

Victim-Perpetrator Relationship: Reconnoitering Typology of Victimization in Anita Nair's *Eating Wasps*

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Abstract

Violence against women is not new from feticide to cyberbullying. It remains unchanged and experienced by all ages of women from perpetrators in the patriarchal hegemony. Every form of violence affects millions of women's lives irrespective of age, class, culture, language, religion, and education, and it cannot be stopped by anything due to deep-rooted patriarchy and gender stereotypes. Men (gender stereotypes) become the primary reason for the violence against women and women become vulnerable victims as they are considered 'Other', the weaker sex. Victimization has a physical and psychological impact on victims' rest of their lives. Anita Nair, an Indian author vociferates the different forms of victimization in the modern era in her latest literary oeuvre *Eating Wasps* (2018). Megha, a six-year-old child, Liliana, an Italian spinster and Najma, a Muslim girl do not share any contribution to victimization but being in the hapless situation entitles them to be victimized. Yet, they are denied to accept the tag 'victim' and become survivors by fighting against the odds in their society. This study traverses the relationship between victims and perpetrators through the lens of Benjamin Mendelsohn's typology of victimization and the challenges encountered by victims in the patriarchal environment.

Keywords: female agency, survivor, perpetrator, victimization, patriarchy, sexual abuse

1. Introduction

Over the centuries, voices have been raised on different forms of violence against women and children such as feticide, domestic violence, femicide, female genital mutilation, child marriage, honor killing, cyberbullying, and so on (Longhorn, 2021, p. 56). Yet, women have to struggle continuously with different problems. In the few decades, violence against women and children continues to be devastatingly ubiquitous, with a number that has stayed relatively stable over the last decade and starts alarmingly young now. WHO reported one in three women is subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or stranger (WHO, 2021). According to National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), a total of 371,503 cases of crimes against women were registered in 2020 in India. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General says that the COVID-19 epidemic has intensified violence against women, which is endemic in every country and culture, and affects millions of women and their families (WHO, 2021). Violence in all its forms can have an impact on women's lives. It increases physical and psychological suffering such as acid attack injuries, depression, unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and other issues. "The NVAW survey found that most violence against women is perpetrated by intimate partners, with the majority of 18 who were victimized reporting they were physically assaulted (72%), raped (62%), or stalked (60%) by an intimate partner" (Taden & Thoennes, 2000a).

Literary works reflect society by giving picturesque of human emotions and conditions. Anita Nair's contribution to women's writing is undeniable for her realistic representations of women characters in the next doors. Her affinity for writing explores the mysteries of women's lives and their hardships in the patriarchal society to liberate them from all the misinterpreted traditions and religions. All of her writings have ordinary women characters as protagonists and manifest the gender inequalities that they have encountered in their day-to-day lives (Kumar & Mohanty, 2018, p. 648). Her recent novel *Eating Wasps* focuses on the lives of ten women (victims) of the 21st century and their trials and tribulations.

Sreelakshmi, the ghost narrator witnesses the lives of these women and regrets that society has had the same partial treatment towards women in her times, which is perhaps not for the better today. All the ten women in the novel have been perpetuated by the men whom they know sometimes or within the family itself. This study limits to the three characters, Megha, Liliana and Najma who fall under the categorization of Mendelsohn's typology of victimization. Megha, a six-year-old child is perpetuated by Prem, a school truck driver. Liliana, a spinster in Italy becomes the victim of cyber defamation when her playful sexual act is orchestrated by her ex. Acid attack is the most heinous act against women by men, and Nair presents this contemporary issue by presenting Najma, a Muslim girl, an acid attack victim and survivor. She is perpetuated for expressing her refusal to marry Imtiaz, a colleague of her mother. Thus the women victims in the novel have shared a kind of relationship with the perpetrator sometimes in their lives, which paves way for their victimization.

2. Benjamin Mendelsohn's Typology of Victimization

Victimology is the sub-discipline of criminology, the study of the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator of victimization (Tiwari, 2012). Victimization is an act that exploits or victimizes someone physically or psychologically. Perpetrators are the person who has committed the crime, and victims are those who have been suffered or victimized physically and psychologically, and individually or collectively by the perpetrator (Dussich, 2006 & Wolhuter et.al, 2008). Cambridge English Dictionary defines, victims are someone or something that has been hurt, damaged, killed, or has suffered, either because of the actions of someone or something else or because of illness or chance (Devasia, 1980, p. 230).

