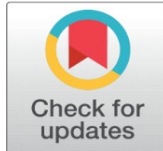
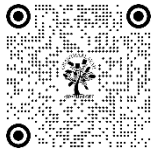


THE WOMAN AS REACTION TO TRAUMA IN A PATRIARCHY - VAIDEHI 'S AKKU (A MEMORY CALLED AMMACHI)

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the relation between trauma and women by analyzing Vaidehi's Akku in A Woman Called Ammachi. It seeks to understand how the prevailing norms of masculinity further adds to the already existing emotional bankruptcy, causes greater mental harm, and discourage the pursuit of assistance. Using qualitative secondary study, the research emphasizes the narrative of Akku as the case of women who are subjugated by the systems. The paper suggest that women's trauma cannot be healed without the abolition of the patriarchal ways of thinking and the empowerment of females. This study explains how feminists need to take up the themes of trauma, self-empowerment and recollection as a source of strength.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Trauma, Women, Suppression, Vaidehi, Empowerment, Psychological Distress, Societal Norms, Feminist Discourse, Healing Pathways

1. INTRODUCTION

Research Background

The impact of trauma on women and the subsequent reaction of women has been a concern for scholars in literature, especially regarding the Indian scenario. In this light, Akku, a short story in the collection A Memory Called Ammachi, written by Vaidehi, seeks to address the status of women in society and how they have learnt to cope with trauma in a patriarchal society (BENTUR, 2020). The work depicts the life of Akku, an abuse survivor and how she copes emotionally and struggles to define herself in a patriarchal world that is oppressive to her gender. The biological society that she is born into has created a set of ideas and practices of how one should behave in a relationship, the practice of self-love and respect, to mention but a few. Akku's trauma is not a result of a psychotic mental collapse, nor is it due to abandonment or treachery, it is how women are generally perceived to be and expected to behave by society that torments them. In paternalistic cultures, it is a common occurrence for women's ordeal to be overlooked or trivialized which makes

classifying this suffering as a personal experience quite misplaced (Rein, 2019). Stifling of women's presence, their pain, and their voices in such contexts are what brought about the trauma that Akku had to deal with.

The depiction presented by Vaidehi's character departs from the traditional understanding of Akku as a woman's mental and emotional state by addressing the reparative power and the psychosocial misconceptions of the woman (Northrup, 2020). The scope of disavowal and repression as trauma coping mechanisms as well as the resulting state of introspection and ultimate acknowledgement of self is broad. Battery, trauma, gender, and culture all seem to intersect in Akku's life experience. Women like Akku are at times trapped in the nexus of trauma. With a lack of supportive systems combined with patriarchal boundaries over one's self-autonomy and family-oriented silence policies, one's condition worsens. In essence, through Akku we see the nested feature of trauma in a capitalist patriarchy as she looks at the individual and the social turmoil of women. By exploring the reverse panorama of trauma experienced by women like Akku, this story also illustrates the possibly greater emotional and psychological effects of the patriarchy over the possibilities of overcoming trauma and self-exploration (Ahmad and Vismara, 2021). However, these possibilities are within a limited competence. This context provides a framework for understanding the relation of literature with women from patriarchal societies and the trauma women suffer from oppression in society.

Aim and objectives

Aim

This research aims to analyze the portrayal of women's reactions to trauma in a patriarchal society through Vaidehi's Akku and explore its psychological and emotional implications.

