel that the individual or subjective freedom can actualize itself only in the rationality of the universal ethical order, Žižek brings the implied meaning in the reverse order:

. . . if a class of people is systematically deprived of their rights, of their very dignity as persons, they are *ipso facto* also released from their duties toward the social order, because this order is no longer their ethical substance, or, to quote Robin Wood: “When a social order fails to actualize its own ethical principles, that amounts to the self-destruction of those principles.” (116)

In *The Parallax View*, Žižek presents two sides of fighting the problem of capitalist globalization. As a form of systemic violence, globalization has to be resisted by the local force in our own living conditions. He uses Simon Critchley’s words from “The Problem of Hegemony”:

Perhaps it is at this intensely situational, indeed local level that the atomizing force of capitalist globalization is to be met, contested and resisted. That is, it is to be resisted by occupying and controlling the terrain upon which one stands, where one lives, works, acts and thinks.

This needn't involve millions of people. It needn't even involve thousands. It could involve just a few at first. It needn't even recently called the domain of "intimate revolt". That is, politics begins right here, locally, practically and specifically, around a concrete issue and not by running off to protest at some meeting of the G8. You shouldn't meet your enemy on their ground, but on your own, on the ground that you made your own. Also, think of the money and time you save on travel!  
(qtd. in Žižek, *PV* 332)

Žižek favours Badiou's "provocative thesis" rather than Critchley's views. Badiou feels: "It is better to do nothing than to contribute to the invention of formal ways of rendering visible that which Empire already recognizes as existent" (qtd. in Žižek, *PV* 334). The problem today is a pseudo-activity, where all are urged to engage in some kind of activity. People participate and intervene all the time to mask Nothingness of what goes on. Academicians "participate in meaningless 'debates' . . . and the truly difficult thing is to step back, to withdraw from all this. Those in power often prefer even a 'critical' participation, a dialogue, to silence—just to engage us in a 'dialogue,' to make sure our ominous passivity is broken" (334). It is when we do something, the main issues are forgotten. By doing so, one is made to believe that something good will emerge in the near future.

Hannah Arendt's insights are referred by Žižek to show the distinction between political power and the mere exercise of (social) violence; "Organizations run by direct nonpolitical authority—by an order of command

that is not politically grounded authority (Army, Church, school)—represent examples of violence (*Gewalt*), not of political Power in the strict sense of the term” (Žižek, *PV* 338). Žižek finds a realm of violence in power relations:

Power always has to rely on an obscene stain of violence; political space is never “pure,” but always involves some kind of reliance on “prepolitical” violence. Of course, the relationship between political power and prepolitical violence is one of mutual implication: not only is violence the necessary supplement of power, (political) power itself is always-already at the root of every apparently “nonpolitical” relationship of violence. (338)

The identity of a human being is at risk when his/her rights are infringed. A citizen gains his/her citizenship when he/she has a profession, a decent living and a sociopolitical identity. Žižek explains this argument in the following manner:

In a properly Hegelian paradoxical dialectics of universal and particular, it is precisely when a human being is deprived of his particular sociopolitical identity, the basis of his specific citizenship, that he, in one and the same move, is no longer recognized and/or treated as human. In short, the paradox is that one is deprived of human rights precisely when one is in effect, in one’s social reality, reduced to a human being “in general,” without citizenship, profession, and so on (340).

Žižek exhorts the readers to follow Gandhi's method: to act rather than waiting for the "objective process" to generate the expected/desired change; "If you just wait for it, it will never come; instead, throw *yourself* into it, *be* this change, take the risk of enacting it directly upon yourself" (342). However, his strategy works only "against a liberal democratic regime which abides by certain minimal ethico-political standards—in which, to put it in emotive terms, those in power still 'have a conscience'" (342). Another way proposed by Žižek is to use Balibar's plea for renouncing violence by "finding oneself in the uncanny place "between the two deaths": one is either biologically dead while symbolically alive (surviving one's biological death as a spectral apparition or symbolic authority of the Name), or symbolically dead while biologically alive (those who are excluded from the sociosymbolic order, from Antigone to today's *Homo sacer*)" (342).

The recent trend of passivity is a new form of violence to fight back violence. Žižek considers "violent outbursts as symptomatic of a fundamental passivity; withdrawal into inactivity as the most radical violent gesture" (346). This suggestion makes us think that there cannot be an end to the problem of violence. However, one can reduce the chances of violence if one deliberately analyzes the systemic and symbolic violence inherent in various social institutions.



## Chapter 4

### **Systemic Violence of Globalization, Racism and Military Dictatorship in African Context: A Critique on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and Nadifa Mohamed's *The Orchard of Lost Souls***

Globalization, racism and military dictatorship—various forms of systemic violence—have caused innumerable casualties to human beings and have created more opportunities for violence. Speaking on the neoliberal policies followed by the nations, Žižek presents the high risk of violence predominant in the society. According to Žižek, globalization and multicultural interaction has created the new problem of intolerance rather than the problems of injustice and inequality. Civil wars and anti-government movements are the visible manifestations of this intolerance. Many nations are ruled by Dictators, who are least concerned about the lives of the citizens. Racism took a new form in the international relations. The existing problems of injustice and inequality faced by women all over the world are ignored in the new context of globalization and racism. This chapter analyzes Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and Nadifa Mohamed's *The Orchard of Lost Souls* in the light of Žižek's concept of systemic and symbolic violence visible in globalization, racism and military dictatorship. The different viewpoints of other writers are included to understand Žižek's concept of systemic violence of racism and globalization.

The criterion for evaluating people is usually the colour of their skin. The practice of segregating people based on the colour of the skin considers the fair skin as the superior race. The greatness or individuality of a person does not depend on this criterion. Each culture has its own way of expression, life style and maintaining the culture. So the terms used to refer to culture as ‘uncivilized’, ‘barbarian’, ‘pagan’ etc. are derogatory and provocative. Civilizing the other culture is a violation of the identity of that culture. A feeling of diffidence is created in the black by the white in order to have dominance without strong resistance. Frantz Fanon speaks about it in *Wretched of the Earth*; “The colonizer first initiates the violent situation by changing the image of the native into a brute. The colonizer has the native undergo physical, cultural, and psychic changes in his/her personality” (36). In Žižekian terms, the whites have made the blacks “inferior at the level of their socio-symbolic identity” (Žižek, V 72).

It is in this context, Žižek sees the systemic nature of violence embedded in the process of globalization. Developed nations take control of all the developing nations even in their internal affairs like financial policies and educational systems. The fear of imposing sanction prevents small and underdeveloped nations to speak against the extraction of natural resources from their land just for the exchange of arms and ammunition or for the exchange of food materials. When nation’s security is at stake, no government thinks anything apart from safeguarding the interests of its citizens. This haplessness is an outcome of international exchange.

In the globalized world, the search for economic security has placed racially affected people into many parts of the world. Racist violence should be understood in the context of the profound economic and social changes that grew with the Industrial Revolution. The new labour market provides opportunities for skilled professionals and entrepreneurs in the financial, commercial and cultural spheres, but it denies opportunities to the unskilled and disadvantaged: it creates a local economy that sharply divides insiders from outsiders, the skilled and competent from the largely unskilled, who lack the resources to adapt to a post-industrial labour market (Ray 115).

Globalization has given wide opportunities to people in obtaining better job, income, and modern comforts. The shortening of distance has made people leave home in search of new lives, better livelihoods, or simply to seek adventure. Women, often reluctant to explore the world due to rigid gender norms and lack of opportunities, have found a place in the labour market. The demand for women in the open market has resulted in the realignment of social and cultural relations. More and more women who were traditionally confined to the home are now seeking more viable livelihood options elsewhere (Jana 142). The search for better education, better job and better remuneration have tempted many people to go after agencies that recruit students to educational institutions or youngsters to job-providing institutions outside the state or country.

In the globalised society, immigration has created another problem of hate crime. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, hate crimes is defined as violence intended to hurt and intimidate someone because of his or her race,

ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or disability (Kittleson 57). In the recent years there were reports about the attacks on Indian students in the US and Australia on the basis of race and religion. The victims of hate crimes are groups that are seen as different from the majority. Racial and religious minorities, homosexuals, and immigrants are often targeted. Hate crime “is a warning not only to the victim but also to people *like* the victim” (59). The victim of the hate crime has no choice to change his race or ethnicity which is the main characteristic motivating the attack. A person cannot modify her or his race, ethnicity, age, gender, or disability status. Even a religious identity or a sexual orientation cannot be modified without causing an individual to make dramatic and painful changes in life style. Another characteristic of hate crimes that makes them different from many other offenses is that the individual victim typically did nothing to provoke the attack and is therefore interchangeable, at least from the perpetrator’s standpoint (Levin 92). The perpetrators of hate crime consider it their duty to safeguard their culture. The racial and ethnic discourses going on in the world affirm the standpoint of the perpetrators that their culture is superior. So, there is a systemic violence in the functioning of hate crimes:

Those who perpetrate a mission crime are convinced that all out-group members are sub-humans who are bent on destroying our culture, our economy, or the purity of our racial heritage. The offender therefore is concerned about much more than simply eliminating a few Blacks or Latinos from his job, his neighborhood, or his school. Instead, he believes that he has a higher order purpose in carrying out his crime. (Levin 95)

Contemporary violence that is visible in the modern world can be the result of the disintegration happening in many areas of human life. Much of it can be attributed to the disintegration happening in the political arena. The political stand on privatizing the government controlled firms and institutions for economic growth has affected a large number of employees and their financial security. The increasing privatization of the economy in areas where there used to be more state control constitutes wholesale encouragement to the privatization of violence. The frustrated employees “transform their rage or social anger into political violence” (Friedman 129). Corporate managerial and technocratic elites claim that “merit” favors the “most qualified” irrespective of race or social status. But in many cases, the minority professionals are recruited to work among their own society wherein they become agents of exploitation. They have to find the customers from their community in order to increase the income of the corporate company. Globalization and new economic policies have created a situation of desperate poor preying on those around them, turning their anger at the injustices they face into crime, as their hopes for political solutions are crushed (218).

Even if globalization generates possibilities for advanced living, the local population sees the possibilities as a threat to their normal way of life, because their culture and products are less valued in the new context. Therefore, they construct a fortress against the “global” or “foreign” in order to safeguard their way of life. These take the form of various kinds of localist movements: environmentalism, anti-World Bank demonstrations, religious fundamentalism, regional separatism, anti-immigrant movements, xenophobia, and at times,

banditry (Sampson 311). The anti-government movements in Africa and in many parts of the world are the result of the reaction against the global or the foreign.

Colour has played a major role in deciding human dignity and dividing societies. The black white conflict—the black as evil and uncivilized and white as good and civilized—is a major issue to be solved. Even after the abolition of slave trade and giving franchise right for the ‘negro’, there still remain many areas of demarcation between the blacks and the whites in the globalized world. An African has to make lot of negotiations to survive in America. The entire life style has to be adjusted to the new surroundings and people. Getting a job in any of the American shops is rather a difficult task for an African native. There is a special training needed to familiarize the accent. In order to adapt to American culture, one has to become used to keeping the dirty clothes for one week before getting them washed. The difference in the usage of certain words, the difficult climate and the atmosphere, and the strangeness experienced from the natives give challenges to the African dwellers in America.

In the context of globalization, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie narrates the lives of the immigrants of Africa through her novel *Americanah*. The novel presents the struggles and attitudinal changes of a few African natives in America. One can notice the cultural differences of both continents and how the Africans are made to feel inferior while living in America. Ifemelu, a medical student, had gone to America after receiving a fellowship. She had to adjust to the American conditions and struggle hard to live with her scarce income. After spending a good span of her life in America she wanted to come back to her

native land, Nigeria. She had to face the negligence in her class rooms, in the places she searched for job, and from the roommates. In order to adapt to the situations, she had to ignore some of her moral principles without any prick of conscience. She learnt to lie to the strangers to show her status as a wealthy and modern woman. One day, Ifemelu met Aisha, a Senegalese woman and told her that she would go back to Nigeria to see her man. Aisha told her that she had two Igbo boyfriends and insisted Ifemelu to tell either of them to marry Aisha when she would see them. Ifemelu found it strange and thought of it as “a Peculiar Case of a Non-American Black, or How the Pressures of Immigrant Life Can Make You Act Crazy” (Adichie 18).

The colonial attitude of considering the white superior in everything affected the lives of the Africans negatively. The mindset of the Africans living in America has changed and they too want to live as Americans. Like the trend in other countries, they too want to give European or American education to their children. Once when there was a discussion about giving education to the children of some of Obinze’s acquaintances in the Chief’s party, he just commented: ““Didn’t we all go to primary schools that taught the Nigerian curriculum?”” (29). His comment was considered a joke and they continued in the discussion of sending the children to the best school that taught British curriculum. In this situation “he felt like an intruder in his new circle, of people who believed that the latest schools, the latest curriculum, would ensure the wholeness of their children. He did not share their certainties. He spent too much time mourning what could have been and questioning what should be” (29). What

children learnt was to be independent and to become aware of their rights. Aunty Uju once told Ifemelu: ““This is how children like to misbehave in this country. Jane was even telling me that her daughter threatens to call the police when she beats her. Imagine. I don’t blame the girl, she has come to America and learned about calling the police”” (109). She has something more to say about the American way of education as she failed her last medical examination in America: ““I’ve never failed an exam in my life. But they weren’t testing actual knowledge, they were testing our ability to answer tricky multiple-choice questions that have nothing to do with real medical knowledge”” (109).

Another complaint against the American system of education was that lower class children never learnt any principles or equations of mathematics. Once Ifemelu asked Dike what he had done in school before summer and he said “Circles”. They would sit on the floor in a circle and share their favourite things. Again she asked him whether he knew divisions. His reply was “I’m only in first grade” (110). To this she replied that when she was his age she could do simple divisions. The conviction lodged in her head was that American children learned nothing in elementary school, and it hardened when he told her that his teacher sometimes gave out homework coupons, if you get a homework coupon, then you could skip one day of homework (112). It is strange to see that in countries where they follow European or American model of education, children in lower grade are forced to study a lot of things including division and other sciences. But in America or in Britain their children are kept away from such burden and enjoy a free learning style. Everyone is moulded into a system for the benefit of a few



rich people who decide the future of the country. In this system, the interests of a very few are maintained. Indigenous knowledge that was followed by the generations based on the condition of the land and people is ignored and gradually removed from the main stream knowledge. In the wake of scientific advancement, reason got priority over instinct. One side of the human being—basic nature—was discarded. In the scientific world of ‘reason’, ‘unreasonable’ is considered rude, uncivilized and unsystematic; what is ‘natural’ is unhygienic, ineffective and time-wasting. Therefore such knowledge and things are ignored. In a move to civilize the instinctual, reason adopted the methods of violence.

The American and the Western system of education promote an attitude of superiority in their children. Children are made to believe that the knowledge they acquire is the best of its kind. But the observation of Adichie regarding the education system of Americans shows the superficial and demoralizing nature of their learning:

SCHOOL IN AMERICA was easy, assignments sent in by e-mail, classrooms air-conditioned, professors willing to give make-up tests. But she was uncomfortable with what the professors called “participation” and did not see why it should be part of the final grade; it merely made students talk and talk, class time wasted on obvious words, hollow words, sometimes meaningless words. It had to be that Americans were taught, from elementary school, to always say something in class, no matter what. And so she sat stiff-tongued, surrounded by students who were all folded easily on their seats, all flush with knowledge, not of the subject of the

classes, but of how to be in the classes. They never said “I don’t know.” They said, instead, “I’m not sure,” which did not give any information but still suggested the possibility of knowledge. And they ambled, these Americans, they walked without rhythm. They avoided giving direct instructions: they did not say “Ask somebody upstairs”; they said “You might want to ask somebody upstairs.” When you tripped and fell, when you chocked, when misfortune befell you, they did not say “Sorry.” They said “Are you ok?” when it was obvious that you were not. And when you said “Sorry” to them when they choked or tripped or encountered misfortune, they replied, eyes wide with surprise, “Oh, it’s not your fault.” And they overused the word “exited”. . . . On her first day at school, she had visited the health centre, and had stared a little too long at the bin filled with free condoms in the corner. (134)

Though Americans boast of giving high education to their children, many of their children fail to see the different aspects of a reality. They are directed in a single path whereby they become ignorant of the real thing. Once there was an argument between Ifemelu and Kimberly’s son, Taylor, regarding the orange which Ifemelu gave him. After putting a piece into his mouth, Taylor said that it was bad because it has got stuff in it. The stuff he mentioned was the seeds of the orange. He had never eaten oranges with seeds in them and never knew that there are oranges with seeds in them (165). A boy of his age—eight years—should have the knowledge that many of the fruit trees including orange grow from its seed; no doubt, he knows about the new space war video game.

Globalization has done much to the native culture of Nigeria and to the life style of Nigerians living in America. After passing the United States Medical Licensing Examination, Auntie Uju had to change her hair style to appear before the interview board. Her reason for the change was that “If you have braids, they will think that you are unprofessional. . . . I have told you what they have told me. You are in a country that is not your own. You do what you have to do if you have to succeed” (119). Ifemelu felt that “Auntie Uju had deliberately left behind something of herself, something essential, in a distant and forgotten place” (119).

According to Žižek, “language . . . is the first and greatest divider, it is because of language that we and our neighbours (can) ‘live in different worlds’ even when we live on the same street” (Žižek, *V* 66). So for him “verbal violence is not a secondary distortion, but the ultimate resort of every specifically human violence” (66). Linguistic violence is possible at the lexico-semantic level and in the discourse level. There are words that are inherently violent, which hurt or offend. Violence can be built up in discourse, through its techniques and strategies, and a particular discourse structure can be perceived by its addressee or by a hearer as offending/hurting or not (Scripnic 152). According to Teresa de Lauretis, “The very notion of rhetoric of violence presupposes that some order of language, some kind of discursive representation is at work not only in the concept of violence, but in the social practices of violence as well” (240). The language used in a society is an “indicative of the relations of power, the socio-political tensions, and the agendas of different forces interlocked in the fight for the preservation or the subversion of the power structure” (Diop 289). Speaking

on the rhetoric of violence, in *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault attaches a socio-cultural and socio-political function to the order of language. The socio-political field is a field of forces, practices, and discourses that involve relations of power that in turn depend on various points of resistance (96). The use of language forms “an interplay of power and resistance, a field of constant confrontation between individuals, groups, and classes. Consequently, the rhetoric of violence not only constructs objects and subjects of violence, but legitimises acts of violence” (Diop 289). Languages compete with each other to establish supremacy in the world. So, not only in the semantic level language creates violence, but also in the discursive level there is violence. To impose hegemony of discourse in a social setting, violence is used as a means. However, understanding the oppressors’ plan to prevail over their victims, there is always a form of resistance from the part of the oppressed (296).

The symbolic violence carried out by the use of language is clearly seen in the novel *Americanah*. In the globalized world, English language is used as the primary medium mediating relations to the outside, facilitating new class fractionalization. The power of language in separating, including and excluding people intensified the tension between the global and the local. Certain lexical combinations used in America have more of sexual overtones. The free approach towards sexual matters is reflected in the vocabulary used by the American. The term “boning” in America means “to have sex”. But in Nigeria, the term means “carrying face”. The word “half-cast” is a bad word which is used in Nigeria for “biracial”. When someone, especially a girl, tells she “has issues” she would be

mocked for having babies (Adichie 124). A fresher from Nigeria like Ifemelu had to suffer humiliation from her classmates before understanding the connotation of such words. Most often the double-meaning words are given its secondary or negative meaning rather than its first meaning. It shows that there is a play of language in suppressing the identity of an African. There are deliberate attempts by the natives to sideline and ridicule the non-natives in their use of certain words. This is a form of symbolic violence happening in the globalized context.

As Ifemelu was trying for a job, she had to face many humiliating experiences from the white employers. Finding it difficult to pronounce the African names, the white men at the interview would shorten the names of the African candidates for their convenience. Once during an interview, Ngozi Ifemelu introduced her to the manager; having found it difficult to utter her name, he wished to call “Ngozi” as “Goz”. White men found it hard to accept the blacks as they were. When someone calls another person a name which is not acceptable to the latter, there is a break of relation. In this case, Ifemelu agreed to be called *Goz*, just after giving a pause, as she was in need of a job. When Ifemelu narrated the incident, Ginika told that she was rejected in the interview not because she paused to agree to his demand but she failed to give explanation of her name. She should have told the manager that Ngozi is her tribal name and Ifemelu is her jungle name and should have thrown in one more as her spiritual name; they would believe all kinds of shit about Africa (131). A fundamental violence exists in the “essencing” ability of language. There is no difference in

the essence of any human being; the concept of inferior and superior is only a construct of the dominant class or race.

The monopoly of Americans in using English was reflected in the way they spoke English. They did not accept the accent of a foreigner while he/she spoke English. Ifemelu felt humiliated at the registration counter for new comers. Cristina Tomas, a white lady at the registration counter deliberately spoke to Ifemelu in slow pace, giving a pause after each word as if Ifemelu did not know English. When Ifemelu said that she knew English, Cristina said; “I just don’t know how *well*” (Adichie 133). All her life she had spoken English, led the debating society in secondary school, and always thought the American twang inchoate. After that experience she began to practice an American accent (134). The prejudice of the Americans never allows them to accept a non-American who uses English better than they use it.

Objective violence is visible in the attitude and behaviour of most of the Americans. Though there are interactions between the whites and the blacks, the racial prejudice never ended in many areas. By making derogatory statements about the blacks in the movies, white people promote symbolic violence. The deliberate attempt to weaken the self-image of the Africans by the white is visible in the film industry. Once some scenes from the movie *Roots* were screened in the history class by “Professor Moore, a tiny, tentative woman with the emotionally malnourished look of someone who did not have friends” (136). During the screening, Wambui, a Kenyan girl, noticed that the word “nigger” was bleeped out in the film. While asked about it, Prof. Moore simply evaded the

question by giving this answer: “Well, this was a recording from network television and one of the things I wanted us to talk about is how we represent history in popular culture and the use of the N-word is certainly an important part of that” (137). To this answer Wambui, with the firm voice said; “It makes no sense to me. . . . I mean, ‘nigger’ is a word that exists. People use it. It is part of America. It has caused a lot of harm to people and I think it is insulting to bleep it out” (137). Globalization has not changed the minds of the Americans in treating the blacks equally. It has only given them more opportunities to mock the blacks so closely because the Africans are now nearer to them—as employees in the office, market and field.

As Žižek writes, when the blacks are treated by the whites as inferior, this makes inferior at the level of their socio-symbolic identity. The white racist ideology exerts a performative efficiency. The interpretation of what the blacks are, determines the very being and social existence of the blacks (Žižek, *V* 72). The inferiority attached to the lives and culture of the blacks makes them adapt the culture of the superior race. As a result, they try to imitate the whites in their dress and food habits. When the Nigerian girls reached America, their taste for dress also changed. Once, Ginika and Ifemelu entered a shop to buy some clothes. Ginika selected a sparkly dress as the salesgirl said it just came in. After wearing the dress and walking on tiptoe, Ginika said she loved it. To this Ifemelu said that it was shapeless. To her it looked “like a boxy sack on which a bored person had haphazardly stuck sequins” (Adichie 126). Ginika said to her that it was postmodern. Ifemelu wondered if she too would come to share her taste for

shapeless dresses and whether this was what America did to her (126). On another occasion when Ifemelu attended a fraternity party, she noticed that the students, who came there, wore torn and determinedly worn dresses. Adichie writes:

Years later a post would read: *When it comes to dressing well, American culture is so self-fulfilled that it has not only disregarded this courtesy of self-presentation, but has turned that disregard into a virtue. "We are too superior/busy/cool/not-upright to bother about how we look to other people, and so we can wear pajamas to school and underwear to the mall".* (129)

The 'superior' feeling of the American compels him to pretend, rather than what he actually feels. After buying the dress, Ginika and Ifemelu were asked by the cashier whether they were helped by anybody to select the dress. There were two girls at the shop to assist them; one was a black lady and the other, a white. Even though the cashier asked them many questions about the identity of these girls, Ginika did not tell that the girl who helped her was the black or the white. Later Ifemelu asked; "Why didn't she just ask 'Was it the black girl or the white girl.' To this Ginika said; 'Because this is America. You're supposed to pretend that you don't notice certain things'" (127). In real life, there is racial discrimination; but it is not shown publically in order to show that the Americans give importance to human dignity and freedom, no matter what be the race or caste. A hypocritical diplomacy is practiced in personal communications in order to cover up the strong contempt for the black. The racial prejudice is covered up with



unfriendly smiles and customary greetings. As long as humanness is never valued, there is objective violence in racism.

