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Between Tradition and Rebellion: Deconstructing Gender Politics in K.R.

Meera's *Hangwoman*

Sruthi S.

Research Scholar,
Sree Ayyappa College for Women,
Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli.

&

Savitha A. R.

Associate Professor,
Sree Ayyappa College for Women,
Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli.

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Abstract:

The ever-increasing popularity of electronic media in the present era has provided it with the capability to penetrate the private lives of individuals. The research article presents a case study of K. R. Meera's *Hangwoman*, which is examined through the perspective of post-viewing media and the traumatic experiences of the people affected. It is the representation of the protagonist in the context of her forced job as the first female hangwoman in the country that serves to project the trauma that a young woman goes through. As a further point of interest, this portrayal highlights the painful experiences that women in modern-day India go through, as demonstrated by the multidimensional character of the protagonist. The article sheds light on the concealed power dynamics, the impact of power on humility, the extent of opposition to the process, and the remarkable resilience of the protagonist, Chetna and other individuals in the face of numerous traumatic experiences. The researcher has conducted a thorough analysis of the postmodern state, wherein the production of simulated images in the media comes at the expense of an individual's privacy.

Keywords: Trauma, Media, Simulacra, Simulations, Resilience, Postmodernity.

The media have an impact on public opinion and the spread of information. By emphasizing dramatic headlines rather than social issues, *Hangwoman* demonstrates how the media has shifted its coverage of the world. In this light, it is clear that the change has been slow. According to K. R. Meera, news programs and channels have become more popular in recent years, which has reduced the significance of newspapers. She believes that the recession will be the downfall of newspapers. The tale portrays the decline of a young woman's relationships as the media fixates on her difficulties, which she struggles to address due to the ongoing problems within her family. Meera presents Chetna as an embodiment of feminine virtues, emphasizing the challenges and concessions that women frequently confront in societal contexts.

The author highlights the phenomenon of commodification of women's bodies, observing that the decision to market commonplace products such as salt or camphor is contingent upon the representation of the female form in advertising. People dehumanize and exploit women due to the perception that their bodies are disposable inside the professional environment. The media endeavors to elicit empathy and compassion from the audience by emphasizing their emotional vulnerabilities. The act of manipulating emotions is utilized to perpetuate the exploitation of women's experiences to capture attention and achieve higher viewership.

In general, Meera's analysis of the media within the novel highlights the importance of prioritizing social concerns and ethical journalism over sensationalism. She condemns the representation of women in the media as objects and commodities and advocates for a more considerate and compassionate approach. Recent research on trauma and media focused on "visual evidence, testimony, and commemoration" (Meek 2). All of the above calls attention

to the significance of these factors in understanding and conveying the community- and person-wide impacts of traumatic events.

There are different ways that a person's mind and emotions can react to a traumatic incident or experience. As Heidarizadeh suggests, "Trauma or traumatize means a traumatic event which involves a single event or experience; it involves the feelings and emotions" (789). As mentioned, trauma is a subjective experience that can have an impact on an individual's mental well-being. Given its intricate nature, trauma proves challenging to classify and comprehend. There is a widespread misinterpretation and idealization of this concept by many individuals. However, fundamentally, trauma can be comprehended as a narrative that endeavors to encapsulate the significant and enduring consequences of a distressing occurrence. The subject matter under consideration presents a challenge in providing straightforward elucidation. It proves to be elusive in terms of comprehension as it delves into the intricate workings of the human psyche.

The psychoanalytic community recognizes the indefinable reality of trauma. This investigation delves into the realm of the unconscious, revealing layers of emotional and psychological anguish that defy easy articulation. Understanding and dealing with the effects of mental illness needs to be done in a more nuanced and compassionate way because this behavior is hard to explain. Experts look at how terrible events are shown, remembered, and portrayed in different media types to learn more about how stress affects people. The authors want to examine how visual evidence, first-hand accounts, and memorials for everyone affect how we understand and respond to traumatic events.