Objectives

- To examine how patriarchy shapes Akku's response to trauma.
- To analyze the emotional and psychological impact of patriarchal oppression on women.
- To investigate the societal forces that perpetuate women's trauma in the story.
- To explore potential pathways to healing and self-discovery within a patriarchal structure.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, researchers, social activists, and writers have been recognizing and detailing the effects of trauma so often experienced and endured by women suffering in the grips of a patriarchal society. Thus, Vaidehi's film Akku depicts a woman's life who grapples with trauma within a patriarchal structure and merits even deeper analysis. In a patriarchal society and system, men hold sovereignty over women, and that often involves violations and physical abuse of women which tends to be concealed. Within such a framework, it is quite evident that women's trauma becomes neglected, erased, downplayed, or even taken for granted. It is also worth mentioning the works of various scholars. For instance, Spivak (1988), explains how the decisions and social constructions in a patriarchal society suppress and further the trauma of women irrespective of their existing discrimination. Here, in the case of Akku, it's not only domestic betrayal or voids of loss that welcomes the trauma for the protagonist, but rather the parameters that a woman is supposed to live and be governed by. These parameters set out by the society on what, how, and to what extent she would operate, react and in fact feel all of this, as the trauma itself becomes an act of 'her' gender oppression.

As Judith Herman explains in her book *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), trauma does not only take the shape of individual suffering within the context of women in a patriarchal society (Arel, 2018). Herman starts from the premise that trauma in such contexts is often exacerbated due to the ideologies that are employed in ignoring or disregarding the pain of women. In the case of Akku, her response to trauma is conditioned by these oppressive structures. Hence, her pain is both private and public. The trauma that patriarchy causes to women is interrelated to their culture and social practices, rather purely, ethnographic. In other words, the way Akku reacts to her trauma of suffering is the way she has been socialized to be rather than what she chooses to be. This explains how women tend to more often than not accept the pain that is embedded into their lives and is a core part of who they are and their lives (Arel, 2018). Thus, for Akku, trauma is one more instance of the trauma engulfing women in a patriarchal society where women are passive objects expecting to be quiet and obedient.

A further dimension of trauma literature in patriarchal contexts that deserves attention is the absence of women-willing supportive structures. Feminist theorist Bell Hooks (2000), states that the subordination of women in any society means that such women suffer in silence. As a result, there is insufficient emotional acceptance and a necessary absence of a safe platform for women to be able to voice their pain which in turn becomes a constant cycle of trauma. In Akku, the

titular character is shown to be innocent of such support. It is made much easier for women to internalize their suffering and shield it from the rest of the world. Furthermore, a key concept in understanding the world of emotion and the psychological impact of patriarchy revolves around the experience of trauma. Several scholars argue how trauma distorts a woman's self-image and identification (Shapiro and Klaus, 2021). More specifically, in her case, she has a trauma that she 'carried' which made her question her "worth", it was exacerbated by the notion in patriarchy that a woman's worth arises from serving others in the family and society.

Although there exists a significant body of literature on trauma and patriarchy, there is still a substantial void about the specific coping processes and healing journeys of women such as Akku who are anchored to a patriarchal framework through which their potential is constrained. There are a sizeable number of studies that address the psychological effects of trauma, but relatively few address the steps that women in such systems take towards healing for instance their reclaiming of their agency (Taylor Miller *et al.* 2021). Moreover, the scholarship that there is tends to concentrate on trauma in 'snapshots', rather than considering the more complex, continuous and recursive trauma that women experience in patriarchal societies. This neglect is important for it further limits our comprehension of ways in which women can withstand and in the end suture the damage caused by patriarchal institutions and ideologies, which is critical to the quest for empowerment and mental fortification of women. Thus, the study of Akku will aim to touch on these aspects, particularly looking at ways of healing and getting out of this kind of shell.

Impact of Patriarchal Norms on Akku's Trauma

As per studies conducted, patriarchal values scout the way women experience trauma and the way they behave when traumatized. A woman named Akku in Vaidehi's writing is subjected to the trauma of patriarchy because it is the roles that patriarchy expects out of her which make her suffer in silence. Patriarchal culture tends to naturalize violence whether physical or emotional and it is this cultural tendency which leads to unlearned trauma. Even feminist writers like Judith Butler (1990) have shown the absence of trauma in within Patriarchal societies during their works (Borg, 2020). This is the type of trauma experienced by Akku, for compliance is required of her not only socially but also emotionally. The result can be a chronic form of PTSD because the woman in question has not just been sexually abused but has also been socially conditioned figuratively speaking, to apply silence and obey. Because women are social beings and such beings are brought up in a patriarchal society, they slice their voices and silence their traumas, griefs and pains, which makes healing a farfetched dream.