Benjamin Mendelsohn, a father of victimology coined the term 'victimology' in 1947. As an attorney, his interest in victim-criminal relationships made him conduct interviews with victims and witnessed and discovered that victims and criminals frequently knew each other and had some form of pre-existing relationship (Spencer, 2015, p. 35). He then devised a classification system for victims depending on their level of culpability, or how much blame they bear. His categorizations of victims are, (i) completely innocent victim (a child or youngster, victimized unconsciously), (ii) victim with minor guilt (victimized by ignorance), (iii) victim as guilty/voluntary victim (equal responsibility in crime, for example, robbery, selling/using drugs), (iv) victim more guilty than offender (victim, who invokes his/her victimization), (v) most guilty victims (victims victimized for a suicidal pact of the offender) and (vi) simulating/imaginary victim (not victimized, fabricates victimization) (Sengstock, 1976).

3. Completely Innocent Victim – Child Abuse

Victims in this typology are innocent victims who do not share any responsibility for the victimization with the perpetrator. They are ideal victims like children who are physically, psychologically, and sexually abused and cannot blame them for their victimization (Arifi, 2006, p. 498). Childhood is a stage of happiness with innocent memories for children, but it may not be true for some who have experienced unpleasant episodes in the form of victimization (Kumar, 2017, p. 587). Children are too young to understand that the world is cruel and there are some forces that are harmful and powerful enough to ruin their lives. Innocence and powerlessness become the major factor in child victimization (Vinoth & Vijayakumar, 2023). Child abuse has many forms: physical, emotional, societal, feticide, exploitation and trafficking. Physical abuse in the form of offensive contact over their bodies impacts the rest of their lives. It alienates the children from their surroundings and known people. It further affects their self-esteem, makes them recluse from society, and turns them into introverts. Most of the perpetrators of child abuse are not strangers but neighbors and known people. The NCRB 2020 data reported that in India, 96 percent of the perpetrators of child abuse are known people. Children depend on known people for protection, guidance, pampering, learning and to avoid mishappenings (Anish & Vishnupriya, 2022). But it is appalling when they are victimized by the protector. The Times of India dated 17 Nov 2021 reported six cases of child abuse every week, totaling 109 cases of which 77 were female children and 33 were male children in Goa from July to September 2021 (Shetye, 2021).

News India reported that 2.4 million online children sexual abuse were reported in India from 2017 to 2020 and eighty percent of the children were under the age of 14 (Pandey, 2021). On Nov 4, 2021, a two and half-year-old girl child was abducted, raped and smothered to death by a neighborhood man in Gujarat on the night of Diwali (The Indian Express, 2021). In Mumbai, on 11 Feb 2016, the six-year-old student returned from school in a distraught state and informed her mother that she was sexually abused by the van driver. The next day she was again abused by the driver. Later her mother lodged a complaint against him (The Times of India, 2020). Children are unaware of the victimization and perpetrators as they are actually innocent but being in the wrong place or with the wrong people makes them victims.

Megha Naidu, a six-year girl is a completely innocent victim in Anita Nair's *Eating Wasps*. She is victimized by a truck driver of her school bus, Prem Uncle, the perpetrator. She does not contribute anything to victimization but her innocence is maneuvered by the perpetrator to exploit her. Every day, Prem Uncle seats Megha on his lap in the truck and gives her a handful of jamuns by tucking her hair behind her ear with careful attentiveness. He tugs the flesh of her cheeks and said "Chubby chubby cheeks, curly curly hair... such a pretty girl!... She is such a Bommakutty!" (Nair, 2018, pp. 26-27).

Children do not beware of the perpetrators' intentions, they cherish love and affection from everyone without judging them. Children who do not get enough expected love from home and parents, start to enjoy and desire it when they get it from outside. It is the case, Megha adores Prem, when he calls her a doll. Because no one calls Megha a doll until now. Her mother also shifts her love toward her first birth, Manoj that lites Megha deep inside. When she gets special attention from Prem, she sings Megha is a "bommakutty, la la la" (27) and writes her name as 'princess' in the school diary.