The continuous investigation not only enhances the reader's understanding of trauma but also underscores the ethical obligations of the media in depicting and interacting with these delicate accounts. The statement highlights the necessity of employing a tactful and knowledgeable strategy when presenting and circulating data concerning distressing

occurrences, recognizing the significant influence such depictions can exert on individuals and the broader community. Trauma is a complicated and deep experience that anybody must understand if one is to sympathize with people who have gone through it and offer them suitable help. A key first step is realizing that traumatic events affect people and the group for an extended period. By recognizing that trauma has real and significant effects, one can work to create a more knowledgeable and helpful environment for people who have been through traumatic events. This will help them continue on their path to recovery and healing. It is little noted that Baudrillard uses the phrases “brute reality” and “the world as it is” (Baudrillard 11) to express the idea of a state of the contemporary world.

The study centers on the adeptness of K. R. Meera in articulating her characters' emotional and psychological turmoil, with a particular emphasis on female characters, in a refined and sophisticated style. Meera endeavors to illuminate the anguish and distress women encounter in her written works, aiming to empower and enlighten her female audience. By employing the literary trick of defamiliarization, Meera allows readers to view these meetings through a fresh lens, free from prejudice. The book offers a critical study of this industry by focussing on how the media in India now exploit and sensationalize issues. Meera examines the repercussions of these exploitative practices, emphasizing their effects on individuals and their families. Throughout the narrative, Chetna, the protagonist, experiences a significant metamorphosis, transitioning from a typical young woman weighed down by familial obligations to ultimately achieving the distinction of being the first Indian woman elected through official channels. The abrupt transition places her in the limelight, garnering significant notice and, occasionally, unfavorable press inspection.

Hangwoman illustrates the significant impact of marketing-driven media on family dynamics and femininity through Chetna's life and experiences. The media purportedly prioritizes public safety. However, it frequently endorses disorder and sensationalism to attract

a larger audience. The paper posits that although viewers may experience a sense of familiarity and confidence in news anchors while watching television, they may be susceptible to manipulative strategies regarding advertising. In the present context, the media underscores the notion that the prioritization of profit frequently supersedes authentic concern and integrity.

The novel accentuates the pressing necessity for a more conscientious and principled approach to media portrayal and narrative by examining its influence on individuals such as Chetna. The sad reality is that “television is certainly a convenient tool in the hands of the rich and powerful” (Vilanilam 163), catching the helpless poor on their cluttered web. When news becomes business, journalists like Sanjeev Kumar Mitra are only concerned with TRP ratings, and the amount of news and facts about daily life are easily forgotten. Kaplan and Wang propose,

The visual media do not just mirror those experiences; in their courting and staging of violence, they are themselves the breeding ground of trauma, as well as the matrix of understanding and experiencing a world out of joint. The visual media have become a cultural institution where the traumatic experience of modernity can be recognized, negotiated, and reconfigured. (17)

The narrative depicts Chetna's voyage, delving into the profound mental anguish she goes through. This exemplifies how the media presents an inflated version of reality and how it can harm viewers' mental health. People nowadays often present stories as a way to pass the time. However, the novel accentuates the marked divergence between the approaches and methodologies utilized in news creation and the authentic solicitude and compassion that ought to be an intrinsic aspect of journalism.

The narrative effectively portrays the various facets of power dynamics and their influence on humility. The text details how the modern media scene affects organizations and campaigns that work to stop bullying. The media uses Chetna's acts to make them into a

controversial and newsworthy subject, which gives the story of her life a start. As a result, she attains the status of an idol in the realm of entertainment, persistently exposed to the demands and anticipations of her peers.

As Chetna becomes immersed in politics, administration, and media driven by emotions, the governing mechanisms and structures encompass her escalate in intensity. This is notably apparent when she engages with the astute and artful journalist Sanjeev Kumar Mitra, who assumes a crucial function in her existence. The proposal on the CNC channel gave rise to the notion of designating the daughter of a former executioner as the executor for the nation's inaugural execution in thirteen years. The contentious matters of capital punishment and gender parity are fervently debated in live media forums, adroitly navigated by the ambitious journalist.