In money matters, American culture was different from African culture. A generous mind was not that common in American culture. Once Allison invited Ifemelu and others to a café and orders some snacks. Ifemelu thought that it was a free treat by Allison. But when the bill came, Ifemelu was surprised to see Allison carefully untangling the items on the bill and making sure nobody paid for anybody else. Finally Ifemelu understood, “That was America for you” (Adichie 129). Inviting someone for a meal or a drink and paying for them was very much a part of African or Asian culture. An African has to change his/her generous nature as long as he/she lives in America.

Even when Americans boast of hygiene and neatness, they don't have any shame in keeping the dirty clothes in the cloth basket for three-four days before putting them in the washing machine on Friday evenings. It was a disgusting sight for Ifemelu to see the dirty undergarments piling as a heap (136). She had the habit of cleaning the under-wears daily. Now she had to keep away that good habit to adjust to American way of living. At home she used to clean her dirty clothes daily; she never waited till the weekends. The poverty of the Africans does not mean everything in the continent is ugly and unhealthy; the affluent culture of America does not mean all that it does is neat and healthy.

The systemic violence of racism is noticeable in the employers who hire Africans for the job. Ifemelu found it difficult to get a job in America because of her native origin and over-qualification. During a meeting of ASA (African

Students Association) Mwombeki, a well-educated Tanzanian, after looking Ifemelu's resume, asked her to delete the three years of university in Nigeria because American employers did not like lower-level employees to be educated. He made this comment from his experience in America. From Mwombeki, Ifemelu came to know about the two associations working for Africans: ASA and BSU. African Americans go to the Black Student Union (BSU) and Africans go to the African Students Association (ASA). Some of the African Americans speak ill of Africa while a few others speak and write good about Africa through their poems. The African students make friendship with other international students more easily than with African American students because the internationals understand the trauma of trying to get an American visa. The employers in America were reluctant to issue a visa to Asians or Africans. Even in appointing them in shops, in companies and in hospitals, Americans prefer the white race to the "brownies" (Asians) and the "blackies" (Africans).

What the Africans faced in another country was the problem of securing a good job. Ifemelu had attended many interviews to earn a living and pay her rent. The owners of the houses and the shops where she went for the interview seemed polite and gave her expectation about the job. But none of them called back appointing her on the job. She even tried to call agencies that needed women for a job that equalled prostitution. She dropped the idea because even in this job, the employee got only the quarter of what she earned; the agency took the rest. When it was time for her to pay the rent she did not have anything in her hand. So finally, she went to a tennis coach, who offered her hundred dollars for a

'massage session'. His only demand was: "Keep me warm. I'll touch you a little bit, nothing you'll be uncomfortable with. I just need some human contact to relax" (Adichie 153). Finally, she succumbed to his demand and ended up on his bed. The trauma of the incident had changed her normal life. In order to make a living in a foreign country, she had to sacrifice the most cherished virtue of her life. The incident affected her very deeply causing mental depression:

SHE WOKE UP torpid each morning, slowed by sadness, frightened by the endless stretch of day that lay ahead. Everything had thickened. She was swallowed, lost in a viscous haze, shrouded in a soup of nothingness. Between her and what she should feel, there was a gap. She cared about nothing. She wanted to care, but she no longer knew how; it had slipped from her memory, the ability to care. Sometimes she woke up flailing and helpless, and she saw, in front of her and behind her and all around her, an utter hopelessness. She knew there was no point in being here, being alive, but she had no energy to think concretely of how she could kill herself. (156)

She would not call this stage of her life a depressive state because according to her "depression was what happened to Americans, with their self-absolving need to turn everything into an illness" (157). Yet, after that incident, she was out of her mind; when her mother called her from Nigeria and said that there had been no light for two weeks, it seemed suddenly foreign to her, and home itself a distant place (159).

Ifemelu thought that in America nobody cheated; but her understanding changed when she appeared for her driving licence. She noticed the instructor erasing the wrong answers in the answer sheet and marking the right answers. In that test everybody passed and they were all given the licence (164). She once again understood that development of a nation does not include moral development. Corruption and other malpractices are accepted as part of the system that focuses on economic development.

According to Žižek, the humanitarian works carried out by the “post-industrial rich” to help the poor is questionable. The normally perceived benevolent and sincere acts by the rich is criticized by him, because “such an attitude betrays a breath-taking insensitivity to the systemic violence that had to go on in order for such a comfortable life to be possible” (Žižek, V 9). In such acts of generosity there are “more forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence” (9). The economic affluence of Americans gives them an upper hand over other people. Because of their richness, they can easily give charity and boast of it in public meetings and gatherings. Observing the systemic violence of giving charity, Žižek writes: “Charity is the humanitarian mask hiding the face of economic exploitation. In a superego blackmail of gigantic proportions, the developed countries ‘help’ the undeveloped with aid, credits, and so on, and thereby avoid the key issue, namely their complicity in and co-responsibility for the miserable situation of the undeveloped” (22).

Americans speak of donations and various charitable activities they do in the African and Asian countries. Once, Ifemelu was invited by Kimberly to attend a party of Americans. Many of the ladies introduced themselves as donors of charity in African countries like Malawi, Ghana, Kenya and Tanzania. Another woman who introduced herself as the chair of the board of charity in Ghana told; “We work with rural women. We’re always interested in African staff, we don’t want to be the NGO that won’t use local labor. So if you’re ever looking for a job after graduation and want to go back and work in Africa, give me a call” (Adichie 169). Ifemelu thanked her for her generosity; but she “wanted, suddenly and desperately, to be from the country of people who gave and not those who received, to be one of those who had and could therefore bask in the grace of having given, to be among those who could afford copious pity and empathy. She went out to the deck in search of fresh air” (170). She did not want to lose her dignity due to the lack of money. She felt within herself the richness of her own country which she did not want to measure with the economic affluence of the Americans. Having lived a couple of years in America, she was able to weigh the blown-up richness of America with the condensed wealth of African countries. Yet in the presence of these American ladies, she felt the strength of her identity oozing out.

Another aspect of the generosity of the Americans is the need that arises from global exchange. The “sovereign self-negating gesture of the endless accumulation of wealth” (Žižek, *V* 23) by the capitalist for the developmental activities of the underdeveloped nations helps to sustain the cycle of social

production. It is necessary for him to donate money, because for the development of his economy, others have to buy; only if others have money they can buy something. Many of the products available in the market are those produced by the developed nations. As the local products are sidelined in the globalization process, the capitalists are sure that their products would be sold out in the global market. So, the capitalist donates from his richness in order to earn more money. By giving away the accumulated wealth, “the capitalists self-negates himself as the mere personification of capital and its reproductive circulation: his life acquires meaning” (23).

Globalization redefined the boundaries of moral principles. What is considered an immoral act in one culture is considered normal in another culture. In the wake of modernization, many of the religious teachings, especially precepts regarding sexual matters, are questioned and the moral force attached to them is diluted. A person coming from a traditional community to a modern society has to undergo a mental torture while engaging in socially reserved acts. Life in America for Ifemelu was a period of experiments with her moral principles. She had switched over to many men whom she came across in her life there. She broke up these relations after having intimate physical contacts. She did not feel any remorse for engaging in these activities. She wrote many articles on race issues and received many comments. Yet she kept her relations with white people. She began to live according to the situation and did not care for the moral principles she had practiced at her home. Though she had tried to accommodate all the new situations, there was nothing standing in her life. Once

she reached home, she had to go back to the traditional way of life and live as a rural Nigerian girl.

Žižek does not approve the idea of culture, because for him “the ultimate source of barbarism is culture itself; one’s direct identification with a particular culture renders one intolerant towards other cultures” (Žižek, V 141). The Pan-American culture has destroyed the diversity of various cultures and civilizations. Adichie presents the cultural difference in family relations existing in America and Nigeria through this novel. There is an increasing number of divorce in Nigerian women in America than that of Nigerian women in Nigeria. Even if it can be attributed to the freedom that women gain in America and to the laws that protect women’s rights, much of it is due to the living style and the difference in the concept of family and due to the loose family relations that exist in America. Nigerian men living in America would seek a nurse or a doctor as wife to take back to America to earn more money (Adichie 117). But the relation may end up once each of them become independent and not wanting the other for any financial support. The motive behind establishing international relation in family relations is not for leading a peaceful family, but for stabilizing the job or for financial gain. So, in the wake of globalization the institution of family as a system suffers a lot. The fleeting relation between husband and wife affects the growth of children. In societies that valued the integrity of family, the changes opened up new problems. As Žižek would notice, the change has created two categories of people: people who are ruled by culture and people who enjoy the culture and who are elevated above it (Žižek, V 141).

Žižek's concept of systemic violence leads us understand systemic violation in providing job opportunities by multi-national companies. Even though globalization provides opportunities for job, one has to surrender one's personal dignity in front of the employer. In the case of a black, he has to suffer the humiliation of racial injustice in his work place. The job-seeker never thinks of the type of the work he is entrusted to do; he embraces the works which he might reject in his hometown. The "foreigner" title makes him comfortable to accept any type of job in an unknown land. While offering a menial job to a foreigner, the employer gains his superiority. The high-position jobs are reserved for the natives. The high qualification of a black is never considered while offering him a job. Thus there is a systemic violation in providing job opportunities. Obinze, the intimate friend and classmate of Ifemelu, left for London in search of job. After a few months of stay there, he did not get a decent job. At last, he had to do the "cleaning of toilets, wearing gloves and carrying a pail, in an estate agent's office on the second floor of a London building" (Adichie 236).

Globalization has not removed the geographical boundaries of the nations. One has to possess a valid passport to enter another country and should have a visa or a work permit to stay in or work in another country. Many people face problems arising out of the legal complications of these documents. It is usually people who flee one country due to insecurity or those who search for better job end up in legal complications. The citizens of the developed nations are safe. Therefore, the complexities of globalization affect the weaker sections in the



insecure nations—the unemployed, the refugees, the trafficked and the cheated. People use many malpractices to stay in the foreign country and to escape from being caught. The insecurity forces people to involve in illegal activities. In order to avoid deportation, Obinze used the National Insurance card of Vincent, a Nigerian, and lived in his identity with the condition that he had to pay the latter thirty five per cent of his earning. Thus Obinze became Vincent. Obinze took up the job of cleaning passages in a detergent-packing warehouse. Even in the unhealthy situation he continued to do his job until his manager told him he was being fired because of a downsizing. The next job he managed to get was “a temporary replacement with a company that delivered kitchens, week after week of sitting beside white drivers who called him ‘labourer,’ of endless construction sites full of noises and helmets, of carrying wooden planks up long stairs, unaided and unsung” (Adichie 251). When Vincent demanded more money for using his NI card, Obinze refused; as a consequence, Vincent informed the chief of the company where Obinze worked, about the false identity of Obinze. Since his chief Roy Snell was a good man, he did not take any immediate action. But Obinze now understood the difficulty of living in another country. He felt alienation run through him like a shiver. Many of his friends could understand many other hardships of life. What he felt was so unique.

. . . all understood the fleeing from war, from the kind of poverty that crushed human soul, but they would not understand the need to escape from the oppressive lethargy of choicelessness. They would not understand why people like him, who were raised well-fed and watered

but mired in dissatisfaction, conditioned from birth to look towards somewhere else, eternally convinced that real lives happened in that somewhere else, were now resolved to dangerous things, illegal things, so as to leave, none of them starving, or raped, or from burned villages, but merely hungry for choice and certainty. (276)

At last, to settle down in London and to get a citizenship, he wished to marry a lady much above his age. When all the money was paid to the agents who arranged the marriage and when they reached the registration office, police caught him for his fake identity. Soon he was sent back to his country, Nigeria. Though Obinze and Ifemelu were lovers, situation made them ignore their mutual love. Later Obinze went to America, became rich, and married Kosi against his own desire for Ifemelu. The life in America changed his attitude towards family. After the study, Ifemelu came back to Nigeria. This aroused the buried desires of Obinze and he frequently visited Ifemelu and made love with each other. Kosi knew his relation with Ifemelu and reminded him of the sacramental sanctity of marriage:

It's about keeping this family together! You took a vow before God. I took a vow before God. I am a good wife. We have a marriage. Do you think you can just destroy this family because your old girlfriend came into town? Do you know what it means to be a responsible father? You have a responsibility to that child downstairs! What you do today can ruin her life and make her damaged until the day she dies! And all because

your old girlfriend came back from America? Because you have had acrobatic sex that reminded you of your time in university? (464)

Even after her advice, Obinze could not resist his passion for Ifemelu and finally he decided to divorce Kosi, his faithful wife. He decided to move away from his house and live in his flat at Parkview. He wanted to be responsible to his daughter Buchi; so he would see her every day and do her what she wanted. He began to define family according to his new understanding—a concept of family life he learned from the American and London culture. He became a globalized Nigerian. In the new context of globalization emotional bonding is sidelined in family relations. Consumerism and pragmatism tear apart the bonding between the couples and the ideologies of capitalism blind the conjugal relation. Even in family relation profit becomes the concern of the couples. The concept of sacrifice and service is no more practiced. The increasing cases of divorces affect women more seriously; they find it difficult to get married again; the emotional bond they have for the family causes mental frustration after the divorce; if they have children, they find it difficult to care for them. Thus, globalization as a form of systemic violence creates problems in family relations and in the lives of women.

The monopoly of American culture, life style, education system and moral principles is what we see in globalization. The choice in front of the transnational citizen is not many but a choice of selecting the American. Cultural and national identity is to be sacrificed to live in a globalized world. The selection of American culture and lifestyle by a foreigner in America is not a free

choice, but a choice for survival. Therefore, the freedom of living one's own culture is denied in globalization. This amounts to structural violence. The other side of the same is what is experienced in the African countries where people lack the basic necessities of life. In the absence of basic material needs, people resort to various activities keeping aside their moral principles. Looting, robbery, attacks and murder form the normal social activities. In a disoriented society, women find it extremely difficult to live a normal life with their children to be cared for. This situation is narrated in *The Orchard of Lost Souls* by Somali born Nadifa Mohamed.

The civil wars, internal riots and communal clashes created many widows and compelled them to seek any type of job available. The helpless women chose the profession of sex workers to support the family. Apart from the structural violence “manifested in the denial of basic material needs (poverty), human rights (repression) and ‘higher needs’ (alienation)” (Jiwani 67), there are certain terms and discourses that promote violence against women. For example, to refer to the aboriginal women, the term “drug-addicted prostitutes” is used in stories by white men. Men are identified and described in detail with respect to their backgrounds and their actions. The young women were constantly referenced as drug-addicted sex workers; “the identities of aboriginal women victims of violence as fitting this profile make them seem responsible for the violence they experience. It is a discursive strategy of blaming the victim” (69).

In the African countries, women are doubly oppressed; their men misbehave towards them and they face racial discrimination from the white.

Dobash, in *Women, Violence and Social Change*, speaks about three reasons for the greater suffering of the women of colour. First, in African societies, men use violence against their partners because of the stresses and frustrations they experience from the white and not so much as a form of male domination and control over women. That is, race is a stronger explanatory factor than gender. Second, women of colour are bound by a greater cultural allegiance to the family and their community, and their poor position in the economic market keeps them bound to a violent man. In any field of work, women experience the double discrimination—discrimination against women and discrimination against people of colour. Thus, to leave the man presents greater difficulties for survival. Third, while it is both difficult and relatively unacceptable to leave a violent man, it is also unacceptable to seek assistance from the authorities, especially the police. The arrest by the police may be interpreted less as a support for women, as it might be for her white counterpart, and more as a further act of racial oppression against men of colour (51).

The impact of globalization in African nations was so severe that most of the nations in the continent became poorer compared to their previous years of economic growth. Unemployment, poverty and civil war increased in those nations and political administration failed to solve these social problems Nadifa Mohamed's *The Orchard of Lost Souls* presents the conditions of people in Somalia under the military rule. The political administration does not care for the normal life of its citizens. This condition increases the struggles of women. In order to focus on the experiences of women, Nadifa has given expression to the

lives of women rather than that of men; a very few male characters appear in the novel. The role of the male characters is limited to imparting pain and torture to the female characters. Instead of concentrating on the general catastrophe of a war-torn land, the author narrates the normal lives of ordinary citizens; their struggles for meeting the daily needs are more emphasized. Nadifa Mohamed sees the land of Somalia after the war with its struggles for survival.

The narration concentrates on three women in three stages of life: a widow in her late 50s, a police officer in her 30s and an orphaned girl in her tender age of ten. All the three of them have their own worries and problems in life. In Part Two of the novel, there are three sections, and each of the sections speaks separately about these three women characters. In Part One of the novel, we see these women coming together in a particular situation and in Part Three of the novel also we see them together. In the first part, we see the old lady Kawsar trying to protect the child Deqo while being beaten up by the *Guddi*, the neighbourhood watch of the army, and as a result, Kawsar is taken to the police station being accused of causing public nuisance. The army woman Filsan hands over Kawsar to the police station and later on she is taken to the jail. At the end of the novel, we see them as members of a family. Each one gains an identity with the help of the other. Unlike many other writers, Nadifa Mohamed did not want to show to the world the devastating condition of war with its heavy bombing and gunfire. She rather concentrated on representing the normal activities of women in a troubled area. The spread of globalization in African nations disturbed the social system. Poverty and unemployment led people to

involve in anti-social activities. When the political administration failed to solve the emerging problems, civil wars broke out in many parts of the continent. In many parts, the army overthrew the political systems. But, the new rule under the leader of the army, who became President, was no way better; they were brutal in many respects. The concern of the army officials was to protect their own rule by amassing weapons. Thus, the wealth of the nation went to the hands of the rich nations who produced weapons. The military rule in all aspects was violent in nature. The narration in the novel helps us find the systemic violence inherent in the military rule.

In societies that witness open violence, there is often a prior increase in militarization and the number of weapons flowing into the locality. Militarization presumes a close relation between political and military elites, and sometimes the regime may actually be a military dictatorship. In certain contexts, men, and sometimes women, are subjected to compulsory military service for a period of time. When men are taken to the camps or military service, women take the onus of running the family. The situation is narrated by Nadifa Mohamed: “Women are running their families because the streets have been emptied of men; those not working abroad are in prison or have been grabbed off the street and conscripted into the army” (149). The government increases the police force in size, reach, and armed capability. Most of the towns are under curfew. “The regime doesn’t just want to black out the city but to silence it” (150). In the guise of national security and secrecy, censorship laws curtail the freedom of expression and

movement. A militarized society is necessarily undemocratic (Cockburn 31) and opens the way for social unrest and public violence.

In Žižek's view, human rights constitute a false ideological universality because they mask and legitimize the concrete politics of Western imperialism and domination, neocolonialism and military interventions (Žižek, V 148). In a militarized society, many restrictions are imposed on basic human rights. People have to work and act in favour of the regime. One such incident is narrated in *The Orchard of Lost Souls*. When the whole region jubilates over the arrival of General Haaruun, the Military-Governor of the North Western region, Kawsar is contemptuous of the celebration. The whole villagers were made to wake up early to receive the General. She could not tolerate the huge crowd making noises and the beats from big drum. Adding to her perturbed mind, she saw a poor little girl, Deqo, being beaten by Milgo, one of the troupe members. She shouted at them and told them to stop that. Now for that shouting, Kawsar was taken to the police station. The child ran from the scene and found a way for escape. Kawsar had her antipathy to the regime, because her only child, Hodan, had been taken to the police station from the school along with other students. When Hodan reached back home, Kawsar noticed "small bruises on her thighs, four on each leg the size and shape of grapes; she replaced the sheets and squeezed her into her arms, hoping against hope that what she feared hadn't happened" (Mohamed 176). Hodan was very docile and her "magnanimity was perceived as weakness, as bloodlessness by adults and children alike. She was cowardly, 'not right', they said" (181). One day, Hodan left the home and did not return for ninety-two days.



After two weeks, “she took a can of gasoline and a box of matches into the bathroom and set herself on fire” (185). After that, Kawsar lived alone in her house surrounded by a fruitful orchard which she cherished with utmost care.

One of the issues to be discussed in connection with the reading of Somalia history is refugee camps. After the civil wars many people fled to neighbouring countries and the remaining lot took shelter in refugee camps run by the international agencies. But the refugee camps also became conflict zones. Jennifer Hyndman in “Refugee Camps as Conflict Zones: The Politics of Gender” gives a picture of the refugee camps functioning in Africa. Most of the refugee camps are governed by UN agencies and are funded by external economies of international agencies. Based on the treaties of international relations, the government has to sanction such camps. The refugees and local population are always in conflict in matters of sharing resources, issues of unfair treatment and political instability. In Kenya’s Northeast Province, where a history of systematic political and economic marginalization includes banditry and sexual assault, widespread insecurity has increased with the temporary settlement of more than 125,000 refugees; mainly refugees from Somalia. Women and girls who leave the camps in search of firewood or any other fuel with which to cook are at risk of being attacked (193). Given the considerable size of the camps, with a total of more than one hundred thousand residents, and the semi-arid environment in which they are situated, it is not unusual for women to cover up to 30 kilometers (round trip) to get wood. The types of food items provided by donor countries make firewood an essential commodity. Whereas the indigenous

economy of most refugees prior to their displacement revolved around livestock (including a diet of meat and milk), the camp rations generally consist of wheat flour, sorghum, corn, corn-soy blend, or occasionally rice as the staple food item. All of these require wood and water to prepare, both of which are in limited supply. Collecting both wood and water is the duty of women according to the gender division of labour among the Somali refugees. Women and girls are thus vulnerable to attacks by so-called bandits when they leave the camps (198). The conflict at home may force a woman to flee her house and finally reach the refugee camp where she may emerge as a leader and decision maker—say, as a health professional. Often male refugee elders will include one or two women on various committees that meet with humanitarian organizations, not because the women contribute to the conversation, but because the male elders know that the institutional culture of organizations with which they must work requires it. Even if she becomes part of the decision making body, her life in the camp is equally troublesome and filled with hardships. Conflict and displacement often destabilize social relations, and it is possible that this person could be at risk (200). Sexual coercion, torture, and rape are relatively common occurrences in conflict zones. Though refugee camps are recognized places of asylum for people fleeing persecution, they can also be unstable environments where residents are susceptible to sexual and physical violence. The arrival and temporary settlement of thousands of refugees has exacerbated widespread insecurity in Kenya, where a history of systematic economic marginalization includes banditry. The presence of the new population has created new tension and given rise to more insecurity by theft and other criminal activities. After nightfall, unarmed households—

especially those known to be headed by women—have been the easy targets of bandits from within the camp itself (204). The stigma related to rape within Somali culture is severe. A system of blood money, referred as *diya*, is often invoked when accepted codes of behaviour among Somalis are violated, as in the case of rape. The family of a raped woman might seek compensation from the family of the culprit in the form of cash or other assets, such as livestock. Many of the Somalis affected would prefer to settle these matters out of public purview, through more discreet agreements of compensation, usually between the men in the families affected by the woman's rape (206).