In order for children to be self-sufficient in the future, today's parents do not want them to grow up in a four-wall setting; instead, they want them to be exposed to various environments and situations. As a result, they will be able to handle difficult situations and vicious motives in the future on their own. Unfortunately, these good motives pave way for the perpetrator to abuse innocent children, who are unaware of what is right and wrong. Sometimes, even parents fail to sense the dreadful intentions. When Megha's mother comes to know that Megha is seated on his lap and her act of writing her name as 'princess', she decides not to send her in the truck anymore. Megha feels unhappy with her mother's decision and prays fervently the whole night for her mother's decision to be reversed. Megha's father fails to sense the vulgarity of the truck driver at first. He thinks that sending her by truck will create a chance to know the world outside which is not the pretty environment that they have created for her. Megha's heart turns somersault when she heard the news that she is allowed to go to school by truck without knowing the hell what happen to her in the future.

Despite the fact that parents allow their children to interact with different settings and people, they impose some restrictions on (female) children to prevent crimes. Mummy warns Megha, neither to sit on the edge of the bench nor Prem Uncle's lap. Thus Megha goes to sit on the bench, not on his lap or edge of the bench the next day. This behavior of Megha irritates Prem Uncle, thus he avoids her gaze and smiles. She cannot understand and accept his ignorance, because he is the one who calls her princess. She buries her head and finds fault in her. Prem's avoidance affects her emotionally thus in the evening way back home, she says 'sorry' in a small voice. She doesn't know why she is sorry and what her crime is. But she knows that sorry almost always worked.

Megha's feeling of ignorance and worthlessness paves way for Prem to exploit her physically. He tries to avail the situation after her sorry. His wet, fat tongue feels like a snake in her mouth and the innocent Megha opens her mouth obediently and closes her eyes with the feeling of the smell of cigarettes and stale food. Children are vulnerable and cannot understand the effect of abuse in their life. In Mahesh Dattani's *Thirty Days in September*, Mala remains silent and doesn't understand what is happening to her when her uncle abuses her sexually in her seven (Suresh & Bhattacharya, 2019, p. 236). Like Mala, innocent child Megha remains silent and then he lifts her off his lap and spreads his sunshine smile at her, which she yearns, "princess... understand, this is our secret... No one must know. Just you and I, promise?" (Nair, 2018, pp. 32). Innocent Megha looks at him helplessly and said yes quietly. He tells her that he will show her a few other ways tomorrow by which she can make him happy. As a young, she cannot understand what is happening to her, but she feels some strangeness like Mala. Young children cannot understand the abuse but they could sense there is something wrong. The next morning she has a helpless rage simmering within her along with the same sour-tasting anger. All day in school Megha feels a hollow pit in her belly and thinks of the fat tongue in her mouth. When the evening comes, she gets into the truck and drags her feet to hide among the boys and girls so that she will be able to escape from his clutches. Suddenly an arm grabs her waist. "Where are you running off to, princess? Why is my princess not meeting my eye? With his rainbow smile" (Nair, 2018, pp. 33-34). She wriggles to get off but his grip tightened her. Megha said, "mummy said I must not sit on a stranger's lap" (Nair, 2018, pp. 34). He smiles and draws her closely am I a stranger? She wriggles, but her waist draws her back to his soft fleshy belly and his fist nudging her bum. She feels foolish and angry. The truck finally stops, she has figured that the more she moves, the more the fist nudges her. Megha sinks her teeth into his hand, a moment of horrification. He yells and tries to pull his hand away from her mouth. Megha flees and tastes the blood in her mouth. When she is at the end of her street, she washes her mouth again and again with her water bottle. But the taste of the blood won't go but the taste of blood is better than the taste of vomit.

Elders blindly trust familiar people around children, such as neighbors, school van drivers, tuition masters, instructors, and relatives, which gives a loophole for predators to victimize innocent children. She is afraid to tell her parents what happened in the truck. Instead of the truth, Prem manipulates that Megha is quarreling with a girl in the truck, and when he tries to stop her from quarreling, she sinks her teeth into his hand. Her parents believe his words and decide not to send her truck anymore to avoid nuisance. But they insist Megha travel by truck the next day to ask sorry to the girl she quarreled with and to Prem because Prem is gracious enough to say that she is still his little bommakutty even after he gets three stitches. He is behaving politely to her parents that he is innocent and protecting the children. At some times, children could sense the antagonism that elders fail to sense the real motives, thus they are victimized. Parents or guardians must protect children from perpetrators, but sometimes they themselves become perpetrators and victimize innocent children (Kumar, 2017. P. 588). When Mala attempts to inform her mother that something strange is happening to her on occasion, her mother does not listen. Her mother accuses her that she is losing her character for her sexual pleasure. Mala shatters at her mother's words and endure sufferings long. Children are not safe even with father-like figures in their own houses. For