Chetna is embroiled in a complicated relationship with the opportunistic Sanjeev Kumar Mitra, eliciting affection and animosity, resulting in significant emotional strain. When confronted with such circumstances, the individual's perceived lack of agency indicates the intricate interplay between power dynamics, media, and interpersonal connections. The literary work delves into the psychological and emotional ramifications of this particular dynamic on the protagonist, Chetna, as she struggles with ambivalent feelings and maneuvers through the intricacies of her circumstances. The novel analyzes how Chetna's experiences represent the exploitative character of the media and the significant challenges that individuals encounter when they are suddenly thrust into the public sphere. The work addresses the themes of power, manipulation, and the complex relationship between love and hatred within media-driven narratives. The novel utilizes Chetna's narrative to elucidate the adverse effects of media sensationalism on personal lives. The series of insults Chetna has to face from this heartbreaking gain begins with a disgusting statement made by her at their first meeting "I want to fuck you hard, even if only once" (Meera 27).

The time Sanjeev Kumar Mitra tried to take a picture of Chetna's disabled sibling is an instance of how the media culture can make pain last longer. Chetna portrays Ramu da's weakness and helplessness as he furrows his brow and closes his eyes to protect himself. The man's inability to conceal his face due to a lack of hands highlights the severity of his abuse. Chetna's automatic response, which included physically damaging and throwing away the camera, could have been a form of resistance against the media's subtle harassment. This example highlights how media favors exclusivity and sensationalism over morals and personal values.

The concept of psychological trauma describes how physical harm or life-threatening conditions can produce moral anguish and have an impact on memory. These hypotheses suggest that these encounters could cause trauma. Television, the internet, and cinema all frequently depict violent occurrences, but in a more complicated manner these days. Media studies have long investigated the influence of such displays. Many people see awful cruelty and do nothing. The study's findings do not support the premise that media coverage is the sole source of harassment or trauma.

Some media prioritize sensationalism above humanity. Chetna's brother's suffering reveals how the media promotes abuse and insensitivity. Despite its psychological repercussions, media attention is simply one of many things that might create harassment and stress, according to the report. However, the price of this exposure may be emotionally and intellectually unrelated to the broader world and even to the "psychic numbing" (Lifton ix) itself listed as a sign of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. No matter how interesting the question of the psychic impact of the media, recent research on trauma and representation often follows a variety of indications.

As proposed by academics such as Felman and Caruth, the current trauma theory explores the complex nature of distressing recollections and their significance in understanding

collective historical accounts, realities, and depictions. Trauma theory investigates the detachment of an initial traumatic experience from its original time and place by integrating psychological categories such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Freudian psychoanalysis. In contrast to meticulously recorded incidents, trauma manifests itself through distressing recollections, dreams, automatic reenactment, and sudden recurrences. According to the trauma theory, a traumatic incident from years ago might still affect a person's outlook. During a stressful scenario, someone may feel disconnected and bewildered, making it challenging to grasp their feelings. Stressed people may struggle to grasp and discuss distressing memories because they can seem broken and weighty in ways they cannot see.

Trauma theory emphasizes delayed action in treatment. Many ignore their problems, which has serious and long-term consequences. Powerful events, misconceptions, and feelings can change things. Delaying important decisions could stall growth and stifle momentum. Dissociation allows people to hide negative ideas. Delaying communication may cause cognitive issues, including confusion. After a stressful occurrence, people may repeat actions or focus on one task.