Deqo is a ten year old refugee girl who was taken to the cell by the army along with the protestors. The cell is a refuge for the prostitutes and the destitute. Deqo hears from the inmates of the cell that her mother left her in the camp soon after the delivery. Thereafter, she was cared by the nurses of the Red Cross and the nurses gave the name Deqo to the child. She knew nothing more about her parents or about the family name or the clan or community. It was discussed in the cell that the child was the daughter of a whore, a term she never understood at that tender age. She was called Deqo Wareego meaning 'wandering Deqo' (Mohamed 69). But she sometimes introduced herself as Deqo Red Cross, as she was delivered in the clinic of the Red Cross. She was somehow trying to associate herself with some other people—trying to have an identity for herself. In the refugee camp, which "housed fifty two orphans and strays" (71), she had a friend called Anab Hirsi Mattan and she called Deqo as Deqo Wareego Hirsi Mattan; "they were new-found sisters, thrown together like leaves in a storm"

(71). Deqo was trying to establish an identity for herself. Her desire to identify herself with some clan or community or any reputable name can be noticed in her self-addressing as 'Deqo Red Cross'. She had many bitter experiences in the refugee camp. Some of the refugee girls were selected to perform a dance during the welcoming ceremony of General Haaruun. During the rehearsal, Deqo could not follow the fast steps and she made some mistakes. The trainer did not show any mercy even to the children. For her mistakes she was scolded and beaten. It was then Kawsar interfered and received her portion of punishment. Deqo escaped from there to the freedom of the outer world. Soon she realized that the world outside the camp was no way better.

When poverty strikes the nation, people will think of doing anything to make a living. The male members in the family are either in the prison or in the army; so they are away from the home. Situations of this kind force women to take up the responsibility of looking after the other dependent members in the family. This was the condition in Somalia during the military rule. So, women were forced to take up flesh trade. Deqo, the child who escaped from the dance performance got a consoling stay in the company of a few harlots. The names of the whores were so strange: Karl Marx, Stalin and China. Asked about the name, Karl Marx said; "Because I have shared and shared and shared until there is nothing left to give" (90). The other two names were also explained by her: "Stalin is named after *Jaalle* Stalin of the Russians for her brutality, and China is a favourite of the coolies" (90). The names with which they identified themselves revealed their personality in this trade. Living with them and doing

the washing and cleaning, Deqo learned the type of customers approaching each woman:

The younger, smartly dressed men go to Nasra, the middle aged husbands hiding their faces behind sunglasses to Stalin, the drunks and gangster types to China, and the humble workers to Karl Marx. Nasra complains that there are only one or two customers willing to brave the curfew most nights and they are China's type rather than hers. Once upon a time they had journalists, and businessmen with dollars in their pockets, she said, rather than hawkers, drunkards and criminals. (104)

The poverty of the country is reflected in their field of work as well. The life and feelings of a sex worker are well explained in the words of Nasra, who became so close to Deqo:

'Who would have said my life would come to this? I'm clever, you know. I'm not a drunk like China or illiterate like Karl Marx. I could have been someone. Once you do this it's like you can never get out, never be anything else. I go outside and people look at me as if I'm a ghost walking around in the daytime.'

'... and I feel as if I have nothing left out there. Why am I even telling you this?' ... 'I don't feel like a real person. I have no family, no friends, no husband, no children. Every day I open my eyes and wonder why I should bother getting up, or eating, or earning another shilling. No one would miss me, in fact my mother would be happy to hear that I have

died, she would clap her hands and say that her shame has been lifted.’

(105)

The depth of the emotions revealed through these words show the agonizing life of a prostitute. The political systems ignore the cry of the sex workers. The situations force them to continue the work which they hate the most. Even though these women are surrounded by many men, they crave for love and affection; they feel lonely. Their lives reveal that such work does not give happiness or establish an identity. So, prostitution causing from poverty in the society, is a systemic violence. In the context of globalization and military rule in Somalia, this form of systemic violence is increasing day by day.

Deqo got full support and nourishment from these women. But she was also considered the next victim to embrace their profession. The moment she realized that she too would become like one of her protectors, and when there was such an attempt by Mustafa, one of the acquaintances of these women, she ran away from there. Moving in the crowd, Deqo noticed three dead bodies being brought in a truck. “Around each of their necks is a board with ‘NFM’ written on it in red ink. The soldiers seated around the bodies look like hunters posing with the wild animals they have caught . . .” (118). The soldiers were made to act in favour of the authority; for that they had to keep aside their feelings for the other. An enemy was like a wild animal to be fought with. The members of the National Freedom Movement resisted the rule of the military regime under the President. Seeing the situation Deqo felt a sense of insecurity both inside and outside. But finally she made a family in the Ethiopian refugee camp. Referring to Kawsar

and Filsan, Deqo told the officer that her grandmother and mother were waiting outside the camp and they needed help (336). Thus the orphan child Deqo compensated the loss of a family which she did not enjoy all through her life.

Filsan, the army lady, is very strict in all what she is assigned with. She is very careful in discharging her duties. The higher officials use their power and position to torture and misbehave with the subordinates. In the military field, this kind of harassment is so common because the low ranking officials have to obey the higher officials in order to continue in the service or to avoid punishments. But, Filsan never wanted to negotiate with her General Haaruun. Once, there was an attempt from the General to assault her in the hotel. She feels the incident as an experience faced by many women: “Filsan’s face burns hot, bringing tears to her eyes. She rushes away before they roll down, back to her corner as the lamps and chandeliers are lit across the room. She straightens her back and stands tall. Even in her uniform they see nothing more than breasts and a hole. He knows who her father is but still parades her like a prostitute” (36).

On their way back from the hotel, Filsan was offered a lift in his car. In the car, the General misbehaved with her. She resisted the attempt and hit on the chest of the General. As a result, she was left half way in a deserted land. She was mentally broken when she had to face such a situation from someone, who is her superior, and whom she considered as a fatherly figure. Since her father was also in the army, she identified Haaruun with her father. It was immediately after this incident that Filsan went to the police station to investigate Kawsar on the public disturbance she caused in the Hargeisa

stadium. Her shocking experience with the General prompted Filsan to be merciless towards Kawsar during the interrogation. Kawsar was falsely accused of trying to assault the members of the *Guddi*. Filsan suspected Kawsar to be a supporter of NFM as she had been fined for listening to the NFM radio. The responses Kawsar made to the questions irritated Filsan and she beat her:

The blows come one after the other. The first to her ear as loud as a wave hitting a rock, then to her temple, cheek, neck. . . . A swirl of sound and sight engulfs her until a punch to the chest knocks her from the chair onto the cement floor. Landing on her hip, Kawsar hears a crack beneath her and then feels a river of pain swelling up from her throat, obstructing her breath. (45-46)

She was so rude with Kawsar that she broke the latter's hip-bone in the interrogation. When the investigation was over Kawsar could not move from the floor. Though she made an attempt to move, her palms were clammy and she lost her grip. Nadifa narrates her condition: "Kawsar licks her upper lip and tastes more blood. She rubs a hand under her nose; it comes away red" (46).

In the novel, there is no mention of Filsan's mother. It is stated that she was brought up by her father. Being part of the army, he was strict with his daughter. Thus, Filsan might not have experienced an affectionate behaviour from her father. This childhood formation made her very dutiful and stubborn in her attitudes. She felt proud of having become an army



officer herself. She used her father's name to get an identity in the army, though her father was suspended and he was at home. Even though she used her father's identity while she was assaulted by the General in the car, the reply she received was, "You think your father doesn't do this to girls he meets?" (38). So, the comment reveals that her father also did not possess a good moral sense. The situations arising in an insecure society negatively affect the lives of children. When children miss a good childhood, they develop behavioural problems. In the field of family violence, abusive parenting is a major area to be focused because children suffer within the very context that is expected to affectively support and protect them. M. Angeles Cerezo in "Parent-Child Conflict, Coercive Family Interaction, and Physical Child Abuse" observes that children who are victims of their parents' chronic aggression, besides being physically threatened and harmed, are under severe psychological stress due to their affective bond with, and their physical dependency on, the perpetrator (9).

It is a common tendency among the human beings to repay the tortures and bad experiences they have received. The persons within the army function with the principle of violence. It was in line with that, Filsan Adan Ali interrogated Kawsar in connection with the trouble she had created during the parade in the stadium. When Kawsar gave very bold unexpected answers Filsan unleashed physical tortures on the old lady leaving her hip-bone broken. Filsan's pent up frustrations and vengeance towards the general found a vent in these activities. Her reaction could also be an act of appeasing the authority or might be

an act done out of the fear of the authority. Whatever was the reason, we see the acts of violence penetrating from one mind to the other; the wounded mind wounds the other mind to feel the healing within. At a later stage, Filsan ran away from the military camp and reached Kawsar's house with a remorseful mind. She helped Kawsar to flee to a safer place by pulling her wheelbarrow.

With the arrival of liberal economy people left their traditional way of generating income. The desire for leading a western style of life forced the youth to abandon agriculture. The need for more money tempted them to leave the place and work somewhere outside. As a result, the local economy suffered and there was scarcity of food materials. In an economically exhausted country, price hike became a major problem adding up to the already existing struggles of the citizens. Nurto, the assistant of Kawsar during her bedridden stage, was suspected of telling lies when she said that a kilogram of tomato had cost hundred and fifty shillings. Kawsar thought the girl was lying because "one month ago a bag of tomatoes cost eighty shillings" (Mohamed 142). Annoyed by the questioning, Nurto said; "Believe what you like. I was lucky to even buy the rice before it was sold out. People were fighting over the last few bags, punching and kicking each other. God above knows that I am telling the truth" (142). The situation was such that people didn't get enough to eat. The government reduced the subsidy or even took away the subsidy for certain essential commodities to avail loan from other nations. Corruption was also at play in the nation. The need for money turned the mind into taking bribe and doing corruption. The food items given freely in the refugee camp were not properly utilized; on the contrary they

were sold out in the market by the government officials. Nadifa narrates the situation; “The shops are bare as the subsidized rice and flour have disappeared to allow the government to obtain more foreign loans; instead of home-grown maize and sorghum, sacks of USAID donations smuggled in from the refugee camps are on sale in the market at ridiculous prices” (150).

When the public systems function as agents of violence, women and children suffer the most. In the novel, Nadifa has given importance to the lives of women. Her concern was to show the lives of women in troubles. Many of the historical narrations usually high light the lives of the people in general or a particular society, clan or community. Here, Nadifa has no such concerns of showing the fall of a culture or a clan. Women as such are the victims of the social evil of civil war; they have their own problems of existence. While highlighting the destruction caused by war and conflicts, usually the representation given to the problems of women is negligible. Through this novel, Nadifa Mohamed really showed her-story of Somalia instead of his-story. In the modern world the normal life of women is filled with severe problems. The troubles of women increased with the advent of globalization. As a system, followed by many nations, globalization is causing more trouble. In countries where people are governed by undemocratic leaders, the condition is worse. The study of this novel affirms the presumption that military dictatorship is a form of systemic violence.

The army shot the rebels dead and looted all their belongings. The military was an agent of the President in safeguarding power, not the lives of

people. Any voice that rises against the political system is silenced by violence and suppressed through aggression. Thus, the army and the police become the agents of violence and aggression. As long as the governing system wants to establish its identity, it has to use force. In that sense, any established system promotes violence in its very existence.

The systemic violence of the established system prevails in every society. The people in authority have to use force to enforce law and order in the society. As a part of the enforcement system, even for the silliest reasons, people are tortured, taken captive, or put into prisons. The agents who enact this forced order have no concern for the perpetrators or the trespassers. The gender, age and health of the infringers and the reasons for the infringement are never considered while enforcing law on them. This kind of violence becomes an approved violence and no one feels questioning such happenings. In such cases, the victims' claims are ignored because a greater cause is given importance. Thus, in order to protect the system, a few others have to suffer; their rights have to be sacrificed; they have to undergo suffering and torture. This reality is presented in *The Orchard of Lost Souls*. The protestors of the refugee camp are taken to the police station. Among them the majority are women—the loose women in the society—and the orphan children, both girls and boys. Their needs are not addressed; the causes of their pathetic plight are never interrogated. No one wants to know why a woman chooses the profession of prostitution. It has become part of the social system without being labelled as unjust and violent. Even in cases of prostitution, the title of “a person of loose morals” is given to woman only.

Again, no one wants to know why there is unrest among the inhabitants of the refugee camp. In the midst of war and turmoil, people are forced to flee the country. At the end of the novel, Kawsar, Filsan and Deqo find shelter in the refugee camp in the Ethiopian wilderness. Though Kawsar had a good house to live in, the situation was so bad that there was no one to help her. The army had wreaked havoc in the neighbourhood and all her friends fled from the country. In conflict zones, the problem of survival guilt haunts the survivors, especially women. It is a sense of guilt for being “alive” while their loved ones, husbands, relatives, and friends in the war zones are in life-threatening situations. Even when women have been fortunate to come across people who treat them in a friendly way, as persons who have individual histories, needs, and interests, they often confront feelings of guilt. It is a common feeling among refugees, and represents “the psychological result of leaving others behind while they themselves were escaping” (Korac 259). They live with a disturbed mind. But, the desire for survival makes them forget the past and cover up the feelings of guilt by rendering support to each other. In this novel, without the support and guidance of any male characters, women characters themselves find a way of survival. Each one gets an identity by the mutual support and joined effort. Even when the systems continue with their self-appeasing acts, and never bother about the lives of the underprivileged, the mutual support given by women brings hope for their future life.

The systems prevailing in a country support the rich and the powerful. The rich get the power by exploiting the weak, the poor and the illiterate. The

developed nations cannot claim to be powerful without the richness of the underdeveloped or developing nations. The African nations are rich in many aspects. The phenomenon of globalization and the discourses on racism have generated a feeling of superiority in the Americans and the whites. The culture of the dominant nation is practiced in other nations sidelining the richness of that culture. The humanness of people is ignored and justice is denied in globalization, dictatorship and racism. Thus, they are forms of objective violence.

## Chapter 5

### **Violence of Fundamentalism, Terrorism, Dictatorship and Patriarchy: Narratives of Women from Afghanistan and Iraq**

According to Žižek, fundamentalism and terrorism, based on religious ideologies, are the recent forms of systemic violence seen in many parts of the world. Žižek speaks about fundamentalism of a particular section of Islam, as a reaction against the recent trends happening in the capitalist and the western world. The Muslim communities could not easily accommodate the new modes of narration and myth circulated in the European countries. The impact of modernization was so direct that the Muslim societies were exposed to this impact directly, without a protective shield or adequate delay. Thus, their symbolic universe was disturbed much more severely. In order to stand up to the time and to keep up their identity, they have to resort to an immediate reaction (Žižek, V 82). Thus “the only way for some of these societies to avoid breakdown was to erect in panic the shield of ‘fundamentalism,’ that psychotic-delirious-incestuous reassertion of religion as direct insight into the divine Real, with all the terrifying consequences that such a reassertion entails, and including the return with a vengeance of the obscene superego divinity demanding sacrifices” (83). The resentment and intolerance shown to the non-believers by the fundamentalists develop into racist, religious, sexist fanatic activities (85). Unlike the true fundamentalists, the pseudo-fundamentalists are deeply bothered,

intrigued and fascinated by the sinful life of the non-believers. The terrorist fundamentalists lack true conviction—their violent outbursts are proof of it (86).

Žižek, in *Parallax View*, says, “the true danger of fundamentalism lies not in the fact that it poses a threat to secular scientific knowledge, but in the fact that *it poses a threat to authentic belief itself*” (348). They live in a fantasy world, where belief is defined according to their interest. Žižek clearly gives the nature of fundamentalism:

Fundamentalism thus concerns neither belief as such nor its content; what distinguishes a ‘fundamentalist’ is the way he relates to his beliefs; its most elementary definition should focus on the formal status of belief. In “Faith and Knowledge,” Derrida explores the inherent link between these two terms: knowledge always relies on a preceding elementary act of faith (in the symbolic order, in the basic rationality of the universe), while religion itself relies increasingly on scientific knowledge, although it disavows this reliance (the use of modern media for the propagation of religions, religious exploitation of the newest scientific advances, and so on). (Žižek, *PV* 350)

The plight of women everywhere is the same. When the laws are made for men, whether it is political, religious or social, the end sufferers are women. While constituting a law, it is not the human concerns but the self-motivated male concerns are taken care of. In such a society, women are just a living object at the service of men. Further aggravated would be the condition of women in a fundamentalist society, where even the moral or religious laws are



opportunistically ignored or interpreted for the comforts of men. The passions, feelings, ideas, desires and needs of women are thwarted away; women live with her desecrated and devoured body, after satisfying men in her youthful days as a pleasing wife. The secluded well of their life is filled with the unfulfilled aspirations of their mind and with memories of their bruised existence. Both the subjective and the objective violence—the terms used by Slavoj Žižek—are very much rooted in many of the societies; but unfortunately our attention falls on the concrete expressions of violence and fails to see the inherent agents of systemic violence. It is basically in the process of establishing or maintaining a system that the subjective violence takes place. An established system, in order to fulfill its objectives, whether it be to eradicate violence or to establish peace, turns to brutal methods and thus the system itself contradicts its objectives; the system itself becomes a form of systemic violence. All the forms of violence against women and the gender discrimination are in a way caused by the forms of systemic or symbolic violence. In Afghanistan, the rule of Taliban is a form of systemic violence and the major victims of this fundamentalism are women. In Jean Sasson's work, *For the Love of a Son*, we get a clear image of the gender discrimination in the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.

Žižek analyzes the nature of violence found in fundamentalism. As a political and religious influence in the region, the terrorist groups imposed more restrictions in the lives of people. The major threat the Arab world faced in the context of globalization was regarding the freedom given to women in the society. The Islamic religious leaders did not want their women to enjoy the

freedom the western women enjoyed. Therefore, the orthodox religious leaders insisted on continuing with the old rules, and to restrict the entry of western culture, imposed more laws on women's lives. In Afghanistan, it is women's sexuality that has been targeted. For example, a kidnapping or elopement could result in the woman being half-buried and shot by her father or male relative, while a woman showing her hand outside her *burqa* may have had it cut off. Some families left Afghanistan because their daughters were growing into beautiful young women, who might be punished through no fault of their own. Women's youth was, and will remain, a cause for sexual attacks in Afghanistan. Under all the Afghan regimes, women have left due to sexual attacks. Whether under communist or Islamic regimes, rape has been consistently found to accompany conflict in Afghanistan. Ethnic chauvinism and minority status in Afghanistan are related to an increase in the incidence of rape (Hans 238-39). Under each Afghan regime, refugee women were forced to leave the country under certain threat. Inter-ethnic and inter-religious feuds account for most departures. Women at the receiving end of the Mujahideen and Taliban edicts have fled the country because the conservative religious policies have threatened their very being as women. Even a pregnant woman is not allowed to deliver at the hospital as she might not be accompanied by a male guardian. "The Mujahideen were animals, but the Taliban are the devil" (240). Abduction of women by Taliban commanders was so common. Some of them even have ten wives, although Islam allows only four. They had enough food, so it was no trouble for them to maintain such large households or harems. The middle-aged

men picked up very young and nubile girls. The soldiers being not so rich picked them up as prostitutes (240).

The liberal policies adopted by the nations accelerated the pace of restricting human freedom. In the globalization period, Arab men migrated to other countries for job. During this time, women, who were left at home, were prone to various kinds of threatening situations. Women, who were part of traditional extended families, felt isolation and displacement from their homes. This process of transformation and dislocation has created a void in the lives of women; women felt isolated from the linkage of the past and excluded from the promise of a future. The recent developments created nuclear families and many women were single and living alone. Their husbands, children, and extended families were scattered in the United States, Canada, or Austria. Some of them were lucky to be in constant touch with these members, and some received financial support from them. There were also stories of women leaving behind husbands, sons, and daughters. The prolonged absence of loved ones leaves irreparable damage to the psyche and deep internal scars, which seldom heal properly. The trauma of this dislocation in women's lives has created deep psychological and stress disorders. Many women experienced the disintegration of the family and home in exile and realized that controlling this process was beyond their capability (Hans 242). Women did not find an emancipated space for themselves in their own land. Denied their autonomy under the Taliban, they continued to suffer violence at the hands of the state and their communities. The gender based history of Afghanistan during years of conflict raises questions

concerning the relationship between women and the state, processes of social inclusion, and nationalist cultures. Afghan women's need for self-definition and autonomy is for the most part, ignored or utilized for political ends. Women as a category of citizens were denied freedom, power and identity (246).

In Arab world, patriarchal control restricts all the sexual activities of women. They use the term "awra" to denote something shameful especially referring to sexual matters. There are many interpretations depending on context: to the private parts of the body, to the female body as a whole or even to the female voice. For Rita Stephan, the literal translation of the word 'awra' is 'private parts'; it also "symbolizes shame, weakness and immaturity" and can be equated with patriarchal conceptions of the female body as a whole (Stephan 66). In the article "Arab Culture and Writing Women's Bodies," Leila Ahmed translates "'awra' as 'from the root meaning 'blemish', also meaning 'vulnerable' and 'weak'", and "is used in particular to mean those parts of the body that religion requires should be concealed" (54). So, the term operates as a powerful motif for conceptions of female sexuality in traditionally patriarchal arenas of the Arab world, in which female sexuality is deemed a private rather than public matter (Ball 73). The female body and sexuality are considered things to be controlled for the maintenance of dignity and honour. Matters relating to sexual violence are codified as a private matter to be dealt with by the woman's family or husband, rather than to be discussed in the public realm. It is an image that at once points towards the emphasis placed on modesty and bodily cover in Arab Islamic culture. The chaste and honourable female body is constructed as a vessel

of communal and familial standing, in which her husband and family's sense of honour (sharaf) rests upon the woman's sexual behaviour (74).

In *For the Love of a Son*, there are innumerable instances of infringement of women's rights happening in the religiously oriented patriarchal society. Women are restricted both by the patriarchal and religious rules. In the beginning of the novel, the author gives the condition of girls in Afghanistan: "In Afghanistan girls can dream, but only the dreams of boys come true. Boys own the world they live in, while girls are basically servants, compelled to please the men in their families" (Sasson, *FLS* 11). Thinking of the burdens a girl child would bring, most of the parents wish to have a boy child. Parents having a first girl child expect their second child to be a boy. This might have motivated the parents of Maryam Khail to disguise their second child as Yousef Khail and told her to sit and mingle with boys in the primary class. Even as small child, Maryam noticed the discrimination between boys and girls in the school. "Boys were allowed to wear any combination of shorts or long trousers with any clean shirt, but all the girls in the school were required to wear the uniform dress" (17). It was forbidden for girls to pedal a bike or rollerskate, for it would be a scandal if a girl fell and exposed her limbs or her panties. The boys were in the centre stage, while the girls were subservient to the boys. Good and interesting courses were offered to boys, while girls learned stitching or cooking. The parents of girl children are not given respect in Afghanistan. Even the sarcastic remarks from the close relatives "What a pity she wasn't a boy" (20) also compelled the parents of Maryam to bring up their child as a boy. But they could not keep the

secrecy for a long time. In the school, teacher discovered her identity and the humiliation weakened her confidence. Maryam believed that her modern parents could protect her from her fate, but of course she was too young to realize the real implications of being a woman in Afghanistan. What she was to learn was that even the queen could be murdered on a whim by her king husband or even by her father, brother or cousin (21-22).