many reasons, crooked men in society regard the female body as a sexual object irrespective of age (Suresh & Bhattacharya, 2019, p. 236). Mala and Megha are abused out of their innocence and are afraid to tell to their parents. Talking about sex is forbidden in India, therefore children hesitate to express themselves about the sexual abuse that they have experienced (Ruchee, 2019, p. 26). So it is parents' responsibility to initiate a discussion with their children about this subject.

Children do not have any option but to oblige their parents' words. Thus, the next day morning, Megha gets into the truck and tries to say sorry but he ignores her. Then she goes to sit on one of the benches so that she will ignore him in the evening too, but the matter of sorry disturbs her. She plans to say sorry in the evening while getting down and fleeing. The truck grounds to a halt, and the children leave more swiftly than ever because it is the beginning of the long weekend. She is waiting at the metal gate to say sorry because if she doesn't say sorry to him, her parents will punish her. To avoid punishment, she waits in the truck to say sorry to him, there is none. He asks her "are you really sorry? ... then show me you are sorry" (Nair, 2018, pp. 38) by pulling her to the back of the truck and the tarpaulin comes down with a flat thud. Megha hears the flapping wings of hundreds of crows around her. She stands there without any escape. The psychological trauma impacts her life. Celie, an African American woman in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982) is sexually molested by a man she believes is her father. When she reaches adolescence, he abuses her and threatens her not to reveal anyone. As a result of his sexual abuse, she has been impregnated two times. She has no idea of the horrible things occurring to her at that age. She has muted herself and feels she is worthless (Mahajan & Malhotra, 2020, p. 4691).

Many parents prefer school buses for their children to ensure safety, yet, buses are not fully safe for young and innocent children. When it comes to children's safety, most parents think about school bus accidents. There are other situations that can hurt children, such as abuse (physical and emotional), especially sexual abuse. Deccan Chronicle dated 27th July 2018, covered in relation to a school bus attendant Bhaskar (48) from a private school in Chennai, physically abused a four year kinder garden girl child and many other girls in the bus. He threatened the children, that if they revealed it to anyone, they would be bitten by the snakes. But, it was revealed to her parents when she refused to go to school by bus the next day. Then the parents mobbed the school and lodged a complaint against him. Girls and women are sexually harassed by men on the school and college premises. We have heard some news that during the COVID-19 lockdown, as classes are made online, schoolgirls are sexually harassed by the male teachers of the school and some students ended their lives by suicide. The Times of India dated 23rd Nov 2021 reports that a class XII girl from a private school committed suicide in Coimbatore, as she is sexually abused by a male teacher in the school. The New Indian Express dated 25th May 2021 reported that a school teacher is arrested by police as he was accused of sexual harassment by school girl students and alumni students. These incidents remind us that our children are not safe, when we think that they are secured and safe.

Unfortunately, we witness the reality of child abuse in school buses on a daily basis in the media and in the newspapers. Because of the enormous number of people and children on board, sexual assault in a school bus may seem unthinkable, yet it does happen on occasion if the child is the last one on the bus. This incident serves as a reminder that children are not safe in any environment, including school buses. Parents must now be concerned not only about traffic accidents but also about bullying and physical abuse occurring in school. In countries like India, people hesitate to talk about a few things forthrightly, one of that is sex. Parents and schools must teach sex education to children to combat such sexual abuses of innocents. As India has a great number of youths who become the future of the nation must be protected from victimization for a healthy nation. Children must tell their parents what is happening around them and parents must listen to the children.