The trauma hypothesis uses several psychological perspectives to explain why people keep thinking about a traumatic incident and feel horrible about themselves (Caruth 5). This research article explores trauma's fascinating patterns, how it affects people, and how flashbacks can transform daily life. Chetna's brother, Ramdev, underwent a profound sense of mourning, which was brought about by a proficient photographer who skillfully captured a poignant image of Ramu da, their father, with a noose that had been readied for Amartya Ghosh. The photograph, as described in the novel, read: "Hangman Phanibhushan Grddha Mullick displaying the noose that he had readied for Amartya Ghosh; in the background, his only son, second-year MA student of Literature at New Providence College, Ramdev Grddha Mullick." (Meera 34)

The photograph serves as a poignant reminder of the anguish and distress imposed upon individuals and families, encapsulating the profound influence visual depictions can exert on communal awareness. The visual representation not only depicts the direct aftermath of the dissemination of the photograph but also serves as a symbolic representation of the more exhaustive ethical deliberations about the media's depiction of individual calamities. The occurrence concerning the photograph serves to underscore the significance of upholding the privacy and dignity of individuals, particularly in the context of calamitous events. The decision of Chetna's father to refrain from releasing additional images of this nature demonstrates a profound comprehension of the detrimental effects that may arise from the sensationalization of individual sorrow and bereavement. This episode highlights the ethical obligations of photographers and media organizations, underscoring the significance of exhibiting sensitivity and self-control when capturing and circulating visuals that entail individual distress. The statement encourages a thoughtful examination of the limits of press freedom and the protection of personal and familial welfare. At this crucial moment, the book explores the impact of visual representations, the ethical concerns surrounding media depictions, and the lasting effects of these images on viewers. Considering that every image captures the depth of human emotions, it is crucial to approach these narratives with care and sensitivity. This underscores the notion that every photograph encapsulates a narrative of human sentiments, necessitating a conscientious and considerate approach to handling such stories.

The society today is living in a "trauma culture" in which "extremity and survival are privileged markers of identity" (Luckhurst 2). Sanjeev Kumar Mitra's attempt to make Chetna's brother an asset to his channel exposes the buying mindset that controls the world of modern media. Chetna's father's words about the aspiring journalist Sanjeev Kumar Mitra, "Looks like a crook, no doubt, but the fellow knows how to make news" (Meera 36) proves this. Mitra's

efforts to gather Grddha Mullick's family history are revealed to be a manipulative scheme fueled by self-serving motives, as evidenced by their deceitful tactics, such as providing Chetna's father with alcohol and making fraudulent promises of marriage to Chetna.

Mitra utilizes deceit to gain the trust and assistance of Chetna's father. The act of deceitful manipulation has a direct impact not only on the father of Chetna but also on Chetna herself. Realizing that they have been exploited for hidden agendas instills a feeling of susceptibility and disloyalty among her kin. The aforementioned disclosure triggers Chetna to scrutinize the credibility of the person's motives and intensifies her resolve to uncover the veracity. The employment of the deceptive tactic serves as a crucial turning point in the plot, revealing the unsavory aspects of the individual's personality and their willingness to resort to extreme measures to further their self-serving objectives. This highlights the significance of exercising discretion and prudence in interactions with individuals who have the potential to misuse reliance and maneuver circumstances for their benefit. "It troubled me that he was taking away the priceless tradition and history of our family from father in return for a few bottles of liquor and a little cash" (Meera 39), thought Chetna. Under the terms of a contract, Chetna was compelled to deliver a series of speeches about the murder, effectively turning her into a spectacle on her show. She was paid to conform to predetermined instructions, devoid of opportunity to express her opinions.

Furthermore, her private space was constantly violated by intrusive cameras, leaving her with no respite or control over her personal life. "Chetna's time, henceforth, must be exclusively for our channel. She must not speak to other newspapers or TV channels. Wherever she goes, we will go with her...till the eve of the hanging" (Meera 52) declares Sanjeev Kumar Mit ra and again "for a decent price" (Meera 53). The shocking depths of the carnivores reveal themselves when a journalist speaks to a drunken father: "...we want your life..your life stories that are" (Meera 52). "This instrument can teach, it can illuminate; yes, it can even inspire, but

it can do so only to the extent that humans are determined to use it to those ends. Otherwise, it is merely wires and lights in a box" (238), says Meyers, pointing to the power of the then-existing television media in a 1958 speech.