When the systems consider only the demands of a few in the society, there is injustice and violence. In patriarchy, the needs of women are ignored. Women are not given an identity. The date of birth of Mayana, Maryam's grandmother, was not known as "birth records were not kept on female children" (28). But there was no relaxation given to women in following the laws. Maryam later on realized that Mayana was a victim of husband's or relatives' tortures. Her grandmother was a woman in deep thought, and head bowed; "the grief she had suffered over her lifetime had molded her face into a mask of eternal sadness" (24). She always remained in her room; her eyes remained without expression; lips failed to spread in a smile. "Mayana had been one of the most beautiful girls in the country. But as with any Afghan woman, even the celebrated beauty could not save her from the evil lurking in Afghanistan" (25). She was unable to live with a man whom she loved. She was forced to live with the head of the Khail tribe as his fourth wife. In order to possess Mayana, Ahmed Khail Khan killed the cousin of Mayana with whom her marriage was arranged and his mangled body was stuffed into a bag. "The murder was a harsh reminder that the Khan held undisputed power over his tribe" (32).

The monarch in Afghanistan ruled with undisputed authority. The royals were just as brutal to each other as they were to their subjects. Cruelty was part of the culture, and the punishment for any crime was so merciless and agonizing; “prisoners being fired from cannons, beheading by sabre, live burials, intentional blinding or stoning” (29) and starvation were some of the many brutal methods of punishment. In such a society, there is no wonder if the concerns of women were considered insignificant. Even the legitimate rights were taken away from women. When Ahmed Khail died in a war, his son Shair Khan took charge of the entire family and became the leader of the Khail Tribe. “Although by Sharia law wives should receive their portion at the time of their husband’s death, in Afghanistan men often ignore the Islamic law when it comes to females, rarely allowing surviving widows and daughters to handle their own wealth” (43).

The religious creeds always stood for showing pity and kindness to the suffering people. The interpretations of the sacred words were in favour of the patriarchy. So, the religion served as a tool to frighten the faithful women. They were taught that if someone questioned or opposed the leaders they were moving against the will of God. So, no one spoke against the cruelties of the religious leaders or the male members in the family. After the death of her husband, Mayana and her children were given less food and more works. A widow had no role in the family affairs; she was considered another servant in the house. Immediately after the death of her husband, Mayana, the lady of the galah, became “a lowly servant, washing and cooking vegetables, scrubbing floors, milking cows or whatever else her stepson and his wives ordered her to do” (44).

After all such works, they did not get any tasty food: “They were permitted tea, but no sugar to put in their tea. They were allowed bread, but no butter or jam to spread on the bread. Grandmother’s hungry daughters pleaded for small chunks of cheese, anything to relieve the monotony of their diet, but their pleas were ignored” (46). Mayana’s daughters were not given the chance to marry young and rich men. Her six-year-old son, Ajab Khail, was sent away to a military boarding school. Shair Khan arranged marriage for Mayana with an old rich man. In protest of this arrangement, she attempted to poison herself. When the attempt failed, she was ordered to be stoned. In Afghanistan and under Islamic law, stoning is a legally sanctioned form of punishment for the sin of adultery. But Shair, the Tribal head, made his own law. The cruelty of stoning was not only a punishment but also it was an occasion of enjoyment for the executioners. In order to enjoy the cruelty of stoning, stones are selected to inflict injury rather than a quick and merciful death. The executioners are discouraged from making any lethal hits on the head at all, at least not until the victim has undergone sufficient pain and suffering. “The victim’s screams of anguish as she pleads for mercy, combined with the stoning cheerleader’s shouts, will drive the stoners into a frenzy, disregarding all personal knowledge of the victim and reducing her to an object of sin and hate” (55). When all arrangements were made, an elderly servant who was loyal to Ahmed Khan and his family, informed Ajab, Mayana’s son, about the whole incident. The timely intervention of Ajab saved the entire family and they were allowed to stay in the galah.



Shair Khan ruled the tribe and the family like a despot. When Ajab, his half-brother, returned after his studies in India and England, he heard that his three daughters had died of tuberculosis. No one dared to inquire the real cause of their death, because “they were only female, of no account, loved only by their mother and brother” (65). Ajab knew that his sisters were in good health. But, to avoid further tortures, he simply accepted his brother’s version regarding the death of his beloved sisters. Mayana, their mother, felt survival guilt. “She hated staying alive while her daughters rotted in the ground” (66). She felt that it was her responsibility to protect her daughters. But now, there was nothing she could do other than mourn the loss and live with a feeling of guilt. Thus, the brutality of the ruler not only destroyed his own sisters for wealth, but also caused suffering to the other surviving female members.

The tyrant Khail tribal leader Shair Khan was orthodox in his attitudes and jealous towards his brother. When Ajab decided to marry an educated woman, someone equal to him, a man’s friend and a woman who would be his partner in every aspect of life (68), Shair could never think of such a woman to be his brother’s wife. Shair found a woman for Ajab and told him: “She can read. She can even write, a little. But she has no interests other than to be an obedient wife and a good mother” (83). An Afghan leader never thought of women to be equal to men; the good wife always obeyed the orders of her husband and cared for his children. Ajab went against the wish of Shair by marrying Sharifa Hassen, a Tajiki woman. Khail tribe belonged to Pashtun ethnic group who were rivals to the Tajiks. The Hassen family was liberal and gave freedom to their girl children.

During the wedding ceremony, both men and women from the Hassen family sang and danced together. Shair became furious and separated them. After the wedding Ajab and Sharifa were given an apartment over the main gate. The life in Khan family was troublesome for Sharifa. Shair Khan's wives and children tortured her in every way possible. Shair's sons collected the clothes of Sharifa from the cloth baskets with the help of his servants and shredded her clothes with knives. To harm her further, many dolls, pierced with many pins, were hidden in the corners of her apartment. It was a form of witchcraft, though Islam forbid such practices of trying to reach the dark spirits (94). When it comes to personal gain or torturing someone who is considered an enemy or someone who is against the tradition, even the religious believes were ignored.

Ajab and Sharifa could not tolerate the comments by the family members and other relatives about the birth of two girl children. "Most men in Afghanistan are contemptuous of daughters claiming that 'The birth of a girl is a curse straight from God himself!' Male children, however are welcomed as little gods" (100-01). Sharifa herself told her husband to marry another woman so that she could give him a son. Even though Sharifa was an educated woman, she could not escape the cultural expectations rampant in Afghanistan (101). It was so difficult for a single family to fight against the cultural norms set by the patriarchal system.

In Afghanistan, "tribal law takes precedence over civil law, as does religious law. The Sharia court and the Islamic police have the authority to enforce certain law, most particularly family law. Yet, when tribal law confronts

Sharia law, most Afghans will follow tribal law” (116-17). Islam asserts that men and women are equal before God, and gives women various rights such as the right to inherit, the right to choose their own partner in marriage and the right to work. But, Afghan men ignore these rights and focus on sections of Islamic Sharia law that keep women under men’s control. In 1926 when Amir Amanullah became king, he introduced various social reforms. He supported education for women, and introduced European dress and business with outside firms. This created turmoil among clerics and tribal leaders. Amir had to cancel the proclamations of reforms, before he was forced to flee. The fundamental nature of the patriarchal and religious system was unquestionably preserved for male section in the society. Many tribal chiefs and clerics began to take control over the situation and unearthly chaos reigned in Afghanistan. In the Sharia court system, it takes two women to testify, to equal the testimony of one man. In divorce cases, the man always wins. “With so many laws from too many groups refusing to bend to government laws, it was challenging for any government in Afghanistan to govern properly, and impossible for women to have a voice” (117), with mutual hatreds erupting into a dozen internal conflicts going on at once.

Another system practiced in Afghanistan was that “the brother of a dead man has full authority over his sibling’s wife and children from the moment of passing” (140). This practice has made the lives of the widows and her children miserable. They were treated as servants and very often, such children were

married to old men according to the demands of their father's brother. This unjust practice takes away the rights of women.

Domestic violence was part of the patriarchal system. Jean Sasson narrates the life of Amina, a neighbour to Maryam, who was beaten by her husband and thus took shelter in Maryam's house. Whenever Amina raised her voice, she was considered insane and was kept in the mental asylum where the staff did not allow her to take a bath for six months. Many of the women were kept locked inside the room and they were rarely seen outside. In the words of Maryam: "Our culture demands that men rule. Our culture demands that cruel men not be punished. Our culture demands that women are faulted for every bad thing that occurs in their lives" (156-57). In another occasion, she remarked: "As male Afghan fetuses grow arms and legs in the womb, their brain tissues are already busy sprouting prejudice and discrimination against women. Who could change the attitude of such men? Not even the Communists would be successful on that point" (189-90). These words show the resistance and dissatisfaction of women against the male dominated social system.

The story of hardships and tortures in Maryam's life began with her marriage with Kaiss, a man fifteen years senior to her. The nature of Kaiss can be understood from these words: "Kaiss jumped at me the moment we walked into his apartment, ripping at my clothes and pushing me into the bedroom. . . . Kaiss was so rough with me that first night of married bliss that I ended up in a hospital emergency room" (264). Maryam was not allowed to go to college for studies. When she resisted, Kaiss sprang at her, grabbing her head with both hands,

squeezing her skull until she waited to hear a deadly crack (266). When she became pregnant, Kaiss did not allow her to see a doctor. He told her: ““You will not go, Maryam. My mother never went to see a doctor. After nine months, she went into her room and gave birth. The next day she was back in her normal routine. You will do the same as my mother!”” (268). Man uses his voice as a force to restrict woman. Woman’s voice becomes powerless in front of man’s voice. Woman becomes afraid of the bossing nature of man’s voice. Certain words promote violence. The meaning and the tone of language inflict mental pain in the hearer. Thus, language functions as a frightening agent in patriarchal discourse. Though there was such frightening command from Kaiss, Maryam took courage to see a doctor. After her arrival from the hospital, Kaiss told her: ““If it is a girl, Maryam, I hope it dies in your stomach. I only want a son. . . . Did you hear me? I will only accept a son”” (268-69). It is strange to notice that in a patriarchal society, men want to marry beautiful women; but they do not want to bring up girl children in their family. The aversion and animosity towards a girl child is a common attitude followed in male dominated society.

One day Maryam went with her son Duran to the common swimming pool wearing a swimming suit. When Kaiss noticed it, he called her back to the home and dragged her to the kitchen. This incident is narrated in the words of Maryam:

Kaiss gripped my throat with one hand while he started slashing at my swimsuit with the other. Choking, I gasped as my swimsuit dropped to the floor. I was stripped naked. He placed the sharp edge of the knife firmly

against my neck. . . . He leaned into my face, whispering in his menacing voice, ‘The next time my wife wears a swimsuit in front of other men, I will kill her’. I winced in pain when he deliberately nicked my neck with the sharp blade. I felt blood stream down my neck. Kaiss’s eyes widened in excitement at the sight of blood. (274)

What made Afghan men to be so cruel to their wives was that they very well knew the rulers never undertook any complaint by a woman against her husband. Thus, both the patriarchy and the fundamentalist tribal leadership promoted systemic violence.

The mind of Afghan women was so conditioned that they always took the blame on themselves. Maryam presents the story of Jamila, a young lady, living next door. When Maryam was sixteen years old, she used to see Jamila coming running to her house to escape the beatings of her husband. Being asked about the incidents, Jamila would give false versions of the story; she used to say that the marks on her face or any parts of the body were caused by falling. If at all she agreed that these bruises were caused by her husband, she used to say that it was her fault. It was possible that if her husband knew that Jamila had said anything against him to others, she was sure to receive more severe tortures. The fear of her husband made Jamila to hide the real incidents. Maryam hated such attitudes of Afghan women towards their husbands. “If a woman was beaten up, it was her fault. If a woman was killed, she must have been a prostitute and it must be her own fault. Nothing was the fault of males. Women bore all the blame” (278). The practice of blaming and targeting women for all the evils happening in life is a

form of symbolic violence. After a few minutes, Jamila's husband came to call her back. Now, with the support of Maryam and her family around, she told him that Maryam was going to take her to the women's centre and report him for all the abuse he had done to her. But, the response her husband gave was a heavy blow on her face (279). Maryam insisted her to go and report in the women's centre. But Jamila told another reason for taking the blame for herself and not acting against her husband: "“No. No. I cannot go. He *will* kill me. Then what will happen to my little children?”" (280). Most of the women suffered the tortures of their husbands because of this reason: they feared that their children would become helpless. The attachment women have towards their children is a compelling force to endure struggles from their husband. The patriarchal and the religious discourse regarding the stereotype behaviour of women compel women to become submissive to all kinds of cruelties and injustice.

When the brutalities of her husband was unbearable, Maryam decided to move against her husband and began a new era of fight for women's cause. As a first step, for all the tortures of Kaiss, Maryam decided to divorce her husband. Divorce was unthinkable in Afghan culture and everyone in the family wanted the woman to accept the miserable lot and to endure the abuse in silence. Though her father agreed to her for her divorce, the tricky promising words of Kaiss changed the mind of her father later. Maryam, a mentally strong woman, expresses the plight of every Pashtun woman:

I was united with every Pashtun woman who had ever lived. We had no rights, no power. We were too feeble to defend ourselves. Grandmother

Mayana had always told me that a woman must be obedient, devoted and self-sacrificing to be worthy of her Pashtun Muslim heritage. Never once had I agreed with her, but for all my fighting talk as a child, now that I was a woman, I was weak too. (282-83)

Her father told her to forget everything and to begin afresh. When she knew that there was not even her educated father to support her, she felt her Afghan upbringing had stripped her of her sense of self-worth (283). She continued to live with Kaiss for some more days.

Violence is part of all political systems. People of Afghanistan never had a peaceful life. The communist rule under the Russian officials was as cruel as that of the tribal chiefs or monarchs. At the end of the twentieth century, Afghanistan was under the rule of the most fundamental outfits like the Mujahedin. When the Mujahedin took control of the country, Afghans expected a better ruling. But the situation was worse. In 1996, all the foreign influences were washed away by the Taliban. They had their own interpretation of the Sharia law and imposed a decree, which was against the scholarly interpretation of the Islamic law. Most of the edicts were against the freedom of women. The twenty second chapter of *For the Love of a Son* presents the content of the Taliban law. Women were supposed to remain at home; they were not allowed to work outside or to attend school. Only women who are physicians could go out for the work. If at all a woman wants to go out, she should cover her whole body. Women were no longer allowed to wash their clothes on the banks of the rivers, which they had been doing for a long time. Dancing, even at wedding parties, was forbidden. Music



was banned everywhere; if music cassettes were found, the owner would be arrested and imprisoned. Female doctors were not to treat male patients. Female patients could go only to female doctors. No taxi drivers were allowed to transport women not properly veiled. If a woman was found out alone in the street, her husband would be beaten or imprisoned.

Women's sexuality is most often defined by physical appearance. In Afghan it was so scandalous to show any part of woman's body. Women were supposed to look decent, by wearing loose dress. Tight dress might expose their physical shape. It was not accepted in a traditional Afghan family. One day Maryam was preparing food in the kitchen. Kaiss came there and pinched on her buttocks as hard as she could. As a reason, he said: "'Well, Maryam,' he whispered threateningly, 'I did it because you are wearing tight slacks and your ass looks very sexy'" (283). Thinking that it was a compliment she thanked him. But, before she could move, he grabbed a knife and slit her trousers down and punched on her stomach. He then said: "'Here is my law, Maryam: my wife will not show her butt to other men!' . . . 'God knows how many men thought of sticking their dick in you'" (284). Kaiss used filthy language to control and humiliate Maryam. The use of this kind of language, which forms symbolic violence, is very common in male dominated society.

In the midst of oppositions from her father and relatives, Maryam decided to divorce Kaiss. By this bold step, she "was dealing with a misogynistic tradition that stretched back many generations. Pashtun women never complained, and never divorced their husbands" (306). To avoid the chance of meeting Kaiss,

Maryam moved to California. It was rather easy for her to go with her decision as she was in America. Her father also moved with her. But Kaiss threatened them through the phone. Complaining to the police, they were told that the police could not do anything against verbal threats. They “were frustrated to discover that America’s justice system was splendidly fair for the criminals, but less so for the victim” (291). Kaiss called them again to give consent for divorce on condition that Maryam should not marry again. After the divorce, he also moved to California. Maryam was allowed to have the possession of her son Duran. The court had not yet ruled to give her full custody of her son. Kaiss was allowed by the court to see his son once in a week. During one of such meetings, he took away Duran and fled to Virginia. The love for her child drove Maryam to reach Virginia. There she was under house arrest under the supervision of a friend of Kaiss. This man’s version about Maryam that without supervision, she would abandon her husband and engage in dancing and sex activities, made Kaiss to suspect her further. It is stated: “Most Afghan men are suspicious of females. They believe all women are promiscuous and must be isolated from men who are not of their family or else they will commit the most sexually depraved acts” (294). So, Kaiss secured the apartment with heavy locks, and popped in and out at odd times to make certain that she was not trying to escape (295). Woman is considered an object of pleasure: a property under the possession of her husband to be used for his sexual gratification. The feelings and aspirations of women are never considered in dealing with sexual matters. Patriarchy does not give women their identity as human beings. This is violence in the patriarchal system.

The hypocrisy of men in religious practices is narrated in the following incident. During Ramadan, Maryam was preparing food for her and her son Duran. Noticing this, Kaiss sneered and told her: “Look at you, eating during Ramadan. You are corrupted by the West,” (295). He pushed her and ordered her: “Beer, I want beer. Go to the grocery store and buy me some” (296). She refused his orders saying that it was not allowed to drink beer during Ramadan. He told that he wanted to break the fast with beer. In a low voice she just uttered “hypocrite”. Hearing this word, Kaiss grabbed Maryam and choked her throat. The holy month of Ramadan was intended for self-purification and doing charitable acts. Kaiss did not allow Maryam to go out of the house; but he now wanted her to buy beer for him. It was not possible for him to buy it from the shop, because others would consider him as someone violating the religious practice. Even though he practiced the Ramadan fast, he could not control his desire for beer. A good believer of Islam abstained from all forms of alcohol. Though outwardly he was a pious man, he did not imbibe the spirit of the Ramadan: he blamed his wife; he could not control his anger; he wanted to consume alcohol; he abused and tortured his wife. Under the pretext of Ramadan and other religious practices, men impose more restrictions on women, while they evade such rules. In a fundamentalistic patriarchal society, the restrictions are more severe for women.

After the incident, Maryam sought police assistance. Maryam and her son Duran was taken to the battered women’s shelter and remained there until she could get a restraining order. She continued to get justice for her claims. At last

Kaiss was arrested and two weeks later a hearing was set. At the hearing, Kaiss and his lawyers spun one lie after another. According to them, Maryam was the abuser, and beat Kaiss regularly. Kaiss had never threatened to kill her or to kidnap Duran. Kaiss was a saint and his wife was the real devil (298). This incident shows how even the judiciary supports the arguments of men against his wife. All the systems functioning in the patriarchal system favours men and reiterates the patriarchal discourse that women have to be subordinates to men.

Maryam, along with Duran, moved back to California to live with her father. Kaiss knew that Nadia, Maryam's sister, had a soft corner towards him. Making use of her, Kaiss began to make friendship with other relatives of his wife. Later, during a function at Maryam's house, he behaved as a good man to everyone. Knowing all about Kaiss, Maryam was suspicious of his arrival. She kept Duran close to her in order to avoid abduction. For going to the bathroom, she entrusted her son with her father. After coming out from the bathroom she enquired about her son and her father told her that Kaiss had taken his son out to get him some juice. That was the real opportunity Kaiss was looking for a long time—he took his son away from his mother. The abduction of or custodial interference with children is another form of intimate partner violence. Abductions of children by family members (most often, intimate partners or spouses) account for the vast majority of cases of child abduction. Child abduction is usually referred to as parental kidnapping, and it is defined as the taking, retention or concealment of the child by a parent, other family member, or their agent, in derogation of the custody rights or visitation rights of another

parent or family member” (Hoff 2). There are a number of reasons for a parent to abduct his or her own child. For some parents, abduction is an extension of the battering relationship itself; for others it is an attempt to control the victim or coerce a victim to stay in a relationship by threatening or by actually kidnapping the children (Kurst-Swanger 116). Kaiss applied all these strategies as revenge and as a means to get control over his wife and child.

The opinions of women are most often rejected and ignored in patriarchal society. Many times Maryam had told her father about the intentions of Kaiss and about his cruelties. Even her father turned a deaf ear to her pleas and opinions. It was only to please her father, Maryam agreed to marry Kaiss. He was so particular that his daughter married a Pashtun man. Even though he married a woman outside his tribe, when it came to his daughter, he was adamant. Her father, Ajab, trusted his son-in-law more than he trusted his daughter. Now, it was again, this trust that caused the kidnapping of Duran easy for Kaiss. Other relatives, including her sister, did not believe all that Maryam told about Kaiss. According to patriarchal system, women are supposed to adjust or suffer certain amount of beatings and abuse. So, when a woman accuses her husband, no one takes it seriously—not even her parents or siblings. In such context, it is difficult to get justice for women’s causes.

Years later, against the promise she made to Kaiss and against the wish of her father, Maryam married Khalid, an affectionate man from Saudi Arabia. Other relatives of Maryam were also skeptical about the new relationship because they knew it would be more difficult for Maryam to live in Saudi Arabia. The

rules in Saudi Arabia were more orthodox than those in many other Arabian countries. However, unlike many Saudi men, Khalid was respectful towards women. When she became pregnant, he accompanied her to the hospital and cared for all her needs. He was not particular about a boy child. However, one of Khalid's female cousins said: "Maryam, don't ever wish for a girl! Girls are no good. Wish for a boy. Having boys is the only way for you to get respect from the family" (Sasson, *FLS* 356). In a patriarchal system, even women are made to believe that boys are better than girls are, and the identity of a woman as a mother comes from giving birth to a son. This thought takes away the confidence of a woman after she giving birth to a daughter; an irrecoverable wound is created in her mind. The discourse circulating in the society regarding the birth of a girl child is a form of symbolic violence.

Maryam was fortunate enough for having given birth to a son. Again, she was blessed, because, her beloved husband allowed her to name their son Duran, to repair the loss of her first son Duran, who is now living with his father in Afghanistan. When everything was going on in favour of Maryam, with the help of Khalid, she made attempts to find out her lost son. Finally, she succeeded to find him and made a few phone calls with him. She wanted to convince him that she was searching for him all these years. Her son was made to believe by his father that her mother divorced his father and sold him to his father for \$ 5000 (389). Maryam wanted to relieve his son from the clutches of his father. In order to possess her son, Maryam made arrangements for DNA test, to be conducted in Peshawar. Duran also came to Peshawar with five smugglers, as he did not have a

passport. The test result proved that Duran was her son. Now the American Embassy provided him with passport and they fled to Virginia. From there Duran made many calls to his father. Maryam entrusted Duran with her sister Nadia. But the frequent quarrels between them compelled Nadia to call Maryam to take him back. After a few weeks, Big Duran arrived in Jeddah (416). All the efforts Maryam made to make him happy and friendly did not produce result. He was hostile to Little Duran. Maryam's maid saw Big Duran's hands wrapped round Little Duran's neck. Maryam herself received a hit from him with the receiver of the telephone (424). When things were beyond control, Khalid insisted Maryam to send him to his father. Finally, he was sent to Frankfurt. Later Maryam realized that all what Big Duran did was a planning of his father. After reaching Frankfurt Duran called her and told that he was her enemy number one. Adding to that, he said that he regretted for one thing. Thinking that he had changed his mind and wanted to express his apology she asked: "What do you regret, my love?" (435) Maryam heard the most agonizing and unimaginable words that a mother could hear from her most beloved son: "Oh, I regret that I didn't rape you. I masturbate with you in my mind every night" (435). After that Maryam thought: "All would have been well had I only had a daughter. 'A daughter, Allah! Why didn't you give me a daughter?'" (436).