4. Victim as Guilty or Voluntary Victim – Cyber Victim

Victims as guilty or voluntary victim share equal responsibility with the perpetrator for the victimization. The victims must be conscious of the situation they may take part in, and anticipate the catastrophe in the future. If they do not aware of the situation, they possess equal responsibility by offering a chance to the offender for victimization and will become victims (Poornima et.al, 2020, p. 2779). Technology is made into our lives and the internet is inevitable for people to access education, profession, leisure, and social purposes in the techno-cultural world. Thus, perpetrators find ways to victimize easy targets using the internet. Women and children are vulnerable victims of cybercrimes. In 2021, there are 4.9 billion internet users over the world, which is 63% of the world population. According to the NCRB report, in India 71 crore people are using the internet out of which 25 crores are women. 80% of people are falling prey to cybercrimes and 63% of people are unaware of lodging complaints about cybercrimes. Perpetrators perceive the internet and social media as easy platforms for harassing or victimizing women emotionally and psychologically (Cunniff Gilson, 2018, p. 91). Cybercrimes include stalking, sextortion, pornography, blackmailing, cybersex trafficking, etc. The NCRB report and CRY (Children Rights and You) report that crimes against women in India have increased steeply by 381 percent in the last decade, an average of 350 cases are recorded every day during the pandemic.

In *Eating Wasps*, Liliana becomes the victim of cyber defamation by giving an opportunity unknowingly for her victimization (Logan et.al, 2006). Her playful sexual video shared by her ex-boyfriend on YouTube become viral and reached a million views. Liliana doesn't aware of the situation and its aftermath when she is at a party in Milan's house in Italy, an artist whom she has met a few times. Liliana doesn't care about anyone or anything in the room "she was a furry feline; a huntress seeking her quarry that nestled within boxer shorts" (Nair, 2018, p. 170). She laughs out loud and looks up sideways as a cat blinked, and meowed at the camera. A playful act, nothing more.

Victims are unaware of their actions and aftermaths, and being in the wrong situation pave way for the perpetrator to victimize them. She is giving an opportunity to the perpetrator by being in the place. Someone in the group sends it to her ex and forwards it to his school, university, and workgroups, with the caption "Pussy-Mouth and Deviant" (Nair, 2018, p. 171). Her playful attitude to sex crucifies her with the power of male imagination. No one looks at her breasts, lips, waist, hair, legs, nose, thoughts, and feelings everything ceased to matter, and her mouth becomes her (Dey, 2018, p. 33). Men look at her mouth as deviant light, everywhere the eyes follow her mouth. Someone creates a fan page on FB, Twitter ID and Pussy-Mouth posts and memes made an appearance. She laments for her mistakes, which turn her pussy mouth. "She hadn't felt vulnerable when she saw the video the first time of her crawling on her knees towards F as he stood lighting a cigarette. At that point, it had just seemed like good fun" (Nair, 2018, p. 170). As a result of her playful act, when she goes to church for communion, the priest's eye rushes to her mouth and his fingertips brush her lips and slide into her mouth. She runs out of the church with shame and undisguised fury. The tag 'Pussy-Mouth' follows her everywhere, she cannot feel safe in the holy places too (Singh & Kannan, 2021, p. 408).

Liliana extricates herself from technology, even after a year she is away from using a smartphone, laptop, or iPad because the World Wide Web becomes a nightmare (Jain, 2017, p. 9). The mouths of predators come to her mind involuntarily. She is looking for a place to run away and finds a resort near the Nila river in Kerala. She says, "I need a refuge for now. Some place and some activity that will take me away from myself" (Nair, 2018, p. 170). Then her passion for dance makes her join Koman's dance academy in Kerala and also she starts to learn Malayalam from Poduval, a Malayalam tutor. One evening in the dance school, she hears a whisper *koothichi* from Tara, a girl in the institute and insults her by saying "so that's why you came here? You thought no one would find out... Listen, Pussy-Mouth, what we learn here is dance. It's not for sluts like you. Why don't you go and find a dance bar somewhere?" (Nair, 2018, p. 177). Liliana replies "if I am a *koothichi*, then we are all *koothichis*. *Koothichi* is not a bad word at all, we made it a bad one. *Koothichi* means someone who performs koothu, dance- a dancer" (Nair, 2018, pp. 177). Liliana left the place with the thought that everyone at the institute would know all about her. Men perpetuate women to revenge on them and exclude them from public life. Sometimes women also hurt other women by reminding them of such bad incidents and calling them victims (Borwell et.al, 2022, p. 942). Thus Liliana cannot get rid of her tag 'Pussy Mouth' even across the borders. She finds refuge in India, but the internet reveals her identity there too. Survivors cannot be happy since the internet continues to recall such terrible events, and even when they have gathered enough courage to live, they are emotionally abused by stereotypical individuals in society. It is human to make mistakes, but women who make mistakes are not considered humans. Men are described as human beings, and women are accused of copying men when they act like humans (Bakshi, 2017, p. 42). Women victims are never allowed to be survivors and live happily in patriarchal societies. They can't get away from them even if they cross borders, she feels, "The spider's web stretched to the far ends of the world. There was no place to hide. And she didn't want to any more. She was tired of running, of trying to erase the person she was" (Nair, 2018, p. 178). Then she goes back to her room and logs into her FB, Twitter, and Instagram accounts, which have been inactive for months. She takes a selfie and posts it in her social media accounts, "Hello darlings, I'm back!... added Meow..." (Nair, 2018, p. 179). She decides to find her where she loses herself. "Every soldier knows that the only way to keep the enemy from following is to burn the bridge behind. She had burnt her bridges too. There was only the way ahead (Nair, 2018, p. 179).