The interdependent association between journalism and personal integrity ought not to be undervalued. In the context of its capacity to effect change, responsible journalism bears the primary obligation of upholding ethical principles and demonstrating a deep reverence for human dignity. Although the current undertaking may be complex, it is not an impossible obstacle to overcome. Journalism can be effective when it adheres to steadfast ethical standards. The media sector in the present nation has experienced unparalleled expansion and affluence. The culture of news dissemination has undergone a significant transformation due to the gradual yet rapid shift from traditional printed newsletters, which were limited to twice a day, to the emergence of 24x7 live news channels. The techniques utilized by these media outlets in disseminating information have become well-known to the general populace. These sources offer a glimpse into a digital realm that frequently emphasizes amusement more than the quest for veracity. Narratives are primarily designed to provide entertainment and diversionary experiences rather than to convey objective facts.

Chetna's broadcast debut drew attention to two major entertainment events. She became famous for her gripping death sentence story. Her story was strange and engaging, leaving the audience guessing until the end. Furthermore, Chetna's valiant endeavor to pursue the hangwoman profession garnered spectators' interest. The television discourse was stimulated, transforming the conversations surrounding the murder into a spectacle that placed significant emphasis on the personal lives and emotions of the journalists involved. Regrettably, Chetna was reduced to a mere instrument, serving as a means for the media to attain their entertainment-oriented goals. The situation bore a resemblance to the Ganges River's loss of

purity due to the pollution caused by human waste, as Sanjay persistently expressed his contemptuous feelings towards Chetna.

This analysis of the media sector highlights the necessity for re-evaluating its objectives, emphasizing veracity, ethical principles, and respect for human rights as paramount. The role of journalism is to function as a means of responsible narrative dissemination, amplifying significant stories, and cultivating a knowledgeable populace. Media must inform the public and hold the powerful accountable by prioritizing truth and enlightenment. Media manipulation has repercussions. If they prioritize ethics and compassion, journalists can change the world. It can impart kindness, charity, and etiquette, among other virtues. Barthes has held on to the possibility of harmful images that could violate the media code: "The more direct the trauma, the more difficult the connotation; or again, the 'mythological' effect of a photograph is inversely proportional to its traumatic effect" (31). The realistic nature of image tracking is part of the descriptive language system; it gives authority but cannot be taken for granted. A somber picture, on the other hand, "is the photograph about which there is nothing to say" (31).

When Chetna exhibited emotional distress in the presence of the media, her sentiments were publicized. However, her protest did not end with tears; she resisted and was brave enough to succeed. In trauma, wrote Caruth, "the outside has gone inside without any mediation" (59). Chetna derived significant motivation from the exceptional women she encountered, each exemplifying fortitude and rebellion when confronted with hardship. Among them was Ratnamalika. She remained strong and independent after her husband's death, despite others' opinions. Despite societal constraints, she exhibited non-conformity and resilience, resisting the oppressive forces that sought to restrict her actions and thoughts. Chetna was inspired by the user's steadfast resolve, which provided a guiding light towards personal freedom and the ability to express oneself.

Chetna achieved her breakthrough when she followed her instincts instead of the crowd. Upon observing strong women and their steadfast dedication to love and the pursuit of happiness, Chetna acknowledged the profound impact of vocalizing opposition to inequity and challenging conventional societal norms. Chetna was deeply moved by the experiences of women who refused to remain silent, leading her to develop a firm conviction that the perpetuation of suffering and suppression of the voices of those affected is a direct result of silence in the face of oppression. She found the courage to speak out against community inequality after this revelation.

Chetna struggled to express herself in the writing prompt. Nobody noticed her or her voice. However, the constant repression strengthened her resolve to run. Chetna courageously pushed her lifelong assumptions to change. Openness in sharing her opinions and ideals gave the unfairly accused a sense of freedom and optimism. Chetna's work has helped impoverished communities.