Analyzing the behaviour of Big Duran, Maryam knew that her son learned all these expressions and manners from his father who was also behaving the same way. From Kaiss, Maryam knew that he was ill-treated during his childhood. Kaiss' father was so cruel towards his wife. When Kaiss was four

years old, his mother had infected tuberculosis. Therefore, his father took her “away from her children to a family farm where she was locked away in a small dark room. The poor woman was fed only once a day, and had to live in that tiny room without access to a toilet. Her disease only worsened with time and eventually she died” (312-13). Kaiss had never seen his father showing respect to his mother or any other women. He continued to follow his father’s path by being cruel to Maryam, his wife. Now, his son, Duran, having deprived of his mother’s love and being ill-treated by his father, never learnt to respect women. His formation told him to consider woman as an object for sexual pleasure—even his mother was not an exception. He was a real product of patriarchy, to unleash violence against entire women.

At the end of the work, Sasson expresses her concern for the lives of women living in Afghanistan through the mouth of Maryam:

We all struggled but we were weak and fell back into resignation. The forces we were struggling against were not like swimming against the tide . . . but more like swimming against a tsunami. We were swimming against an ancient culture which demands that women always submit, that women always stay weak. So I end where I began . . . dreaming a dream that can never come true. For wherever I am in the world, in my mind I am still in Afghanistan, and in Afghanistan only the dreams of boys can come true. (437)

In the centres of the globalizing world system, there are significant zones where violence is latent, poised to be triggered by escalating conflicts (Friedman



30). Afghanistan has become such a conflict zone with the emergence of Taliban. The lifestyle of the Afghans began to change with the new governments taking the control of the land. The religious leaders feared a change leading to the liberal practice of religious rules. This fear forced them to impose more stringent rules upon the people, especially upon women. Thus, Taliban took the role of the guardian of religious dogmas.

Terrorism has added many conflicts in the twentieth century. Terrorists use violence as a weapon to instill fear or to influence political action or to promote a political or religious cause. They focus not an opposing army but a civilian population and try to influence them with frightening actions (Kittleson 132). In terrorism, comparatively a small group of people, through violent acts, try to pressurize the government to achieve their goal. Their actions create a huge impact in the society. "Terrorists seek out civilian targets, not only because it is easier to attack unarmed civilians than soldiers, but also because a well-placed bomb in a shopping mall guarantees publicity for their cause" (133). The terrorist groups establish themselves as a system, like the other functionaries of the government. Based on certain religious and cultural principles, the terrorist groups insist the government or the administrative system to implement their regulations in the community. The method they use to force the government to enact their law in most cases is that of threat, kidnapping or bomb attack.

Terrorism can be domestic or international. A violent act without the international nature can be a terrorist act. Many of the nations face domestic acts of violence with terrorist nature. Controlling such violence has proved to be

extremely difficult (Farnsworth 237-238). The terrorist organization will use violence for its survival, a bullying action that substitutes violence for politics and alienates the organization from the mainstream society and its own grassroots, thereby dividing the society along ethnic lines and “inculcating ethnic hatred and ethnic consciousness” (Dönmez 122).

Since war killed many men in Afghanistan, many women became widows. They took menial jobs to support the family. Some women, going outside to do some work, were not allowed to continue the work. Women who were employed in schools were very much affected by this restriction. This at last led them to sell their body. Since it was to please the other gender, choosing this profession did not come as a restricted job under the law.

No law or decree sufficiently safeguards women. In every country, whether it is ruled by a king, a monarch, a president, or a group of people with national feeling, discrimination against women continues. Religious laws are conveniently manipulated in order to make the political administration easier. Making use of the fear factor of the human psyche, and exploiting the religious sentiments of the people, the fundamentalists plan for the accomplishment of their selfish motives. Very often, their laws and regulations curtail the freedom and dignity of women. Thus, the system itself becomes another type of violence.

Another country, where violence of the political system rampant, was Iraq. People of Iraq always had a challenging life. The rich reservoir of oil was plundered by other nations and the struggling people with the barren land continued to hope for a better tomorrow. The changing monarchs, foreign

invasions, the war with Iran, and the military rule made life in Iraq turbulent and troublesome. Added to their worries, the citizens of Iraq had a bitter time during the rule of Saddam Hussein. The dictatorship of Saddam negatively contributed to their lives. When Saddam Hussein became the President of Iraq there was much expectation in the people, because he knew the land, and stood for the people. He wanted to save Iraq from the domination of the capitalist power, America. What remained unsettled were the problems of women. Like in many of the Arab nations, the freedom and the rights of women were curtailed under the laws of religion. Though Islam has high respect for women, the laws are interpreted in favour of men. The male domination in religion does not give women a chance to see the Holy Scriptures from a feminist viewpoint. The law is made by and interpreted for men. “The greatest impediment towards a more feminist interpretation of women issues in Islamist discourse is the almost total absence of women interpreters of traditional sources of Islamic law throughout Muslim history” (Salman 194). Saddam kept the Sharia law in high regard in order to get the support from the religious leaders. He did not want to have trouble from the religious leaders by interfering in their way of functioning. His interest was to suppress any group or any individual whom he considered plotting against his regime. Such people were put in prison without trial. Jean Sasson’s biographical memoir *Mayada: Daughter of Iraq* narrates the pathetic life of eighteen women including Mayada, who undergo tortures in Saddam’s Al-Baladiyat prison in Baghdad.

Power is a weapon of suppression. For a military commander, becoming the President of a nation was a golden opportunity to misuse power as a dictator. The power of the military and the administrative system supported him to execute his plans. Religious leaders were controlling the moral aspects of the citizens' lives, thereby safeguarding the law and order, to a great extent. What remained unnoticed was the plight of the women of that country. They were excluded from the protection of religious and civil rights. Moreover, they were continued to be tortured by both the political and the religious systems. It is found that, more often, power is forcefully executed on the powerless and the weak sections of the society, because, it is easy to do, and it will keep other sections away from involving in any protest against the powerful. This was the strategy used by Saddam while keeping the suspected women in prison. It has the double advantage that the resistance from the imprisoned women was less and there was no enquiry by the relatives as the imprisoned were women.

*Mayada: Daughter of Iraq* narrates the stories of the prison tortures undergone by women who were in a respectable position in the society. All of them were kept in a single cell of the prison in an inhuman condition without proper food, clothes or sanitation facilities. All of them had to use a single toilet which "had been purposefully placed in the cell's one spot that lay in the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca, the point toward which she was supposed to take her five daily prayers. This was an intentional insult against every Muslim" (Sasson, *MDI* 51) and a mental torture for all the imprisoned women. The

accusation levelled against these women was that they were spying against the ruling government or involved in such activity in any form.

Siyaves Azeri sees prison as “an oppressive apparatus for structuring the subject in the image of the atomic, individualised self” (190). Prison is an apparatus to change the individual’s behaviour. It deprives the inmate of his/her liberty, and transforms him/her. The techniques of correction form part of the institutional framework of penal detention (191). Azeri analyzes the effect of the isolation process exercised in the prison:

It is not only the convict who is isolated, rather, every member of society is subjected to the isolation process, which is produced and exercised in prison. The effectiveness of this process, ironically, is based on the social-communal makeup of the human self. Thus, what is aimed at is not ‘socialising the individual’ as if the individual and the society are in opposition; rather, prison, as a particular apparatus of structuring the individual and society, aims at impressing a new form upon society via reforming the individual self. (192)

The narration of the book unveils the experiences of the inmates of the prison cell 52. Mayada, a divorced woman with two children, and the granddaughter of the noted writer and ‘the father of Arab nationalism’ Sati Al-Husri, was arrested on the charges of printing leaflets against the government. “Her small print shop had never been asked to print leaflets criticizing the government” (Sasson, *MDI* 44). Even if she confessed her innocence, all her computers were taken by the army, and she was asked to reveal the content of all

these computers. The man who took her to the prison shouted: ““And what do you think you were going to accomplish by this treason? . . . You lowlives have the guts to print leaflets against the government!”” (44). Charges of treason would mean death in Iraq. Innocent people were taken to the prison without any reason.

Another shadow woman in the cell 52 was Samara, someone who grew up a bit of a legend in the region because many people claimed she was very beautiful. “Iraqi society values nothing more than great beauty. And this shadow woman was a raving beauty” (57). Therefore, her marriage was conducted at an early age. During a battle with Iran, her husband was killed leaving her with two sons and a daughter to feed. A few weeks after her husband’s death, a coffin was sent to them with the command that not to open it. But, with the insistence of her brother, they opened the coffin and found that it was filled with dirt. So, there was a doubt whether her husband was actually killed or was taken as a prison-captive by the Iranian force. Nothing was heard about him later. Though it was difficult for an Arab widow with three children to get married, “this woman’s flawless beauty was so striking that many men would want to marry her” (59). Samara got married again to a good man. But this man was not happy with the grandfather’s name attached to her name rather than that of her father. He was not doing anything his own with regard to the naming; he just wanted to follow the custom prevailing in the society. “In his opinion, it was a sign of a father’s shame that his daughter would owe immediate allegiance to another, even to her mother’s father. In order to make him happy, she changed all official papers” (59). It was because of this change, the couple was arrested on their way back

from Jordan to Iraq. When they were arrested, neither the guards nor the officials knew the reason for the arrest. The guards only said that they were doing it as per the orders given to them. When the couple was taken to the Baladiyat prison, they were kept separate and no one knew where the husband would be.

When Samara was taken for interrogation, the officer seemed to be very polite and offered her a cup of tea. He asked her, ““Tell me, would you like to wear some earrings or would you like to wear some pantaloons?”” (62). Samara was convinced by his behaviour that he was going to present her with a government sanctioned gift for all the hardships she had endured. So, she preferred earrings so that she could sell them to buy presents for her children. The officer smiled at her and ordered his assistants to come in. They tied her hands and feet to a chair. Samara explained what happened next: “Then, imagine my horror when they hooked a battery charger up to my ears. Before I could protest, that polite man turned the electricity on full force and stood there laughing at my pain and terror. The pain of that torture was far beyond that of childbirth. Each time the pain eased slightly, he flipped the switch again and again” (62). Along with this gift of “earrings” she was offered the “pantaloons” as well:

Those pantaloons he mentioned now came as a surprise. As I sat there limp, waiting for the wood-like taste in my mouth to disappear, one of his assistants entered with a big pair of black pantaloons-like slacks that they slipped over my legs. I was picked up in the air and laid down on a special table. Those pantaloons were used to restrain my legs and feet. Then my feet were bound together in a wooden restraining device. That same evil

man began to beat the soles of my feet with a special stick, and soon I found out what it was they believed I had done. He shouted at me as he beat my feet, ‘Why did you change your name? Why did you change your papers? Who are you spying for? Is it Israel? Is it Iran?’ (63)

As a result of these tortures, Samara’s feet were “crisscrossed with vivid scars of red that cut deep into her flesh” (63). The only mistake she did was that she had changed her grandfather’s name and added her father’s name as per the demand of her husband. This act was misunderstood by the officials as part of a spy work; this act turned fatal in her life. There was no one to believe her simple explanation and she was doomed to remain in the prison as she had nothing to confess.

The prisoners were not given enough food or water. So, even if they did not like or could not eat the food, they saved it because, they were not sure when they would be given the next meal. Sometimes the soup given to them was poisoned or sterile. One day Samara told Mayada: “‘Never eat the eggplant. They served eggplant soup a month ago and we were all poisoned and could do nothing but lie on the floor writhing in pain for many days. We later heard that many prisoners died, although everyone in our cell survived’” (54).

Aliya, another cellmate was detained in the prison on the charges of travelling with stolen passport. She wanted to go to Jordan in order to help her husband in his bakery. But it was not possible for her to go alone as there was an order from Saddam that woman should be accompanied by a *Mahram*:



After the war deaths of so many husbands and fathers, and the economic weakening inside Iraq connected to the sanctions, some Iraqi women had slipped across the border to Jordan to work as prostitutes to earn money to feed their hungry children. When Saddam discovered Iraqi women were dishonouring the country by selling their bodies, he ordered that all women must travel with a *Mahram*, who could be her husband or any male relative to whom a Muslim woman cannot be married, such as her father, brother, uncle, nephew, stepfather, father-in-law or son-in-law.

(122)

Accordingly, Aliya's brother accompanied her. At the customs in Traibeel, their passports were taken away and they were asked to stand aside. Later on, her brother was beaten up by the secret police in front of Aliya and her three-year-old daughter. Even though they said that they had obtained the passports from a reputed passport bureau, the customs officials did not believe them. They were transported to the Detention Centre and kept for three weeks before her brother was released; but Aliya and her daughter were sent to Baladiyat prison. During the interrogation, the little child was forced to watch while Aliya was beaten. The prosecutors also tortured the child in front of Aliya and the "baby shrieked until her belly button flipped inside out" (123). They were also threatened of being raped. But the little girl was spared. Anyone seeing the scars and raw wounds crisscrossed on Aliya's abdomen, thighs and buttocks would wonder if she had been raped. No one would directly ask that question, for no Muslim woman would ever admit that she had been dishonoured in such a manner (125). Rape

was a form of torture against both males and females in Iraqi prisons, but the most attractive women were raped repeatedly by many different men (130). Aliya narrated another incident she witnessed in the prison:

. . . a woman who had been tortured almost to death was thrown to the floor. Her face was raw with deep cuts, and her skull had been cracked. Blood oozed out of a hole in her head that appeared to have been made by an electric drill. Three of her fingernails had been ripped out and so many cigarettes had been put out on her legs that the stench of burnt flesh soon filled the cell. The woman was Rasha. (124)

Saddam left no stone unturned to find out any one who conspired against him. He made use of his officers to execute his plans. Whenever there was uprising in any part of the country, the government immediately claimed that those involved in the uprising had committed mutiny, and captured thousands of people, ordering troops to pull down their houses and imprison the inhabitants. Entire families were tossed into prison. Men, women and children were packed into cells meant for half the number (126). The officials in the prison were “experts at keeping the ones they were questioning one breath away from death” (104). The security forces of Saddam Hussein were given cash bonuses, promotions and awards for capturing the Iraqis or inflicting more pain on the captives or for inventing new torture methods. After receiving these cash prizes, they approached the relatives of the prisoners and extorted money, land or any valuables on the pretext that they would lessen the pain of their dear ones or do the needful for releasing them (173).

Mayada revealed to other prisoners that revenge and treachery were other forms of violence used by the dictator. Hussain Kamil, Saddam's son-in-law amassed enormous sums of money from government projects. Uday, Saddam's oldest son whom everyone considered insane, became jealous of his brother-in-law. "Greed seems to attach itself to cruelty" (188). Knowing that Uday would kill him, Kamil fled to Jordan and humiliated Saddam with his disloyalty when he began to inform Iraq's enemies of everything he knew about Iraq's weapon programme. Saddam courteously brought him back swearing that he would not harm the father of his grandchildren. Believing his father-in-law's words, he returned to Iraq and within a few days he was murdered (156).

The cruelty of Saddam was not restricted to human beings alone; the President was cruel to animals as well. One day Sajida, Saddam's wife, was attacked by his Doberman Mukhtar. The dog was sentenced to die hungry and thirsty. "Saddam not only wanted the dog dead, but he said that the crime of attacking a member of the ruling family demanded prolonged torment prior to death" (133). So, he chained the dog to a pole and once or twice a day he or his son Uday would shock the dog with the electric prod (134). Seeing the suffering of others was the enjoyment for the ruling family. The tortures were not mere punishment for the crime, but a reminder to others to be obedient to the rules.

The story of Um Sami, a neighbor of Mayada, presented a strange reality of Saddam's rule. Um Sami's twin sons aged fourteen went to the market to buy a new football and they never returned. They were charged with staring the two members of the Mukhabarat, the government's terror and intimidation

organization, and taken to the cell. Using the connections of Mayada's family with Dr. Fadil, a powerful person overseeing many security departments, Um Sami searched for her sons in the cell. She gives a vivid narration of what she saw there:

Inside were great many bodies, but I saw my sons at once. Just as they were bonded in life they were together in death. . . . My beautiful sons had been horribly tortured. Blackened blood covered their faces and hands and feet. There were visible burn marks.

. . . I saw things no mother should ever see. I saw one young man whose chest bore the searing print of an electric iron. I saw a second young man whose chest spilled open, having been dissected from his neck to his stomach. I saw a third young man whose legs had been hacked away. I saw a fourth young man whose eyes had been squeezed out of their sockets. His eye-balls lay on his slack face. (170-71)

Um Sami did not get the clarification for her question whether staring was such a crime leading to death sentence. No one knew what the law was and what the punishment was in Iraq.

The officials working under Saddam never knew what would happen in their life next. Even though they did something good for the government or the people, these deeds can be interpreted negatively. Dr. Sabah, the Director General of the General Establishment of Constructional Projects, shared her one such experience with the cellmates. She was asked to execute a colleague who was pointed out as a plotter against Saddam. Each time she was given the gun to

shoot, she would vomit. Finally, she ran away from there and reached home. With this incident, she became a speck in the government's eye: someone who disobeyed the orders. On another occasion, as part of her work, Dr. Sabah auctioned the unused goods and equipment left by the contractors of her company and returned the money to the state exchequer. But she was arrested for using her position to steal goods and equipment from the private sector. Her crime was called a conspiracy to undermine the state's economy (195). And thus she shares the cell with other shadow women.

Mayada's association with Saddam and his high officials gave her good opportunity to know many of the clandestine activities inside the secret police. Ali Hassan al-Majid, a cousin of Saddam, known as Chemical Ali, was the second most influential person and one of the cruelest men in Iraq. He was placed atop the nation's secret police, after Dr. Fadil was elevated to the head of the intelligence (199). One day, Mayada was invited by Ali Majid to report 'a democratic exercise' at the secret police headquarters. It was to inform the family of every criminal what happened to their loved ones. As the names were announced, people came forward and cried out their grievances. To a man who enquired about his son, Ali said: "Yes. Your son was accused of high treason. He has been executed. The whereabouts of his grave is unknown. Here is a tape of his confession. Go home and listen to it so you won't grieve the death of this traitor" (231). Another man appeared on the stage. Beside him stood his wife. This man was taken by the police because of a letter written by his wife. She

wrote that her husband was an Islamic Party member, who planned to assassinate officials in the government. This man addressed the audience:

“See these hands? . . . See how my fingernails were ripped from my fingers? For ten days, one a day, until every nail was gone. And my toes”. . . . “I have no nails on my toes. Another ten days of one nail a day. Then I was taken to a small room and placed in a chair. My hands were tied to the chair. A man with a small pair of pliers came into the room and yanked out a tooth. He pulled my teeth, one by one, until every tooth was on the floor. After that I was taken by force and put into a large oven, big enough for two men. I was put into that oven and told I was going to be roasted to death and then fed to the dogs. But they left me only long enough to toast my skin and melt my hair.” (234-35)

All these sufferings happened in his life because of his unfaithful wife. She was an Iranian, married to this man and they had three children. When her husband was away, she invited other men to her house. When he confronted her, she denied the charge and took revenge upon him. The punishment for this lady was announced by Ali: “Listen, whore. Today you will be thrown in the no-man’s land between the Iraqi army and the Iranian army. Your children will be thrown there with you. The artillery shelling is so heavy that eventually you will all be killed. And that will be a good thing for Iraq” (236). There cannot be any justification for the punishment given to the lady and her innocent children. After announcing the judgment Ali said; “I am a kind man. I am a good man” (236).

The press had no freedom under Saddam's rule. Mayada was invited to report this "democratic exercise" in favour of the government and in praise of Ali Majid. But all what Mayada witnessed was nauseating experience for her. So the next day, when she went to her office, she told Suhail Sami Nadir, the person in charge of the whole magazine, that she would not write anything about it. But Suhail told her to write about it without mentioning her name and stop writing gradually. He shared his experience: "Once I had a similar experience. I refused to do a piece. And what happened to me? I spent three years imprisoned by the Mukhabarat" (238). Suddenly Mayada understood why Suhail appeared so quiet and withdrawn. He had a limp, an arm hung at an angle and had many memories in his body (238). Anyone who refused to work for or worked against the government did not have a peaceful life in Iraq. There should not be anything other than obeying the will of the ruler because it was proclaimed that all that the ruler intended to do was for the good of the nation.

The attitude towards women is that they be inside the house. The freedom of movement is denied to women. One day, the shadow women were dragged outside the cell at gun point and were placed in the courtyard facing the wall. The guards made all such preparations as if they were going to shoot these women to death. Frightened by these maddening behaviours of the wardens, some of the women fainted, some dumb found and some horrified. Here Jean Sasson writes what the wardens had in their mind:

The warden shouted. "You are a mighty bunch, I must say." He spat on the ground in disgust at their fear and terror. "I praise Allah that I have a

wife and sisters and daughters at home that do not even know how to buy groceries at the market,” meaning that they were so pious that they did not go out of the home. “And look at you, a bunch of filthy criminals. You are a disgrace to your families. And cowards, too.” He spat once again. (242-43)

Even the young guards in the prison were ardent in executing their duties. One of the guards who was just twenty years old asked Mayada: ““What are you looking at, you old bitch?”” (253). Mayada exclaimed how in such a young age they could become so hateful and inimical. During the interrogation, she was slapped on the face many times and electric shock made her body shiver with pain. She was fortunate enough not to have any scars on her body. The torturers knew about her fame and royal background and one of them called her name in full length in a sarcastic way.

Many of the prisoners were arrested not for their mistakes, but that they could not get the real culprits. Safana and Muna were arrested because the boss of the bank where they worked stole a huge amount and when they were asked about him, they said that he was a good man, not knowing this fact about the stealing. Their mistake was that they failed to say that he was a thief. Mayada was arrested because someone had printed leaflets against the government and the police could not find the printers. So they took ten publishers of that area into custody. One among them was Mayada. Eman was told that she was arrested for criticizing Saddam Hussain. May was arrested on the charges of favouring communists. Wafae had been seized by the police because her brother had



escaped to Syria. Anwar was put in the prison because she borrowed the passport of her sister, who looked similar to her, to go to Yemen. Hayat and Asia were arrested because two boxes of floor tiles disappeared from the establishment where they worked. None of the explanations given by them was considered for their release. The most difficult part of their stay was that none of the relatives of these women knew where they were taken, what happened to them and thus where to give a complaint. Unless someone among them was released, their freedom remained a dream. Salwa, Mayada's mother, used her high level connections with Saddam to make her daughter's release, on condition that Mayada would not leave Iraq unless the investigation about the leaflet was completed. The guards in the prison became rich by exploiting the prisoners through their relatives. After getting the address from the inmates, the guards approached the relatives and demanded huge amounts of money for their relief. Knowing that Mayada would be freed, Mamoun, one of the guards, approached Mayada's children and demanded a ransom of five hundred dollars (360). When everything about her release was arranged, he demanded another ransom of 50000 dollars for her daughter, Fay. After Mayada reached Jordan, she made arrangements for her daughter to join her. Finally, she had to pay 25000 dollars to Mamoun to take Fay. Once Mayada reached a safer place, she tried all her relations to free the shadow women from the prison even though the only way was through bribery (338).

The existing structures in the world very often function for the powerful in the society. In other words, the powerful uses the structures in the society for

establishing their identity. When Saddam became the President of Iraq, all the state apparatuses functioned according to his will. To remain in power, he had to use violence against women as well. That was the pathetic side of his rule.

Religion is not only used by religious leaders but also by political leaders to establish power in the society. The government does not act against the religious extremists when they release violence in the other community. There is strong support from the government for certain religions in many parts of the world. In Afghanistan and Iraq, religious fundamentalists get full support. Like other extremists, religious extremists also use massive violence with political support (Haar 11).