The Agency of women is restricted by many tools of the patriarchy, the recent tool taken by men is the internet to spread scandals (Mitra & Chakrabarti, 2021, p. 2211). Deccan Chronicle dated 10th Mar 2020 reports that a 16-year-old girl from Gujarat, India committed suicide after her boyfriend leaked their intimate video. Gulf News dated 31st Jan 2022 reported that a 36-year-old Egyptian woman committed suicide after her husband threatened her by sharing her nude pictures and intimate videos (Nasrallah, 2022). Most girls and women are afraid to reveal the threats made by the perpetrators which motivate more crimes. Liliana is a representation of the real victims. Victims exclude themselves from public life but Liliana is ready to face the challenges with courage. Victims never be a victim always, they can recreate their lives with determination.

5. Victim with Minor Guilt

Acid attack or vitriol is a form of gender-based violence with the intention of killing or hurting someone (especially women) physically and psychologically by throwing acid or any corrosive substances on the body or face. Perpetrators (men) throw acid on victims' (women) face not to kill them, but to endure the long-lasting sufferings throughout their life

psychologically as well as physically (Goswami & Handa, 2020. P. 84). In the patriarchal society, men have been told to domineer and women have to be enslaved. Women never say no to men, if she refuses to do something like a denial of love request or relationship, withdrawal from the relationship, refuses sexual advances and so on men find ways to destroy them. Women and girls are the victims and survivors of acid attacks. Globally there are approximately 1500 acid attacks a year. The greatest prevalence is in South Asian countries including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, where acid remains inexpensive and freely available.

In Anita Nair's *Eating Wasps*, Najma is an acid attack victim and survivor. She is a Muslim girl of 24, and lives with her Ammi (mother). She does not know that her world will shift like a horror movie within five or six minutes on the train by a man whom she never knows. She has seen him on the morning train for almost a fortnight and catches her gaze once or twice. He is Imtiaz, a man who is working in a catering company with Ammi. He sees Najma there a few times and fell in love with her and wants to marry her. He approaches Ammi for marrying her but she rejects and laughs at him by saying "My daughter deserves better. She is a teacher. Why would she marry a lowly kitchen help like you?" (Nair, 2018, p. 61).

Men in the patriarchal society expect women to say yes to them, when she says no they take it as dishonor. Imtiaz, a man from the working class cannot endure the rejection and takes this as an insult to his manliness. He confides this to his friend and tells him that no man will let such a slur go unpunished. So he decides to give her an unforgettable scar which makes her suffer physically and psychologically throughout her life. He chooses acid attack because acid is a cheap material and easily available for a layman and he thinks it destroys her beauty. Easy availability and low cost make him choose acid as his weapon to destroy her. One evening he is waiting outside the school gate and follows her to the station. He tells "Your Ammi is an arrogant bitch. Like you are. The two of you think you are above all of us" (Nair, 2018, p. 62). He criticizes her as a whore and flaunts her beauty to have men in her way. "She thinks you are too good for me. Does she know that you are no better than a two-bit whore? Do you think I haven't seen you? Flaunting your face for the world to see. Using your beauty to have your way with men. From the tea-stall boy to everyone in this train... How many men do you want, you whore?" (Nair, 2018, p. 62).