Chetna changed considerably after speaking up after a long silence. Her courage and tenacity drove her to confront traditional wisdom. Her unwavering support for under-represented groups shows the value of speaking up. Chetna's experience serves as a poignant reminder of the significance of affording marginalized individuals, particularly women, the opportunity and acknowledgment they are entitled to. It "always inflicts a wound in the everyday course of history, in the ordinary repetition and anticipation of all experience." (Borradori 96)

Creating an inclusive and equitable world can be facilitated by affording individuals such as Chetna the opportunity and resources to express their personal experiences. The impact of media on Chetna's life has transformed over time, while the degree of autonomy afforded to women has remained unchanged. As her conduct garnered significant public interest and became a widely discussed subject in the media, she was elevated to an icon in the

entertainment industry. Nonetheless, the recent surge in popularity also exposed her to unyielding pressure from diverse origins. Notwithstanding the progress made in media depictions and inclusivity, the fundamental mechanisms of gender-based inequity endured. Chetna's experiences illustrate that despite media recognition of her accomplishments, the societal limitations on women's autonomy persisted. She emerged as an emblem of triumph and motivation; however, the demands and anticipations imposed on her by external sources were a persistent indication of the restricted capacity and independence bestowed upon females.

Chetna's paradoxical situation illustrates the intricate relationship between media depictions of women and their independence. Even though she was famous, she battled with social expectations. Despite her progress, the media's fascination with her as a symbol emphasized women's independence and equal rights issues. As LaCapra opines, "The traumatic event has its greatest and most clearly unjustifiable effect on the victim, but in different ways, it also affects everyone who comes into contact with it" (9). Chetna's persistence and resilience facilitated her progress, allowing her to confront and surmount multiple impediments that impede her progress. In contrast to the tendency of some women to submit to male dominance, Chetna exhibited remarkable courage by actively contesting the prevailing norms and conventions. She fearlessly maneuvered through a group of men intent on asserting their power and influence.

As the narrative approaches its pinnacle, the conditions are established for an exceptional culmination of occurrences. The act of hanging is symbolized within a studio setting through the meticulous arrangement of a tree and a hangman's rope. Writing for the public good rather than self-interest poses ethical difficulties and questions one's values. The heroine rebels by streaming her friend's horrible execution live. The above are important because they challenge the media's fixation with breaking news and emphasize social change.

This statement shows Chetna's strategic resistance and steadfast determination to assert her individuality and regain control over her actions.

The author adeptly critiques the channel media during this pivotal moment, revealing its exploitative inclinations and unquenchable desire for sensational content. As public watchdogs, the media report on social injustices and advocate for change. This examines why the media stopped reporting the truth. Its partnerships with news companies are untrustworthy. The author highlights journalism and the media's moral shaping power. The arguments demonstrate the need for society to change and the media to report ethically and impartially. Chetna strongly encourages people to challenge their beliefs and institutions to demolish oppressive structures and embrace their individuality. Chetna's relentless advocacy inspires others to fight for equality. They keep going despite setbacks. Bravery and persistence can change lives, as this lady shows. People grow when they challenge themselves and do not settle.

This book is a fascinating look at how media affects society. People ask the media to rethink its role in morality, honesty, and social welfare, and individuals should consider their moral compass. This declaration declares a new age of journalism that values honesty, empathy, and social awareness. It acknowledges the significant influence that journalism can wield in shaping public sentiment and bringing about constructive transformations.

The case study highlights the protagonist's astute resistance against the widespread "trauma" (Hartman 134) and detrimental tendencies that afflict our society. The text explores the complex power dynamics in operation and the main character's revolutionary pursuit to establish her individuality. The protagonist shows incredible resilience and fortitude when faced with social issues. Conflicting ideas can potentiate against repressive systems that keep pain and progress at bay when wielded properly. It exemplifies the protagonist's perseverance and unwavering resolve in surmounting her challenges. It sheds light on the capacity of

resistance to bring about transformation, both at an individual and societal level, by contesting prevailing norms and structures.

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