Psychological Effects of Patriarchal Oppression

Feminist researchers have observed how women are structurally disadvantaged on a societal level, as it has an impact on their psychological wellbeing, the repercussions on their health and wellbeing are alarming. For instance, scholars like Bell Hooks (2000) explain how women growing up in a patriarchal society possess an inner sense of inferiority, which is caused by the constant belittling of their existence (Swain, 2017). For Akku, the protagonist, there is the trauma of personal loss and the trauma of patriarchy both at the same time. This dualism aggravates Akku's psychological pain, where she learns to endure pain submissively. Being forced to be occupied in subordinate jobs reduces the target's self-esteem and results in anxiety and depression. Furthermore, the desire to care for someone, deeply embedded in women, often makes them neglect and avoid their trauma - an act of self-silencing, which is both sad and incredibly powerful all at once. All of these become the source of emotional pain that most females wade through their entire lives, which makes it impossible for them to truly heal or nurture their self-worth.

Lack of Support Systems for Women in Patriarchal Contexts

In societies governed by patriarchal norms, it is not unusual for women to suffer from anxiety and stress owing to the ineffective support systems that have existed for a considerable period of time. Research on women shows that most women in these societies do not have the capabilities or the geographical sociocultural boundaries that would enable them to work towards the traumatic experiences and the aftermath that follow (Gómez and Gobin, 2020). For instance, in the case of Akku, her trauma gets worse because she is devoid of a support system and is also isolated. Family members can dictate the emotions that women display which further indicates the kyriarchy's stranglehold. There is a dearth of emotional support resulting in survivors reaching out for help without getting any form of sociocultural validation such as understanding and inclusion, just like in the case of Akku. The majority of women living in such an environment find it extremely challenging to break free from these restraints, and their lifelong overwhelming pain and trauma remain

untreated, giving them little to no hope in life. It is not surprising that the pandemic of violence against women continues to escalate.

Pathways to Healing and Empowerment

The trauma of women in patriarchal societies appears endless, but some factors can help women to heal and gain strength. That is, there is a 'for' standpoint that historically isolated women and oppressed systems can indeed be understood and dismantled by points which integrate the structures of gender, class and race (Kimberlé Crenshaw, 1989). To Akku, moments of reflection and enlightenment signify the possible journeys to healing. For Akku's journey, it appears that self-empowerment can start with the recognition that there is more to her than what society holds her to be. As she comes to terms with her trauma and claims her right to emotion, she is actively engaging in the reclamation of herself. Feminine healing can also be achieved through therapeutic measures and support networks of feminists. The evidence also suggests that women can achieve healing by participating in community-affiliated support systems that hold together notions of support, appreciation and strength. While Akku's journey still has the restrictions imposed by the patriarchal society you are still in, accepting the feeling of the quantity of worth you hold and what it means to be autonomous can be the first impression of the healing and empowerment process.

3. CONCLUSION

This research illustrates the silenced and often unseen trauma of women to the trauma lens through which they are predicted and sometimes understood as being 'othered' or 'different' in Vaidehi's Akku. A value system within patriarchy endorses numbness, inflicts deeper mental suffering and prevents contact with aid – thus women remain in situations of suffering. The study demonstrates that healing through self-realisation and collective engagement are avenues that can work against the intrusion of society's proverbial glass door. Dealing with these issues requires implementing fundamental alterations which are intended to empower gender and include angling for women's platforms through which their voices can be heard and healed. This research enriches feminist studies by articulating the logic of deconstructing male governance in order to allow vulnerable women to develop strength and heal.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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