We live in a society, where everyone gives opinions but nobody is ready to combat victimization. When he behaves unusually on the train nobody the passengers, the teachers, and a man don't want to get involved, and they began moving away from there. The venom in his voice is understood by everyone, even though they don't know Urdu. "The old man in the skull cap murmured, Education doesn't mean you disdain the Koran. What kind of Muslim woman steps out without a hijab?" (Nair, 2018, p. 62). Even though women are innocent, considering them as the weaker sex makes them victims easily. In Afghanistan, women become acid attack victims for not wearing hijab or modesty dress. But she is hoping that nothing worst going to happen because she is in a public place and gets down within five or six minutes. She does not know that her world will shift like a horror movie in those five or six minutes. The old man gets up and goes towards the door. He leans forward and stares at her. She pleads with him to leave her alone. He flings acid on her face by telling her "I won't let you become anyone else's wife" (Nair, 2018, p. 63). She is screaming between life and death while her skin melts. Nothing has happened with the policemen's investigation, she is excluded from society and locked herself in her house. Helpless Ammi says "Time will heal everything. It's like watching grass grow... you think you can't see any difference, but one day you will see that the grass has indeed grown" (Nair, 2018, p. 63-64). She starts to hate her Ammi after hearing these words. The trauma stops her from stepping out of the house. Even after knowing everything about the perpetrator the laws and society fail to save her from the physical and psychological trauma. After the death of Ammi, she must do something either kill herself or live. She pulls her burkha and shows her melted face and the stretched-out skin of her neck with a tiny voice. The acid damages her larynx as well.

Acid attacks leave victims as damaged goods and restrict them from public life. But some victims become survivors and bounce back strongly. Najma doesn't want to be a victim in four walls and hide her face and identity. She decides to face the challenges in the world. "Ammi I did it. I did what you asked of me. I faced the world. I will never hide behind a burkha" (Nair, 2018, p. 67). Even though she is a trained teacher it is not easy for her to find a teaching job or any job. Because no one wants a wrecked face and the burkha is bad for business. But she has the will to not hide her face with burkha. She is working as a housekeeper in a resort nearby the Nila river.

Empowering such victims is not easy, but victims in real life come back with their dream to change the world. Laxmi Agarwal was attacked in 2005 in New Delhi at the age of 15 by a man to whom she said no to marry. He flung acid on her face in a public place and she screamed like Najma between life and death. But the public ignored her screaming instead of helping her at times they witnessed the horror with pity. Her perpetrator had thought that she became a victim who would be constrained by four walls but she become a survivor and started an organization for acid attack victims. Her victimization was adapted into a film 'Chhapaak' in 2020 in the Hindi language. The reel and real victims make their lives out of the victimization and empower themselves against all such odd victimization (Jayaratne, 2022, 387).

6. Conclusion

Eating Wasps is a tale of women's hearts affected by different forms of abuse from childhood to adulthood. Children and women irrespective of anything, due to the prevalence of gender politics victimized by men in their society which ruins their lives not only physically but also their mental health. Generally, women victims are afraid of society and the patriarchal restrictions which turn them voiceless for their repercussions. And in recent days we are witnessing a number of news on girls and women being abused in schools, colleges, and workstations. They become victims and end their lives with death. But Nair doesn't treat her female characters as pity subjects rather she tries to give agency to them to become survivors after victimization. Cyber victimization does not have any geographical boundaries, Lilita is suffering the repercussions in India, due to the deep-rooted stereotypical gender norms across the globe. But she collects her courage and challenges the people who are trying to tag her as a 'victim'. Najma neither ends her life nor hides her face, rather she fights for her survival and creates her own identity. Lilita and Najma do not restrict themselves as victims of repercussions, rather they come out as survivors and recreate their identities. According to Mendelsohn, victims are responsible to some extent knowingly or unknowingly for the victimization and pave way for the perpetrator to happen the victimization. To err is human, thus being in hapless situations makes them victims. Hence, they fight against the odd restrictions imposed on women in various forms and recreate their identities. Preventing such long existed crimes is not an easy task, it requires continuous addressing of inequality in socio-economic systems and culture. A crime-free world is impossible to achieve without raising continuous voices, thus Nair aims to address the victimization of women in the 21st century through her female characters in *Eating Wasps*.

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