Religions have a great role in imposing restrictions on their believers in the form of abstinence, fasting and flagellation. The fundamentalists encourage the believers to follow the rules of the religion very strictly. Certain form of violence on the body is considered virtuous for the spiritual awakening and well-being. Therefore, religious institutions encourage the believers to inflict pain on the body. Believers become blind followers of what the religious leaders tell them. The reality for them is what the religious leaders tell. Religions make their own rules which are legally approved in the court, when there is a dispute regarding religious matters. Out of the trust in the religious leaders and of the promise of the heaven or eternal reward, the believers are ready to die or to murder for a religious cause. Religions have such a commanding power over their followers. The religious benefits promised by the teachings of the religious leaders encourage the believers to do any kind of violence, which otherwise they

may not do. (Selengut 184-85). Some of the earlier rituals involving pain or torture followed in ancient religions have been dropped or made almost entirely symbolic. Still, Judaism and Islam still carry on such practices. The pain and suffering is the price and reward the believers win for the life after death. For the eternal life, the believers are to give their body: “they have to offer their physical being, their bodies, to be violently acted upon by the religious authorities” (189). The readiness to accept suffering is given a higher meaning in religious terms; the more you suffer, the closer you are to God. All religions interpret human suffering as divinely ordained and exhort the believers to accept the routine and extraordinary pain and suffering inherent in human existence as the will of God. The irony in the teaching is that the same religion that teaches the believers to tolerate pain and loss for the sake of God tells them to unite for a fight or a protest when their religious dogmas are questioned, or the images of their deity or leaders are cartooned, or the property of their religion is settled by court. Religions that teach tolerance and suffering for a greater cause call for violent attack instead of suffering the loss. The violence released by the religions inflicts suffering to both their believers and the believers of other religion.

The regime of Saddam was favourable to men and fundamentalistic Islamic believers; but the women had sufferings from both the government and the religion. The dictatorial rule of Saddam in a way resisted the rule of America in Iraq and the neighbouring countries; but he could not see the suffering he and his Ba’ath party inflicted on the women and Shiite community. The supporting structures never go against the ruling party as it would be self-destructive. In

Islamic countries, rulers move in line with the religion and the religion supports the government in imposing restrictions on the citizens who violate the religious or civil law. Since there is so much restriction regarding sexual matters, most of the laws impose restriction on women. Apart from these restrictions, Saddam finds fault with women in conspiring against him—a new way of silencing women.

The increase in violence outside the home space has a direct relation with the violence inside the home. The insecurity of women inside the home has a correlation with the conflicts and war within their nation. Iraqi women have had to choose between dealing with escalating violence in the home space, including domestic violence in the private sphere, or to risk leaving the home space, which might expose them to a the range of violence that women typically experience in the public spaces of their nations during war. Women and the girl-child were even more “vulnerable to trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced prostitution due to insecurity, displacement, financial hardship, social disintegration, and the dissolution of rule of law and state authority” (Rajan 66). The insecurity women face in the conflict zones prevents their mobility. Female sexuality and female mobility are controlled by the insecurity felt by women in war zones.

The Taliban, the Islamic State (IS) and a few other Fundamental outfits, termed as terrorist groups, have taken control of a large portion of territory in the Arab land. Though there were conflicts between capitalist countries and a few Islamic countries in the twentieth century, in the wake of globalization the

conflicts have further intensified. When there was a threat to the ethnic culture and traditional religious practices from the growing modern ideologies, some of the orthodox leaders and believers found it necessary to safeguard the indigenous culture and religious creed. So, the fundamentalism seen in the world is a product of communitarian tendencies, which try to preserve homogeneity of the local culture and the social disintegration (Friedman 27). The structural violence practiced through fundamentalism, terrorism and dictatorial rule is the major problem faced by the citizens, especially women, in Afghanistan and Iraq. To the existing social problems of patriarchal rule and religious restrictions, these recent issues add up to their worries and struggles of survival. With all the complications arising from globalization, fundamentalism, dictatorship and patriarchy, the lives of women become all the more tensed and troublesome. In Zizekian terms, all these systems promote violence and all these systems exist in the base of violence.

## Chapter 6

### **Domestic Violence and Surrogacy in Indian Context: A Study on Kishwar Desai's *Witness the Night and Origins of Love***

Domestic violence is one of the most visible forms of the subjective violence of patriarchal system. According to Žižek, subjective violence “is seen as a perturbation of the ‘normal,’ peaceful state of things. However, objective violence is precisely the violence inherent to this ‘normal’ state of things” (Žižek, V 1). Since it is part of the system, this systemic violence is “the counterpart to an all-too-visible subjective violence. It may be invisible, but it has to be taken into account if one is to make sense of what otherwise seems to be ‘irrational’ explosions of subjective violence” (2). All the violations of women’s rights within the home can be considered the objective violence of the patriarchy. The masculine authoritarianism not even considers violence in the domestic circle as a crime. The tortures and brutalities experienced by women at home form the subjective violence, while the various discourses and rules of a male dominated society form the objective violence.

Kishwar Desai’s first novel *Witness the Night*, that has honoured her with Costa First Novel award in 2010, presents a vivid picture of the violence carried out in a male dominated family to the feeble girl children. All over the world, where women are considered a second class citizen, there is always a dangerous situation faced by women. The reasons for ill-treating women vary depending on the society where the needs of men are given high priority. Family structure, the

problems related to the institution of marriage, the economic instability of women, the biological functioning of women and the religious restrictions imposed upon women generally reduce the power of women in the society. When a girl child is born in a family, the members in the family, including the mother of the child, do not have a pleasant mind and in some societies, the elders try to kill that child somehow. Survival of the child in such families is a horrible struggle. The two girls mentioned in *Witness the Night* had undergone all the hardships for survival and their coming to life was a miracle. Even if they excelled in studies and in all other activities compared to their male siblings, these girls were deprived of basic amenities of life and were ignored by all members in the family. When they reached puberty, they were used by other men, especially their tuition master, with the permission of the parents. The same parents arranged other girls for having fun for their sons. To safeguard the prestige of the family, the mentally derailed girls were kept in a mental asylum and later on in a farmhouse. No one knew what would be the reaction of these girls once they get a chance to retaliate. The exploiter made use of the girl to execute his plan. At last, the girl committed the strenuous act of killing all the thirteen members present in her house. Yet, the real culprit walked away slowly to the safe haven in the dark night. He is the only witness of that horrible night.

In patriarchal system, women are objects of pleasure, subordinates of men, submissive listeners, laborious house-hold workers and witnesses of all that happen in the family; they are not policy makers, they are not outside goers, they are not speakers, they are not income-generators and they are not considered

humans with passions and feelings. As long as women are able to suffer, they are just used and abused; tortured and suppressed; accused and punished. The general understanding of men and women is that the duty of women in the family is to breed and feed, listen and obey, and suffer and die. This forms the systemic part of patriarchal violence.

The Atwal family was a traditional family involved in business and they had high reputation in the society. They had good connections with high officials in the police force and public administration. Anything that went against the reputation of the family was not accepted. This was kept intact even when Durga, the youngest girl child of the Atwal family, was taken to the police custody for the accusation of killing thirteen members in her family. She was given a few allowances—better food, proper clothes and occasional access to television. However, a fourteen-year-old girl would have been kept in a juvenile home. “Unfortunately, the juvenile home was recently raided and newspaper headlines screamed that many of the children were being sexually exploited and used for prostitution. So Durga has been put here, in a makeshift remand home for children” (Desai, *WN* 12). Another possibility of keeping her in “Nari Niketan (the reformist institution for fallen women) was also ruled out because of the high risk of exposure to drug and prostitution rackets” (12). All these descriptions throw light into the prevailing insecure system of government-run juvenile homes and refuge houses in India. Once a child or a woman is accused of any crime, they are then onwards termed as “fallen” “immoral” or “loose”. They are then preyed upon for flesh trade. Many of the accused have committed the crime in



self-defense or in molestation or sexual harassment attempt. So, by keeping them in reform-centres, they are now more prone to sexual abuse and immoral activities. No system works genuinely for the betterment of women.

Simran Singh, the social worker in the novel, investigates into the real culprit of the brutal killing. Her experience in this field told her that a girl of fourteen years would not do such a crime single handedly, and if at all she did that, there would have been very grave reason for committing this act. Making use of the advantage of the title of social worker, Simran put herself into the investigation and got into the life of Durga, the accused. Even when Durga told that there was nobody to help her to do the crime, Simran couldn't believe it, because she knew that there was someone whom Durga did not want to bring into the lime light. The police officials also would not do further enquiry once they caught hold of one culprit. It is usual that if the police have more evidence that there is an involvement of any of their friends and relatives, they will complete the investigation and present the crime report as early as possible without making any reference to them. So, according to the police, the entire crime is planned and executed by the accused, whom they have found out. This practice denies justice to the accuser and promotes chances for further crime. This is a form of systemic violence. As long as justice is denied, there will emerge a violent reaction from the part of the sufferers.

From the narrations of Durga, Simran came to know that the girl children in Atwal family had a bitter childhood experience. Sharda, the elder sister of Durga, survived all the techniques used by her family to kill her:

At first they gave her opium and put her in a pot of milk and twirled it around. Miraculously, the milk turned to butter and the crying child still lived. The opium did not put her to sleep. The midwife got worried and ran away, because she thought Sharda had inverted feet, the sure sign of a witch.

Finally my grandmother picked up courage and instructed that the wretched girl be buried in a clay pot in the earth at night. Unfortunately for her, the dogs dug her out, and Jitu brought her home, still crying for milk. (82)

In patriarchal families, girls are ignored and boys are recognized by the parents. Parents wish to have sons rather than daughters. They prefer a dark ugly boy to a beautiful girl. Durga explains the condition: “My sister looked like my mother. She was equally lovely. My brothers were not as good-looking, but no one cared really, they were boys and that was enough. We knew they were actually my cousins, but my father was crazy for sons, and so was my mother. So they got all the attention” (34-35).

The patriarchal concept of beauty focused on the colour of the skin and the shape of the body. Women with fair and physically attractive figures were considered beautiful. This concept of the ‘fair’ and ‘black’ was another problem faced by Durga. She was of dark complexion and therefore she was treated as “kala teeka”. In order to make her fair, they massaged her body with besan mixed with curds in circular motion so that the hair would lessen and she would turn fair (35). Even if the regular application of ‘Fair and Lovely’ cream and hydrogen

peroxide turned the dark skin somewhat acceptable and the hair, blond fuzz, she could not solve other issues related to her girl identity. The girls were not expected to perform activities, which boys did. The reward for doing such activities was punishment and scolding for girls and encouragement and appreciation for boys:

Even though I was much more of a boy than a girl . . . and I was always climbing trees and breaking my bones, I was never treated with the same sort of respect the Boys got. I tried to do everything they did, including horse-riding and cricket. I even learnt to smoke (which no Sikh family could tolerate) and abuse like them, but all I got were slaps, and all they got was love and praise. Even their smoking was shrugged off as a childish prank. . . . I had longer hair than theirs, and so I would tie mine in a turban, wear their trousers and shirts, but no one seemed to appreciate any of it. All they would do was look at me and sigh and say, ‘Poor thing, no one will ever marry her.’ (35-36)

Women, who are brought up in a liberal society are also forced to follow the customs of the patriarchal society, when they are married to men living in male dominated society. Durga’s brother (cousin) Jitu married an English lady, Brinda Atwal, alias Binny. She was not happy with the life she had with her husband in India. The Atwal family was so strict with ladies in the family, like any other Sikh family. Though Binny had roots in India, she was born and brought up in Southall and lived like a western lady. Many girls like Binny would leave their culture and come to live in India. After coming to India, they would be

forced to live within the family. Kishwar Desai writes about the condition of such women:

. . . a girl like Binny . . . would be wrapped in a red bridal saree and parceled off to a traditional family. Her parents would have dreamt of this since she was born. And from that moment onwards her British modernity would be carefully concealed beneath her red silk dupatta. It would never reappear. . . . All the problems that followed concerned no one and no one would ever resolve them. (39)

It becomes difficult for a single woman to fight against the rules set by her husband's family. Even a liberal and forward-thinking husband cannot support his wife, when his traditional parents, relatives and neighbours set norms for the couples' behaviour. The very core of the male hegemony demands suppression of women's rights.

The discrimination towards girls is very evident in academic matters. The outlook of the parents regarding giving education to girl children is that education spoils the life. Girls were not given education beyond school level because the girls belonged to other family and thus they did not bring income to the family. In traditional families, women did not go out for any job. According to Manubhai, a worker in the Atwal family, the books have ruined the life of the girls and that was the reason for the brutal murder carried out by the little girl in the family. It was this servant who brought a few girls from his village to the Atwal family for the fun of the boys (89). These girls were kept in the servants' rooms near the garden. Those rooms were next to the bedrooms of the boys adopted by Durga's

father (68). In a system, where women are treated as slaves or servants, violence against them does not receive any attention.

A patriarchal family always considered girls a burden. The rich families offered the girls education. Their girl children were sent to convent schools and the boys were sent to “co-educational boarding school where they learnt to smoke and drink” (53). Girl children were given off in marriage in the middle of their studies and they rarely finished their studies. Ramnath Singh, the police officer and Amrinder, Simran’s school friend, had two daughters: Reena and Sangeeta. They are brought up in fashionable manner. Yet their parents are planning to marry them off during the course of their studies. In order to compensate the lack of sons, Ramnath and Amrinder tried to play up the talents of their daughters in front of everyone as many people in Punjab would wonder how one would live without sons (45). Even though a family had talented and beautiful daughters, if it lacked sons, it was a great vacuum. Many of the parents feel confident if they have a son. The various comments the parents receive from others after the birth of a son are encouraging and self-boosting, while the comments the parents of a girl receive are disheartening and sometimes frightening.

From Reena and Sangeeta, Simran came to know that Durga was brought up like a traditional Punjabi girl, always in salwar and kameez. She was not allowed to go out; the family had a strict watch on her. Even though she did very well in school and her essays were read out to the whole class, Durga was not allowed to attend any of the school functions. She was almost invisible in school, except for writing and no one bothered with her (46). If the family considered

their girls equal to boys, justice would not have been denied to Durga and her elder sister, Sharda. As long as gender discrimination continues, patriarchy can only be said to be promoting violence.

The girls in the family had no identity. Photograph is something that reveals the identity of a person. A family photograph shows the unity and affection between the members of the family. As Simran was searching for the photographs of the two girls, Durga and Sharda, she could find the photographs and portraits of other members in the family and their relatives, but could not find any photograph of these girls. It was as though the two girls had never existed (49). These girls were considered “snake children”. According to Manubhai, the servant who has been working in Atwal family for forty years, Sharda and Durga used to quarrel with the parents and on such an occasion Durga burnt the photographs. When Simran told Durga what Manubhai had informed her about the photographs, Durga told her that he was lying and she had never burnt any photographs. Later, Simran got a naked photograph of Sharda from the books she gathered from Durga’s room. It was taken while she was kept in the mental asylum. Her condition there was pathetic and inhuman:

Her lying on the bed, handcuffed to the side, not even allowed any clothes or food, a long chain keeping her from wandering too far away. You can’t see any of that in the photograph, nor can you smell the filth and dirt. . . .

She would be like that for days, her faeces mixed with menstrual blood lining the floor till someone came and cleaned it up. Why did they do this to her? Her own family, her own flesh and blood? (166)

The life and mind of a girl in a male dominated society is well narrated in the novel through the diary of Durga:

Trying to be a girl is not easy. There are few comforts that you are born with or can attain. I knew, they dress you in frocks and put ribbons in your hair, bangles on your arms, anklets on your feet, teach you to sing and dance and bake cakes, but what about the Inside-you? The Outside-you can smile and cut vegetables and sit with legs crossed and say 'namaste auntie' but the Inside-you is always angry and looking out of the window and wanting to run with the boys. (53)

The elder daughter Sharda was cleverer than boys. She was a good business woman and knew the ups and downs in the stock exchange. Her father would invest in the shares according to her calculations and gained the profit. But nothing ever came to her because all the shares were put in the name of the boys (53). All the girls were "paraaya dhan"—wealth which belonged to someone else. "The girls were like horses: the young fillies were easy to manage than the older ones. And younger they were, the more they were in demand" (54). Even though the girls were wealth, dowry was an essential requirement for marriage. "The girl who had gone away as a bride had come back as a corpse within a month, she had been burnt because her dowry had been insufficient" (54). Dowry deaths are so common in India. Most of the communities in India practice the custom of giving dowry to the groom. The in-laws value the worth of the bride based on the dowry she has brought. This practice belittles the bride and promotes chances of disharmony between the families of the couples. Man counts the worth of a

woman in her beauty and the wealth she brings. It is another violence existing in the patriarchal system.

The dislike for girl children has drastically affected the sex ratio in India. Punjab and Haryana have the lowest sex ratio in India—less than 850 girls per 1000 men. In Chandigarh, it is now 777 per thousand males (55). This data shows that in a patriarchal system, the lives of girl children are at risk. Female foeticide and infanticide are practiced both in urban and rural areas. The happiness of the couple is lost when they are blessed with a girl child; the desire for a boy child prevents them from giving all the love and care that a child deserves. In many Indian societies, girls are considered inferior to boys. Many methods of killing girls are adopted in India. Girl children are underfed and they die of malnutrition. Some children are given the poisonous juice from an oleander flower, mixed with castor oil. Another method is by pushing paddy husk down a baby's throat thereby rupturing the windpipe. In the case of Durga and Sharda, it was burying them alive inside an earthen pot. During the pre-natal checkup or sex detection, children are killed within the womb (128). Thus, abortion is another method used by many parents to avoid the burden of bringing up a girl child. The misogynous attitude and inadequate responses to violence against women promote femicide. The role of the service providers in normalizing domestic violence as not being serious or a real danger to women accelerates femicide (Prieto-Carrón 33). The failure of service providers to treat victims and their relatives with respect, and to take their experiences seriously, represents a form of institutional violence by the



state (34). As long as there is no dignity given to women, there will continue to exist discriminative killing and merciless tortures.

Domestic violence is part of patriarchal system. It is not only the girls who are being ill-treated in a family but also the other female members in the family. Even in the decisions concerning the women in the family, wives or girl children did not have any voice. Once, Durga's mother was slapped in public by her husband for objecting to send Sharda with Ramnath to hide her illegal pregnancy (Desai, *WN* 168).

The number of unwed mothers is increasing in many parts of the world. Teenage girls are sexually abused and they become pregnant. In some cases, they are kept secretly till the time of delivery and in some cases they are forced to undergo abortion. Sharda became pregnant at the age of sixteen and she was kept in the farmhouse of the Atwal family. After the delivery, she was sent to an asylum where she was chained in both legs and kept in a small dark room. Later on, her son, Rahul, was brought back to the Atwal family in the guise of an adopted child. There was no consideration given to Sharda as a daughter or as a mother. As her child was a boy, the family protected him. If the child were a girl, they would kill the child, because, finding after the checkup that the child within the womb of Binny, Jitu's wife, was a girl, the Atwal family was rude towards her. It was by luck that Binny escaped to England and saved the child.

Mental hospitals in India have many women patients. People are ignorant of the difference between mental illness and mental retardation. Whenever there is a socially unaccepted behaviour from a woman, she is taken to the mental

hospital or mental asylum. Kishwar Desai explains the reasons for this kind of immediate action from the male members in the family:

Many women were locked up simply because they were not wanted by their families, and minor incidents were blown into catastrophic events. A large portion of women in these hospitals were well into their middle age and often had husbands or families who found them difficult to live with- - too aggressive or argumentative. Sometimes there were issues of inheritance, or the husband wanted to get re-married. It was certainly a cheaper option than a divorce. (102-103)

It is strange to notice that in patriarchal societies old ladies also support men to torture and suppress other women in the family. Durga's father Santji, as he was called, was supported by his mother Beeji in terminating the girls born in the family. She "did not conceal her deep dislike for her daughter-in-law's inability to produce a male heir" (155). Ammiji, Durga's mother, failed to give a son to the Atwal family and she had to pay a heavy price for that all through her life. Durga writes in her book:

Sikhism is one of the few religions that actually does confer an equal status upon men and women. But the women in our home were terrorized into accepting their inferior position, and even an educated woman like my mother who could discuss the suffragette movement and women's votes in a posh English accent had been beaten into submission. . . .

She needed the status of a married woman . . . and she was terrified of exposing the truth to the world. She lacked the courage. . . . She did not want the world to know who my father really was, behind the mask he wore every day. (154-55)

It was the same Ammiji who tried to kill her girl children. Sharda and Durga had miraculously survived two murder attempts before they were ill-treated by the family members. Even after doing this heinous crime, Ammiji did her prayers and bhajans in the prayer room. The reason for trying to kill her daughters by Ammiji might be that she knew what the life would be of a girl child in that Company Bagh house. She did not want her children suffer the same tortures she experienced in the Atwal house at Company Bagh. Giving birth to a boy child was a matter of survival for every woman in a patriarchal family.

Men are hypocritical in many walks of life. There is a tendency among some men to appear gentle in public and be so cruel and immoral in personal life. The father of Durga and Sharda was one such kind. He was a highly respected person in Jullundar. He had rich contacts with the police force and politicians in Punjab. Everyone considered him a generous man giving alms to the needy and food to the hungry. But in the house, he suppressed his wife and did not allow her to tell anything against his wish. As Durga states: “Santji dictated everything in the house. . . . With each law that he laid down, he tormented my mother more and bought her silence” (156). The most inhuman act from his part was that he abused his own daughter Sharda. One day, Durga saw his father with Sharda being naked (152). The gentleness and generosity shown outside is only a

gorgeous attire to hide the brutal nature of man's behaviour. The brutality of Santji was so inhuman that he did not consider even his daughter as a portion of his own blood. The one who was supposed to be the very protector and giving affection to the girl becomes her terminator. Such instances are part of the patriarchal violence.

Another "gentle man" in the novel is Harpreet Singh, the tutor of both Sharda and Durga. He was handsome and polite. He married Sudha, a lady who was burnt by her first husband because of insufficient dowry. She even had a daughter. "Harpreet married her because no one would accept her. Even her parents didn't want her back" (150). Because of this noble act, he was well accepted in the society. It was not out of love for the lady, or out of his magnanimity he married her; it was a mask he used to hide his immoral relations with other ladies. He abused Sharda and from her he had a son—Rahul. Later on, he plotted plans to kill the whole family of Atwal, using Durga. Durga was under his spell and she could do anything under his command. Finally, he tactfully escaped the scene and Durga was caught by the police. No one ever suspected him. He arranged everything for giving poison to the entire family of Atwal and convinced Durga of doing this act as a revenge upon her parents and other members in the family for the ill-treatment rendered upon her. He raped Durga to show that the murder was her immediate reaction upon the family. He also made arrangements to leave the country and reach Southall, where Brinda lived with his son Rahul. Now that Jitu, Brinda's husband was murdered, it was easy for Harpreet to live with Brinda. So, he could have the pleasure of keeping two

ladies. Again, he would be praised for protecting a widow. These types of “gentlemen” never come before the law and they continue to exploit helpless women.

In a male dominated society, whenever something goes in the family the blame will be upon the female members in the family. If a woman fails to give birth to a boy child, the blame will be on the woman. If some misfortune happens in the family, the cause of it will be put on the wife or any subservient woman in the family. Whenever a crime is committed by a man, there will be all the operations to hide it or solve it through using money and political power. But a crime by a woman is never tolerated and she will never be supported by any of the powers. Here, the police officials were determined to put the entire blame on Durga and end the investigation. For them, it was easy to come to the conclusion from the circumstantial evidence. There was no fingerprint or any other evidence to find the involvement of another person in the crime. The survival of the only member in the family, who was also present at the time of the crime also made the investigators think that Durga was the murderer. The conspirators wanted to eliminate the heir of the properties of Atwal. As Sharda, the elder daughter was already insane and many do not know her whereabouts, the only hindrance on the way to inherit the Atwal property was Durga. If she too was kept out of the way, the real culprits could easily manage the properties of the Atwal. Santji and other members in the family who avoided and misbehaved with the sisters Sharda and Durga had to pay a heavy price for ignoring them and keeping others as trusted friends of the family. In patriarchy, the opinions of male friends and relatives are

more important and trustworthy than those of the wife or other female members of the family. Justice is denied to women when their needs are ignored. In a system where injustice prevails, there is objective violence.

If a girl child is not safe in the family and her parents turn a deaf ear to her basic needs and demands, there will appear outsiders to exploit the situation. The response of the formal agencies, like the police, to the incidents of sexual attack shows the ineffective practice of attaining gender justice in the society. The police may be associated with the silencing of rape victims' voices. The police officer Ramnath operated as the guardian for the Atwal family when Sharda became pregnant. Like in many cases of rape, the victim might have been blamed or seen as partially responsible for the incident. The police and courts operate within the context of a society shaped by patriarchy and cherish victim-blaming and rape-supportive beliefs (Jordan 266). Though the culprit was known to everyone in the family, no one blamed him or took action against him. Ramnath advised the Atwals to keep it a secret to safeguard the image of the family. He made all the arrangements for hiding her in a safe place and later on admitting her in the asylum when she began to show aggressive behaviour. He had his eyes on the wealth of the Atwals. After the murder of thirteen members of the Atwal family by Durga, he made all the arrangements for keeping Durga in the remand home for children and then to be shifted to the mental asylum. Finally, he was happy to buy the Atwal home at half the market price. Harpreet, the tuition master, was keen on protecting Sharda because she was the proof to claim the Atwal property. Rahul was his son from Sharda and therefore he could

claim the share of Atwal property. He purposely made Durga to do the crime, and along with Ramnath, wanted to keep Durga in an asylum. When he found that his plans were scattered by Simran and Gurmit, he decided to go to Southall to join his son Rahul and Brinda, Jitu's wife, now a widow. The law and order system function for the culprits rather than for the victims. When Sharda became pregnant, instead of protecting her, she was kept away from the home and she had to live a miserable life in the hidden place and later in the asylum. The parents of Sharda did not find fault with the man who made her pregnant at a younger age. They did not feel anything bad about this incident. Even after the incident, the tuition master was well accepted in the house and he continued to be the tuition teacher for the little girl Durga. The reputation of the family was more important for them than the life of their child. The Atwal family did everything promising for the boys and completely denied the demands of the girls. A patriarchal society has no thoughts about the needs and rights of women. All these practices point to the objective violence inherent in the patriarchal system.

In patriarchal families, ladies are made to think of giving birth to a son. Sex determination test was so crucial for fetal girls. Finding that the child in the womb is a girl, the mother of the child tries to reject the child and she is not given any care usually given to a pregnant woman. Parents who have no remorse for committing a crime choose abortion or undertake risky tasks to terminate the fetus. In case a child is born, the mother gets the accusation of giving birth to a girl. The child is ignored by both the parents and other members in the family. As the child grows, she is scolded or beaten up for every single mistake and

discouraged or ignored in achievements and personal growth. In *Witness the Night*, Sharda and Durga survived all the murder attempts carried out by their family members. They supported each other to survive in a torturing family. Durga was in a way happy to go into the mental asylum because she thought she could join with her sister there. Durga writes: “Didi and I seem to have a joint destiny. We were saved from death at birth to be forced into a kind of living hell. My only hope now is that Ramnath keeps his promise that they will eventually lock me up with my sister and in our madness, at least, we will be together. My sister, my mother, my lover” (Desai, *WN* 191).

It is difficult to fight against the male domination unless there is a collective effort from both men and women. It is found that women themselves are working against women in family and in society. Fight among the in-laws is very common in patriarchal societies. The mother and the sister find it difficult to accept the wife of her son or brother. This kind of division among women wilts their strength. A real change in the life of women can happen only if they realize the value of womanhood and fight against all the male domination happening in the society.

When Sharda expressed her reaction and behaved in a strange way, she was sent to the mental asylum. The normal understanding in the society is that if a boy becomes aggressive, it is part of his masculinity and it is normal; but if a girl becomes aggressive, it is out of mental abnormality and out of moral degradation. Accounts of violence by women is part of the discourse on gender. The violence perpetrated by young women is considered a problem because



hegemonic femininity is commonly perceived as passive, non-aggressive and non-violent. The “abnormal behaviour” by girls is a threat to the moral fabric of society, and something about which something ‘must be done’. In order to keep existing models of femininity intact, female violence has to be portrayed as an aberration. The act is understood as an outcome of the feminist move and is blamed for the erosion of traditional femininity (Burman 74). Throughout the various discourses, girls’ violence is depicted in oppositional ways. On the one hand, it is portrayed as dangerous, irrational, a manifestation of individual pathology, and hence largely incomprehensible, and on the other hand, violent girls are described as coldly calculating, intentionally targeting, manipulative and scheming. Their violence is either trivialised, or amusing, and not as serious as male violence, or it is constructed as particularly frightening (75). Knowing the pathetic condition of her sister, Durga kept all her violent thoughts within her and remained so silent. Her thoughts were inflamed by her tuition master, Harpreet, and she became an instrument of acting out his plan. Had Durga been given enough care and affection by her parents and loved ones, she would not have committed the crime of destroying her entire family. There is no time given to understand the feelings of women in a male dominated society.

When physical violence takes place, it also brings trauma and mental pain. It not only affects the injured persons but those who are depending on them or who are related to their lives. It causes deformity, health problems, economic lose, poverty, mental agony, relational break etc. The victim turns to develop negative attitude towards life. Negative emotions such as anger, revenge,

frustration and despair destroy the well-being of the person. His/her reaction can be either self-destruction in the form of suicide or retaliation in the form of killing the enemy, or destroying his/her property. Thus, violence leads to violence.

Research indicates that defective and abusive parenting practices play a vital role in the development of child psychological disorders. Child physical abuse is very common in economically backward countries. It is a real sign of dysfunctional parenting. A number of studies have shown that behavioural problems, psychological disorders and violent behaviours are results of physical child abuse. Similarly, there is a correlation between harsh and inconsistent parental discipline and the development of child's antisocial behaviour. Besides the behavioural problems, the abused children have deficiency in emotional and cognitive areas. Thus, children who become "victims of physical and emotional abuse show a higher level of depressive symptomatology and depressogenic attributional style than their non-abused peers and report lower self-esteem" (Cerezo 15). Both Sharda and Durga had to suffer bitter experiences all through their lives. They never got a word of appreciation from their parents or any moment of enjoyment with their relatives. Thus, it was sure that they would express some kind of behavioural problems in their lives. In patriarchal system, many women express aggressive or depressive behaviour due to male dominance.

Thus, the study on Kishwar Desai's *Witness the Night* reveals many instances of domestic violence happening in Indian society. Her another novel, *Origins of Love*, gives us insight into a new trend happening in the domain of

domestic violence—surrogacy. Man has taken total control over female body; from the selling of the entire body, now the new concept of lending the womb has caught his attention.

There is a great business deal going on for the body of woman. The flesh trade is now a legalized business. Organ transplantation fetches lot of money to the intermediary. Surrogacy is the recent trend found among the economically backward women in India. There are many issues related to the womb trade. Is it not violence against motherhood and womb? Is it not a denial of a child's maternal care? Who will be the mother to the child? How will a woman simply forget the fruit of her womb? When the healthy embryo is selected, what will be the fate of the rejected embryos—is it not an abortion outside the womb? Kishwar Desai makes us think about these problems through her novel *Origins of Love*.

In India, there are many clinics to foster surrogate mothers. Though the government doesn't promote such practices, there is no law against such practice. 'Madonna and Child Clinic' at Gurgaon owned by Dr. Subhash Pandey already accommodates six ladies of whom two are already pregnant through IVF (Invitro Fertilization). The normal charge for nurturing a pregnancy was twenty lakh rupees. But, when there were two gay couples from Germany and Britain in need of a child, the charge rose up to forty lakh rupees, because dealing with homosexual cases in India was still complicated; it was largely a taboo subject and the laws did not help either. Countries like Germany, Spain, Israel, France and Belgium had already issued notifications that IVF clinics in India should not

entertain surrogacy for citizens of their country (Desai, *OL* 21). It shows that people in the Western culture still value life and human dignity. But the biggest democratic country—India—could afford to have all such practices without any trouble from the government. These practices now go on as something approved by the government or as a part of the state apparatus—mother and child welfare.

In male dominated societies, women are subjected to various types of disciplining of mind and body. The power of controlling and governing both the state and the family rests in the hands of men. Analyzing the implication of the essay on “Governmentality” by Foucault, Lori Reed and Paula Saukko clearly explain his intention in writing the essay:

Governmentality bridges the micropolitics of disciplining the body and mind and the macropolitics of governing the nation-state via management of populations by various programs and institutions, such as education and health care. Doing so draws attention to parallels between historical modes of political governance and the way in which we govern our bodies and selves in our everyday intimate lives. The aim of Foucault’s works on clinics, asylums, prisons, and sexuality was to delineate a particular mode of governing people’s bodies and minds or souls typical of the modern period. (5)

As part of disciplining, female body undergoes different types of transformation. Motherhood is considered natural for women. Therefore, women are supposed to undergo any kind of treatment to become a mother. The modern treatment for pregnancy is so natural that any woman who refuses to undergo such treatment is

considered selfish and arrogant. Therefore, the nonmother who “refuses” treatment is rendered as lacking the self-sacrificial qualities of normative (“natural”) womanhood/motherhood (Throsby 239). The treatment of IVF produces new forms of governance of the female body. The responsibility and the pain of conceiving a child becomes a prime concern of the couples. However, “this drive toward treatment reflects a more pervasive assumption that women, in particular, should “do everything possible” to have a child. . . . These practices are profoundly gendered, with the responsibility falling primarily to the female partners” (248). The treatment of IVF is not just all about reproductive process but rather it creates a new discourse on female body:

. . . for all its “newness,” IVF is both produced by, and productive of, perniciously familiar discourses about the female body as “naturally” reproductive, and unpredictable and liable to failure. This construction results not only in the female body being rendered as an object of medical surveillance and intervention in ways that are easily made invisible through the naturalization of those interventions, but it also means that the female body can be held responsible for the failure of those interventions. This burden of responsibility becomes lost in the construction of “the couple” as the IVF patient—a construction that is sustained by assumptions of reproductive labor as a “natural” part of femininity. (248-49)

Kishwar Desai wants the reader understand how even the protectors or promoters of life go against the principles they professed. Dr. Subhash Pandey was supported by her doctor wife Anita and his colleague, Ashok Ganguly. When

Dr. Pandey felt some uneasiness about homosexuals being given children to look after, his wife reminded him that he was a doctor and not a priest (Desai, *OL* 22). No morality works beyond the power of money. Even the threats from Swami Ganga and the Pratha Suraksha Sansthan, an organization which claimed to be working towards preserving the moral traditions of India and opposed children being given to couples, did not upset Dr. Anita. Her answer to her husband was that Indians had to modernize. Can anything be considered modern that functions against tradition? Will Indians be modernized if we adopt all the western customs? Is the adoption of western culture the criteria for modernization? Kishwar Desai highlights the role of the powerful in implementing in the society certain customs, which inflict pain and suffering. Under the pretext of modernization, the influential sections in the society make use of the economically weak sections. The economical need of women is exploited by these doctors and their team, thwarting away the existing social norms and traditions. The gang that works behind the womb trade is so powerful. Mr. Sharma is the supplier of surrogate women. We get an idea about Mr. Sharma from these lines:

Sharma was the archetypal supplier. He was the guy you called when you needed foreign liquor at short notice, a driving licence without passing the test, a file pushed in a government office, or a new building given clearance without the proper fire-and-safety regulations being adhered to. He could get you medical supplies, oxygen cylinders, expensive perfume, imported cameras. . . . No one knew his first name or where he came

from, but he had made a small fortune from his ability to supply whatever the client wanted. His connections were many, and everyone supported him. He was invaluable in a city like Delhi. (25)

This description about Sharma gives us the idea how unlawfully things happen in the society and how the government departments support such illegal practices. Violation of law is violence against those who obey the law. In this sense, surrogacy is a systemic violence embedded in the medical field.

Those women who are ready for carrying the embryo are selected after a long process. They are thoroughly checked by the doctors and they are provided nutrient food and skin care. Most clients from Europe preferred fair women and so dark skins were always a problem for the agents in India. The Europeans' preference for the fair skin comes from their aversion towards the Asian and African race. To solve this problem or to hide it for a short time, Dr. Subhash had his techniques: "With more expensive clothes, a protein-rich diet, bleach to lighten her skin, and may be some makeup, Sonia could do. Better photographs would have to be taken (especially for the website, which was designed to appeal to Western tastes), in soft pastels and with floral borders" (26-27). In the global market, to sell a product, it has to be according to the taste of the upper class or the superior race. For their need and satisfaction, the lower class and the other race have to toil hard. With the arrival of globalization, men thought of making money ignoring all the ethical standards. The business of surrogacy is benefiting the rich and the Europeans. Many couples in the European countries prefer IVF to natural pregnancy to avoid the struggles of pregnancy and to keep the body

attractive. Nazir Ali, a Customs Officer would see a new form of colonization in the whole business of surrogacy:

Those *goras* are having fewer babies than us, you see. They are getting older, while we have a young population. So now they want to reverse that, get it?

. . . They want our women to stop having babies for us and have them for those *goras* instead. *Our* women do the work, and their population goes up. Don't you see it's a plot? A new way to colonize us. (40)

Once, Nazir Ali and his subordinate, Mehta, seized a container with embryos from UK. They made use of this chance to make money. The container contained twelve cans of embryos and they priced fifty thousand each for releasing the consignment. At the same time, they called the press and informed them that they have confiscated the lot (41). In the whole business there is no morality working out. The Customs get the double advantage of getting their name and photo published in the newspaper and a huge amount as bribe. The ultimate sufferers are the poor women who agree to nurture these embryos in their wombs taking all the physical pains till the birth of the child and the mental pain after the separation of the child. The money offered as a fee for carrying the baby goes to the pockets of the husband or brother or any other relative of the woman. If the woman is capable of carrying for a second time, she has to sign in the next document. Her womb becomes a vessel of fetching money. This is violence to the womb and to its dignity.



Simran, the social activist goes to London in search of the donor of the sperm, who is said to be Edward Walters, a person with the mission of spreading the seed (45). So far, he has fathered fifty children and still ready for the generous deed of donating his sperm to the needy women. His only condition is that once a child is born, the child should not see the father or rather the mother should not tell the child about his/her father. Simran arrived in London to find out the reason for the infection of HIV in the newborn child Amelia, who was born to a surrogate mother. The mother did not have HIV; the embryo might have been infected with the virus. Simran approached Edward on the pretext of getting a child with his help. In many embryo transplantation, strict medical checkup is carried out. However, due to more number of cases to be dealt with, doctors ignore checkup for all cases. This causes severe problems to the mother and the child. In some cases both the mother and the child will infect serious diseases like HIV, tuberculosis, hepatitis or some other genetic disorders. Finally the risk is taken by the helpless mother or the child. When the commissioning parents come to know that the child has some deformity or disease, they refuse to accept the child. Finally, the responsibility of bringing up the child falls on the lady who carried the child in the womb.

Throughout the novel, the craving of the couples to get a child by any means is discussed. Ben and Kate are trying their level best to get a child after three miscarriages. To have a child is a genuine need of a married couple. But in the modern society, “two total strangers would meet over a glass of wine (and cold milk) to plan their future child, who would start his or her journey to life in a

plastic bowl” (52). This situation can very much affect the stability of the society. The parents may not feel any kind of attachment or commitment to the child. The emotional bond between parents and children will be less and children can be abused or mistreated by the same parents. Thus, Kishwar Desai’s narration unfolds the latent element of violence in the whole process of surrogacy and IVF pregnancy.

The facilities provided in the clinic run by Dr. Subhash were comparatively good enough to compete with other such clinics blooming in the different parts of the country. He did it as a marketing strategy and to provide privacy for the gestational mother. This privacy was also essential for the donor or commissioning parents to spend time with their expected child. The facilities varied according to the amount charged from the commissioning parents. Here the concern was not the pregnant woman or the child, but the status of the institution and the satisfaction of the customer, who usually was a foreigner. The real intention of making anything good is not to provide comfort for the deserving women in the clinic. No mercy is shown to these women once they are out of the clinic after the delivery and all the dealings are completed. The total process of surrogacy is done as a business deal. No humanitarian concern is given to the willing women. The womb is just considered as a storage place of the embryo or as a fertile field where crops are cultivated. As long as there are crops, the land is protected and provided with water and necessary manure.

The coaching given to the women in the clinic for improving English and Skill Development was another strategy used by Dr. Subhash and team. Since the

commissioning parents wanted educated women to foster their child, the clinical team wanted to create an impression that all the women in their clinic were well educated and were able to write and read English. Simran Singh, Anita's cousin and social worker, gave them English lessons. They were given basic skills in communication. Many of the women kept in the clinic did not have even the primary education. Therefore, Simran had to teach them the alphabet of English. Preeti, a pregnant woman, learnt to write her name in English, even though "the letters were all uneven, very much like a child's" (70). These women are moulded to the taste of the Western couples. This learning of English would no way help them when they reach their homeland, because they never get a chance to use any of the words they learnt; they do not get enough food to feed their hungry stomach; they have to continue in their previous situation once they reach home. Therefore, the new learning gives no advantage to these poor women; the foreign parents are also to some way cheated because they are made to believe that the woman who carries their child is educated according to their customs. In fact, no literacy is provided other than a few lessons given during the pregnancy. Thus, there is no ethics at play in the whole dealing of surrogacy. This again proves that surrogacy is another example of systemic violence existing in the society.

In order to make the clients believe that the women are educated, Class ten certificates are produced. Mr. Sharma obtained the stamped certificates from the school and space for writing the name was kept blank. When Subhash mentioned that those certificates were incomplete, Ganguly said with a smile:

“You don’t get it, do you? We are the ones who fill the names in” (72). Subhash felt “sorry for the women who would accept the false certificates as just another means for them to earn large sums of money legitimately. They would not even question the web of lies, which surround their new identities. It was how the country functioned” (73). With a person like Mr. Sharma, everything was possible; Mr. Sharma is only one among the thousands in the country working for such needs. To support one corrupt practice there are many more such practices prevailing in the society. When it comes to the matter of money and woman, every door will open at any time.

Kishwar Desai uses Simran Singh to permeate into the clandestine business of rich classes, including doctors, customs officers, business agents etc. Simran’s role as a social worker is suitable to intrude upon the secret areas of an illegal practice going on in the society unperturbed or unchallenged. Simran is presented as an unmarried woman who “preferred to spend her time either working in juvenile-detention centres, or sorting out problems for them at their hospital” (71). It is through the intervention of Simran, the author narrates all the unhealthy practices of the male dominated society.

The practice of surrogacy has both physical and emotional problems. Most of the surrogate mothers get attached to the child after giving birth and the thought of never seeing the child again creates havoc and huge wrench in them. Dr. Anita has pointed out the awesome reaction of some women: “. . . it was all the more difficult when a beautiful white baby emerged from between their dusky thighs, as though they had given birth to a god or goddess. It was a miracle they

would remember for the rest of their lives—and their excitement was palpable” (74). In another case, the breast milk was carefully packaged and sent to Australia where the child would feed from it for at least three months. The mother of the child felt connected to her child through this process. As Subhash was experiencing all these changes happening in front of his eyes, he began to think how globalization changed the concept of motherhood; it has made “motherhood complex almost beyond belief and its boundaries were constantly shifting, as everyone searched for the immaculate conception and birth” (74).

The number of surrogate mothers increases in India year after year. In the US or in Europe women will not take up such task because they very well know what they are venturing into. Even “in India, no self-respecting, educated woman from a middle class background would agree to have another couple’s baby—not unless there was a very compelling reason” (75). The advances in the medical field and the introduction of IVF have transformed the lives of women and their destinies, and disrupted the concept of family and family relationships in general. In order to show this complexity, Kishwar Desai adds another incident happened in the clinic:

In his hospital last year a mother had given birth to her own daughter’s child, since the daughter was unable to carry an infant to full term.

. . . Subhash, along with many millions of Indians, had pondered over the fate of the father of the child in this case. He had tried to imagine the bizarre situation on which the man was caught. Not only was his mother-

in-law injected with his sperm, she was the mother of her own grandchild.

Did that make him both the grandfather *and* the father? (75)

How cunning a man can be in dealing with sperms and eggs is shown to us through the character of Dr. Ashok Ganguly. He was thinking about how to blackmail the donors of eggs and sperms, by telling them the need to prevent the possibility of misuse. If the remaining sperm or egg is used without permission, another child can be born with the same DNA of a legitimate child or the parents. So in future, if a child claims for his/her parenthood in these donors, their life will be in trouble. The legitimate child may have to shockingly hear about his/her brother/sister living somewhere and claiming all the rights as he/she would. Thinking about this possibility, Ganguly was preparing to charge an amount from the donors to destroy the remaining sperms and eggs, and to keep the deal completely secret and out of danger (76). Creating fear and putting people under pressure is another method of violence in surrogacy.

Kishwar Desai presents the story of Radhika, a 16-year-old girl, who was pregnant with twins for a gay couple from France, to show that the majority of the women involved in the womb business are helpless women. She got involved into the business because her husband, a construction worker, suffered head injury from the site. In order to meet the expensive treatment, she needed money. Sharma met her on the roadside in such situation and she was trapped into an endless cycle of surrogacy (78). Radhika, already a victim of child marriage, was enslaved into another social evil of surrogacy. The reason for choosing adolescent girls is that they have better eggs and the chance of miscarriage is less.

The exploiters know how and when to approach the helpless people under the guise of a saviour.

There came another girl of fifteen years into the clinic led by Sharma. She came there to donate eggs for an infertile Indian woman who was in her forties. The woman did not want her husband to know she was unable to have children. The eggs would be stored under her name. The girl was fair with curly hair just as the client had demanded (77).

The case of Sonia reveals to us another face of exploitation of women. Sonia, a widow, now living with her cousin, is offered to the needy men in Delhi. She was not allowed to go out without the permission of her cousin Rohit, a peon at the home of the Delhi Health Minister, Renu Mishra. One day, Rohit hit her on the face for going out to meet the doctor without his permission. After washing the bleeding nose, Sonia thought “she had something else to sell, putting her arms around her abdomen and pressing it as the doctor had done” (83). The visitors of Sonia were mainly the assistants, working in Health Minister Renu’s office. Again, this indicates how the Health Department functions in our country. No one cared what the officers did and what types of people were employed in the office. Rohit tried to please all the officers by all means possible (offering Sonia also) because he knew one day he too would be able to sit on a chair next to the Chief Minister (86). It was difficult for a widow to live alone without the support of a man in our society. Therefore, Sonia had no other option than obeying Rohit. Sonia took every precaution not to get pregnant or to infect with any disease, as it would affect her chance for earning money through surrogacy. She needed money

to educate her two children now living with her parents in the village. She had to sell her body to keep her caretaker happy and she had to rent her womb to keep her children and parents happy. When Sonia told Rohit about the plan of surrogacy, his shrewd mind thought of another plan. Renu Mishra wished to have a child to continue the dynastic rule. According to the present condition in Indian democracy, ruling was a family affair. Renu Madam could rule for twenty years, but what after that? (198). So Sonia was used as a surrogate for Renu and Vineet Bhai, her close associate. The question to be asked is whether an economically backward woman is an object to be exploited. Trespassing into the rights of a woman is not yet considered violence because it is part of the approved system—a system supporting male dominance. Anything that has become part of the system is unchallenged before the law.

Even when the doctors at the clinic claim that they take all the precaution in the IVF, the reality is very different. In the case of Sonia, she was offered to many men for their sexual gratification and then used as surrogate for many couples. How can we assure that she is not infected with any disease?

The problem related to Amelia was so complicated that neither the doctors nor Simran could find a solution. Amelia, born from Preeti, to British couple Mike and Susan Oldham, tested HIV positive. No one knew from where the child got the disease because the blood samples of the couple did not have any trace of HIV. The test result of Preeti before the IVF was also clear. Now to test the blood once again, Preeti was not available because immediately after receiving the amount, she left the clinic and no whereabouts was known. Amelia,



the premature baby was kept in the incubator while the parents arrived to receive the child. In order to pacify the parents of the child, they were offered a tour package to Rajasthan. The most tragic part of it was that the couple died in a freak car accident while returning from Jaipur. It seemed that the car had got fire following the crash and only the Oldham's charred bodies were recovered (115). But the driver had a miraculous escape. In this condition, there arose the question of the citizenship of the child. "Where would the child go, and to whom did the child belong, with both the parents dead and the surrogate missing?" (116). Here the child has become a scapegoat of this unnatural progenitive process.

Simran Singh wanted to find out the cause of the HIV in baby Amelia. She went to London and met Edward Walters as his name was scribbled on the corner of the application form filled by Mike and Susan. After a prolonged and troublesome investigation, Simran came to know that the sperm was collected from Martin, now a twenty year old boy, who was born to Susan through Edward. Martin and Peter were gay couple and they wanted to have a child. When Susan came to know that Martin was HIV positive and would die soon, she wanted to keep his memory through him. She took him to Mybaby.com clinic run by Dr. Hansen and deposited his sperm with the surety that the HIV will be separated from the sample before being used for the union. The egg was from Susan. Without removing the virus, the embryo was sent to India just after one week and thus the child was born with HIV. Now another problem is revealed; Amelia is a result of incest—Susan's egg and Martin's sperm: mother-son relation. In this relation, Edward is the grandfather of Amelia as Martin was his son from Susan.

Thus, the web created by surrogacy, IVF and ART is complex. The agonizing psyche of the people involved in this web of complications crave for a relief, though such a craving never finds fulfillment. A suffering created by a system cannot be erased until the system itself vanishes.

It is not only those who can not conceive or bear a child opt for a surrogate child, but those who want to preserve their figure or career, or both. The beauty conscious ladies with affluent richness can easily avoid the pains of pregnancy and they can go on with their profession uninterrupted. As long as there are poverty-stricken women, rich ladies can afford to have a child as a commodity brought from the market. Women are forced to keep their beauty to continue in their profession or to get affection from their husbands. When a woman loses her physical beauty, she is neglected by her husband. In certain careers, only attractive women can continue in the job. As long as a woman's physical structure loses its attractiveness, she is at the risk of losing her job. This fear factor compels women working in the multinational companies to keep away from pregnancy. The discourse on feminine beauty is centering on the colour of the skin and the shape of the body. Men value women mostly with these parameters. The mental tortures a woman undergoes after losing her physical beauty is the result of male domination on female body.

Surrogacy becomes a violation of women's rights on other grounds as well. As Kishwar Desai puts it through Simran, "they are being completely and thoughtlessly exploited—especially when they were given cycles of hormones to produce donor eggs, and persuaded to carry multiple embryos" (111). Sometimes

the drugs given to induce egg production could be life threatening. These drugs caused physical discomfort and mental stress (209). Kate, a lady who wanted to have a child through IVF, had such a bad experience in the clinic. The surrogates are forced to undergo caesareans to adjust to the busy schedule of the commissioning parents.

Many of the problems related to surrogacy would be avoided if the couple opted for adoption. But the government is forced to harden the adoption laws due to the abuse of children after the adoption. Some parents use the child as a domestic worker, or, if the child is a girl, sexually abuse her or offer her in front of men. Such incidents forced the government to make strict regulations for adoption. Moreover, all the desiring parents wanted a child with their DNA, their genes, and everything their own. No one wanted to settle for a child who might have nothing to do with him/her. Still, in the corrupt system, the abuses related to adoption and surrogacy go on among the rich and the poor alike.

The women chosen for surrogacy are so young that they can be used again for other couples. Many of them are young ladies, either abandoned by their husbands, or widows, or adolescent girls, who are trapped by the agents. As long as they don't have a better option to go anywhere or to live a better life somewhere, they are used again by the doctors. So, like bonded slaves, they work on the demand of other people and produce children for some strangers. These women have to leave their home, if they have one, and live like a cloistered nun in a clinic. When someone in their village asked about them, the answer given would be that they had gone to the city for work. No one would know that their

neighbouring lady had gone to carry the blastocyte/embryo of someone far off this country. In the world of globalization, where everything is valued in economic terms, a fetus is also a commodity which can be produced in a lab and transferred to a womb, without thinking of the emotional attachment the growing fetus can have to the womb that protects it. The womb, that protects the life inside it, can never forget the fruit of its labour. After the delivery of the child, the woman comes home with a heavy heart for losing her nurtured child.

There is a group of people to exploit both the couples, who are craving for a child, and the women who are in dire need of money. When these people sign the agreement, there is not enough time left to think about the consequences of the deal. The agents and the doctors can squeeze the couples to extract more money and bargain with the surrogate women for a lesser amount. The IVF and related treatments fetch doctors and agents lots of money. The margin left for the intermediaries and the doctors is so huge that they can start another clinic in some other part of the country. As long as the laws do not hurt them, they can go on with this exploitation.

The possibility of mix up of the sperms with the eggs of another woman is so common an issue. The commissioning parents may not get the child from the union of their sperm and egg. Though the doctors claim the confidentiality and complete safety for the embryos, none of the parents goes for a DNA checkup after the birth of the child. The seized container of embryos which was addressed to the Madona and Child Clinic at Gurgaon was given to Freedom Hospital at Mumbai. All the cans containing the embryos had addresses of the couples for

whom the embryos were created. This exchange was done by customs officer Nazir Ali because of the deal he had made with Dr. Wadhvani. Ali had told Diwan Nath Mehta, a subordinate officer of Ali, to deliver the consignment at the Freedom Hospital at Mumbai. Mehta was offered a bundle of thousand rupee notes for this job. Even though Dr. Subhash Pandey was ready to offer a bribe to get the consignment released, Ali told that the container was then the property of the government and they could not do anything. He consoled the Pandeys that the next container would be given to them as a compensation for the present one. In a corrupt system, it is easy to cheat someone and continue to be a well-wisher. Since the intention of each party is to make money, the mutual support will continue.

The embryos sent to the Freedom Hospital in Mumbai were used for the experiment in stem cell surgery. Many patients with fatal injuries and prolonged diseases were experimented with embryonic stem-cell surgery, which was still banned in India. The customs officer Nazir Ali, who was fighting against the new method of colonization, knew that the embryos sent to Dr. Wadhvani were not used for producing white *goras*. Therefore, while sending the containers to Freedom Hospital, he could get both money and his jihad fulfilled. The commissioning parents at the Mybaby.com Clinic in the UK used to give more samples to the clinic in order to select the healthy embryo for the surrogacy. After the selection, the remaining embryos were sent to India as per the demand from India. None of the parents enquired about the remaining embryos, since their main concern was to have a baby of their own by any means. Now with the

advancement of technology, medical field can define the motherhood or parenthood without the knowledge or permission of the woman or parents. If the clinic develops two embryos instead of one, the commissioning parents will have two children, one living somewhere without their knowledge. Later on, this child can claim parenthood on this couple. So, more than a matter of ethical concern, surrogacy can create legal problems and instability in family relations. This will add up to the domestic violence already existing in the society.

Dr. Ashok Ganguly, who is so pragmatic in making money, did not agree with Dr. Pandey in refusing the demand of the gay couples opting for a child. He could demand more money from the couples if they were gay, because in many countries, they were not allowed to have a child. As there were complications in their countries, these couples came to India for fulfilling their wish. Dr. Ganguly made use of this chance to exploit them. Knowing that Dr. Pandey was not favouring this practice, Dr. Ganguly started his own clinic at Delhi with the name 'New Life'. He had great linkage with Dr. Wadhvani of Freedom Hospital. Dr. Ganguly made use of the embryos for both surrogacy and embryonic stem-cell surgery. He wanted to be well established before the laws regarding stem-cell surgery were approved by the government. Having found that Amelia was HIV positive, Dr. Ganguly took Preeti, the surrogate mother away from Madona and Child Clinic. On the way, she was thrown out of the car and suffered serious head injuries causing coma. She is now being treated at the New Life clinic with embryonic stem-cell surgery. Dr. Ganguly was funded by Viva-Bio, a company that supplies medicines related to stem-cell surgery. The company used him to

conduct experiment with the medicine on the unconscious patients. He could go to any level as far as money is concerned. In the first instance, Preeti was used as an agent for making money, and in this clinic, she was used as an experimental object. This innocent woman was not allowed to have a normal life, even after her great sacrifices for her family. She could not escape from the chain of violence although her life.

The multibillion dollar business of surrogacy causes innumerable problems to women and children in the society. The dignity of a pregnant woman is bargained; the relations are redefined; the life of a newborn child is at stake; ethical principles in medicine are diluted; corruption among the professionals and bureaucrats increases; the social system of family is disturbed. When an illegal practice is supported by the state, it becomes part of the system that promotes violence.

Patriarchy defines reality in masculine terms and women's worth is identified in relation to her male counterpart. When women internalise this ideology, they see their social status as contingent upon their maintenance of relationships with men (Thompson 273). When man decides what woman should do, the identity of the woman as the 'subject of the enunciated' is no more in existence. She is produced by man and exists only so far as man embraces his own sexuality at the expense of his spirituality. Woman's one aim is to perpetuate the sexuality of man, because if she did not, she would not exist. It is in this context, in *The Metastases of Enjoyment* Žižek holds the opinions of Weininger and Lacan that "woman therefore does not exist" (142). The various discourses

on sexuality existing in the patriarchal system make woman a symptom of man. Woman is only a symptom or an embodiment of the betrayal of man's desire. In *Enjoy Your Symptom*, Žižek comments that man has compromised his spirituality for the desire of woman; "he gave way as to his desire" (154). In this process, he has completely ignored the dignity of womanhood and made use of the woman's body for pleasure and wealth.

As Žižek has stated, there is violence inherent to this normal state of things. All the supporting institutions of the government like police, court, public offices, and the service sectors like medical, educational and financial departments functioning in the patriarchal society are systems of systemic violence. A woman does not get recognition at her home or in public places; her concerns are not addressed in both these spaces. The narration of various incidents of child abuse, domestic violence and problems of surrogacy in Kishwar Desai's novels help us see the areas of objective violence existing in the male dominated Indian societies.



## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusion**

The study has discussed the various aspects of violence—definition, types and causes of violence—giving special emphasis on violence towards women. The ideological dominance in the society favours men and the institutions and structures construct law based on the dominant ideology. Economic insecurity, unjust distribution of rights, social negligence and religious restrictions develop frustration in people, and end up in violent outbursts. Many theories by sociologists, anthropologists, environmentalists and psychologists have explained different theories concerning the reasons for violence. This thesis has made a comprehensive study on various research writings to include different viewpoints of writers on the topic of violence. Thinkers like Althusser, Foucault, Bourdieu, Galtung and Deleuze spoke on the structural nature of violence. Žižek worked on their concepts and classified the objective violence as systemic and symbolic. He attacks capitalists and their strategy of globalization, and the fundamentalists and their ideological stand for promoting systemic and symbolic violence in the modern times. All these writers have seen violence as a discourse, a representation of frustration and a resistance strategy adopted by different sections of society.

One of the well-known philosophers and cultural critics of the twentieth century, Slavoj Žižek examines the way we look at violence. There are many things we do not perceive or misperceive in violence. Taking examples and

excerpts from history, philosophy, psychology and every day events, Žižek states in his book, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, that there are two forms of violence: subjective and objective. In our reading, we usually perceive only the subjective violence; or rather, one form of violence blurs our vision of seeing the other forms of violence. To solve the problems related to violence, one has to look into the agents of symbolic and systemic violence such as racism, hate-speech, discrimination, the prevalent political and economic systems and various social structures. This study has brought to light such forms of violence narrated in the select works of four women writers.

The thesis has analysed Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*, Nadifa Mohamed's *The Orchard of Lost Souls*, Jean Sasson's *For the Love of a Son* and *Mayada: Daughter of Iraq*, and Kishwar Desai's *Origins of Love* and *Witness the Night*, in the light of the Žižekian exposition on violence. All these writers represent various cultural groups and their writings depict characters from different socio-cultural backgrounds. In all these works, there are detailed narrations of innumerable incidents that unveil the tortures and traumas of the female characters in the various phases of their lives. These writers have tried to bring to the awareness of the power holders and the public the bare and unending process of the various forms of violence happening in their society or worldwide. In *Americanah*, Chimamanda brings to forefront the lives of two lovers in the poverty-stricken Nigeria and the exodus of the people to the secure places in search of better jobs. Nadifa Mohamed's *The Orchard of Lost Souls* gives the narration of a refugee camp, civil war and the tortures towards women by the

police in Somalia. Jean Sasson's *For the Love of a Son* presents the story of Maryam's fight against the second-class existence in her community, fight for equality and the search for her abducted child in the war torn territories of Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia. *Mayada: Daughter of Iraq* presents the heart-rending story of the brutalities and tortures faced by eighteen women, who were kept in the prison during the reign of Saddam Hussein. Kishwar Desai, in *Witness the Night* and *Origins of Love*, gives the in-depth depiction of the various problems faced by women in the northern part of India and highlights the problems related to surrogacy, foetal sex determination, sex-selective abortions, female infanticide, child abuse, domestic violence, trafficking in women and inequality prevailing in the globalized India.

Some of the issues that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the Nigerian novelist, depicts in her novel *Americanah* are gender discrimination, racism, structural inequality and the impact of globalization in African culture. The love relation of two teenagers—Ifemelu and Obinze—in the native and the transferred culture forms the central theme of the novel. The mental conflict Ifemelu feels while living in America due to her racial inferiority and her separation from Obinze makes the life all the more unbearable. The transformation of the life style due to globalization and the issues of migration during civil war are also narrated in this novel. Globalization promotes systemic violence in various forms. The education system followed in the world promotes the interest of the select class of people. What Ifemelu saw in America was the superior feeling of the people about their method of teaching-learning process. But, she very well

understood the teaching-learning process in her country was far better than that in America. The various discourses on race are instances of symbolic violence existing in the US. The lexical and semantic difference in English gave opportunity for the Americans to ridicule the black. Systemic violence was visible in employment sector. Ifemelu could not get a decent job even with her medical qualification. Corruption and malpractices were also part of the administrative system. Thus, *Americanah* presents examples of various systemic and symbolic violence.

The Somali-British writer Nadifa Mohamed in *The Orchard of Lost Souls* presents the stories of three women characters in the politically unstable land of Somalia. The struggle to survive, the animosity to rebel, the determination to fight back, and the desire to love and live form the plot of the novel. The existing system and the exploitation by a few, further aggravate the pathetic living condition of people. The economic backwardness, the internal conflicts, political instability and malfunctioning military regime are the causes and results of the systemic violence happening in Somalia. The incidents narrated in the novel reflect the systemic violence, especially violence against women, going on in the country. One can notice the incidents narrated by Nadifa Mohamed as examples of Zizek's explanation of objective violence. The powerful structures existing in the society do not realize that the pathetic condition of the people is the result of the former's negligence of responsibility. Even a child below the age of ten is mistreated by the military corps and the lady who questioned the misbehaviour of the army was also given brutal punishment. When the political administration

fails to provide job opportunities, the hapless women find the alternative in prostitution. Finally, the unrest and insecure condition in the nation leads the people to flee the land and find refuge in nearby countries. All such situations explained in *The Orchard of Lost Souls* are the results of objective violence.

The main theme in the works of Jean Sasson, an American writer, is the predicaments of women living in the Middle East. The author of the bestselling *Princess* trilogy, Sasson, in *For the Love of a Son*, presents the life of Maryam, a determined woman who fights against the unequal treatment given to women by the religio-political laws. Maryam is only a representative of the rebellious women who searches for personal identity and freedom. The episodes from Maryam's life presents the systemic violence of patriarchal system, religion and fundamentalism. It was difficult for Maryam to fight against all these structures because, no one noticed any anomaly in these systems; the inherent nature of violence was unnoticed or ignored in the established social systems. The unjust laws of the judiciary concerning the rights of women, lack of support from the relatives and economic instability were the major barriers in front of Maryam to fight against the brutality of her husband. The various discourses going in the society about female children form symbolic violence. No one rejoiced over the birth of a girl child in the family. The society looked with contempt and the family members accused and blamed the woman who gave birth to girl child. The instances of such symbolic violence are presented in *For the Love of a Son*. Along with the narration of the life of Maryam, the author presents the fundamentalistic and fanatic rule of Taliban in Afghanistan. In the disguise of

implementing religious morality, especially on women, Taliban restricted all types of enjoyment and recreational activities. The Sharia law favoured men and did not find fault with men in matters of domestic violence and sexual activities. Fundamentalism and orthodox practices of the religions have restricted the free movement of many of the believers. Religious fundamentalism has developed to a level of political power, controlling all the areas of social life.

*Mayada: Daughter of Iraq* gives the lived-in experience of Mayada, a royal woman, and other seventeen prisoners during the Baathist regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. The dictator's rule in Iraq restricted freedom of expression. The press and media were not allowed to speak or write anything against the government. The supporters and spy-workers of the government received rewards and awards for the works they did. The prison officials found pleasure in inflicting more pain upon the inmates. There was no consideration given for a feeding mother or an ailing person. Al-Baladiyat prison in Baghdad was notorious for experimenting with new torture methods. The various structures under the government functioned to promote violence. Religious laws were also misinterpreted to support the oppressive systems. Mayada and other prisoners could not appeal for their relief. Many of the relatives of these prisoners paid money to the prison officials with the hope of release of their loved ones; but the corrupt system did nothing for the release. Denial of justice is a violence of human rights. Thus, the various incidents in the biographical memoir stand witness to systemic violence during Saddam Hussein's rule in Iraq. The systemic and symbolic violence of fundamentalism, terrorism, dictatorship and patriarchy

narrated in Jean Sasson's *For the Love of a Son* and *Mayada: Daughter of Iraq* is analyzed in the fifth chapter.

Kishwar Desai's *Witness the Night* narrates all the major problems faced by women in general, as a consequence of patriarchal violence. The depiction of the struggles of two girl children to survive in a male dominated family and the various heart-rending incidents of torture, injustice, discrimination, sexual abuse etc. make the novel an eye opener to the violations of women's rights. Durga faced the discrimination for being a girl and being dark in complexion. The verbal attack in the form of teasing, ridiculing, cursing and scolding are symbolic violence experienced by the two girl children—Sharda and Durga—in the Atwal family. The male dominance in the family was inextricably in high degree that these girls were not recognized as children of the Atwal family. They were freely exposed to be used by their tutor. Later on, Sharda had to live in the asylum, in a secret place. There were other girls brought from outside to work in the farm; what they had to do actually was to satisfy the boys. The negligence of the Atwal family in giving heed to the voices of its female members resulted in the destruction of thirteen members of that family. Even when the only survivor was accused of murdering the entire family, the main culprit escaped the scene. The narration of all these incidents in the novel highlights the patriarchal discourse, which is another form of systemic violence. The study about the novel reveals that in patriarchal society, the law enforcing agents like the police, the knowledge-imparting agents like the teachers and even the protecting guardians

like the parents did not support the talented girls. Domestic violence was an accepted practice in male dominated society.

*Origins of Love* discusses another problem emerging in the patriarchal society—the problem of surrogate mother—and poses a doubt in the dignity of a mother's womb. Human life and the value of womb are measured in monetary terms. Kishwar Desai questions the trade of womb-borrowing and the psychological alienation experienced by the womb donor and the replanted child in a globalized market. She wants the reader understand how even doctors, the protectors or promoters of life, go against the principles they professed. Further, she highlights the role of the powerful in implementing in the society certain customs that inflict pain and suffering. Under the pretext of modernization, the influential sections in the society make use of the economically weak sections. The economical need of women is exploited by doctors and their team, thwarting away the existing social norms and traditions. Illegal practices happen in the society with the support of the government departments. Violation of law is violence against those who obey the law. In this sense, surrogacy is a systemic violence embedded in the medical field. Thus, various instances of domestic violence, which form part of systemic and symbolic violence, are analyzed in the sixth chapter.

The study is significant in the contemporary socio-cultural context as many writers are focusing their attention on the issues of violence in and around the world. Many researchers have discussed the issues of violence from socio-cultural context and analyzed the subjective visible violence. To see the problem



of violence in its totality, the hidden agents, the promoters of systemic violence, have to be dealt with. This research crosses the Discipline of English literature and touches the areas of Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology and Political Science. Therefore this study, focusing on both subjective and objective violence against women and their rights, gains due importance.

Zizek's categorization of violence helps us see the inner circle of violence. One is prompted to blame the systems rather than blaming the one engaging in violence in certain cases like civil war and mob attacks happening in the world. The failure of the state in fulfilling the duties propels the people to act against the system. All the troubles that happen in the society negatively affect women and children. Male dominance causes trouble for women all over the world.

The thesis has analysed the different ways people impose laws through violence. The systems functioning in a state use force to implement any law. The resistance to the law is handled by the use of force—police, army, and court. The concerns of the common people are ignored while implementing the policies of the government. The frustration and internal conflicts of the affected citizens are thrown aside in the jubilation of the commissioning of the big projects. The capitalist controlled media highlight the merits and benefits of the projects in order to get more support from the public for the government. It is only through violence, nations have achieved development. In the case of men, at least some sections might have raised resistance to the developmental activities going on in the world incessantly. But the nature has silently suffered the violence done to its

biodiversities. The demand of globalization for more comfort and luxury, its craving for amassing wealth, and its focus on anthropocentrism looted the nature and the various cultures of the docile communities.

The existence of a healthy human society very much depends on the wellbeing of every member and on the coordination of each segment in the society. When the power politics and ideologies begin to suppress some of the less prominent communities and the indigenous cultures, there arise upheavals, unrest and counter attacks by the weaker sections. Whether the violence is unleashed by the powerful or the weaker section, the real sufferers are women and children. If we are to reduce any of the violations of the human rights, we need to focus on the objective violence or the systemic violence. Women writers of all the cultures have presented with high dexterity the atrocities, violations, and brutalities against women in their works. The works selected for the study presented all major issues pertaining to violence. The depiction of the social realities by the writers can be considered an exhortation to the public to take practical measures to address the issues related to violence. The trend of lingering on the feminist perspective can be given a broad outlook and a new horizon of study is possible by perceiving violence in its various forms. Instead of becoming horrified by reading the physical tortures and atrocities, one can see the real cause of such violence. The general trend of pin-pointing an individual or an organization as the agent of spreading violence can be reduced, and one can see the violence inherent in the political, economic and religious systems. Zizek's discourse on violence helps academicians and media to focus on the systemic and

symbolic violence rather than to focus on the visible expressions of violence. His exhortation to focus on the systemic and the symbolic violence, the two forms of objective violence, reveals different structures, institutions, discourses and ideologies that beget objective violence. The analysis of the select works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Nadifa Mohamed, Jean Sasson and Kishwar Desai included in this study is a new approach to the study of violence presented in literature. The issues narrated by these writers are not only a concern for the critical thinkers but also for social workers, psychologists, investigators, political administrators and lovers of justice and peace. The study provides enough critical insight to read the works of other writers from a similar angle and opens up a new perspective to view violence happening in the world.

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