

EXPLORING TRAUMA BONDING AND ADAPTIVE SURVIVAL MECHANISMS IN THE MALAYALAM MOVIE *JAYA JAYA JAYA HEY: A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS*

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Abstract

Trauma bonding is not a new concept that evolved recently. On the contrary, it was there from time immemorial and the victims can be seen everywhere. Whenever a person is not able to get out of the clutches of a relationship, s/he is trauma bonded. Most often the person involved would never come to realize that s/he is in such a dilemma or else it would be very late to recognise it. It is the need of the hour to realize whether people are trauma bonded. It may be quite difficult and complicated to survive a trauma bond and eventually break free from it. The paper analyses the trauma bonding faced by the character Jayabharathi in the Malayalam movie *Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* directed by Sri Vipin Das. The film explores a timely social topic by dispelling the stereotypes that are prevalent in our society. The movie shows how much a woman can endure in trauma bond. It is expected that such a study would be beneficial to many people in our society to lead better productive lives.

Key words: Trauma bonding, intermittent reinforcement, cognitive dissonance, Survival tactics

In psychological terminology, the idea of trauma bond has significant application in interpersonal interactions. When a person suffers in a relationship, bonding turns into trauma. In other words, a deep emotional relationship known as trauma bonding develops between two individuals as a result of strong, shared emotional experiences. This connection can form in various kinds of relationships, including those between victims and abusers, hostel inmates or any others who have gone through for a long time together. It usually involves abusive cycles, in which instances of compassion or stress release are entwined with destructive behaviour. Usually, the victim undergoes physical abuse but afterwards receives encouragement. The person is forced to continue the relationship by the emotional attachment. Most often the victim begins to associate the good times with the abuser, as a result a strong emotional attachment that is difficult to break is evolved.

In the Malayalam movie *Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* directed by Vipin Das, the central character Jaya is trauma bonded to her parents, relatives, lover and husband. When the sufferer is totally hurt while being inside the relationships and is unable to escape, the situation becomes worse. The story revolves around the village girl Jaya who is always placed in situations where those around her make decisions for her. Later, the same people inform her that she had complete freedom to choose the life she chooses. Getting Jaya married to Rajesh, who believes that women are made to take care of the home and bow to men's words, is one such choice.

When Jaya tells her brother about the abuse, he responds with a voicemail that says, "Don't worry, I'll talk to him." It has a forwarded tag on it, explaining everything in a similar way to how everyone, even her parents, tells her that women need to adjust because men who looks after the financial matters will have reasons to become angry. No one in not even in a single scene in the movie, asks Rajesh why he is acting the way he is; instead, Jaya is questioned by everyone regarding her behaviour. This kind of mindset is held, whether intentionally or unintentionally, by some families, husbands, and in-laws, and it can be detrimental to the mental health of women. Jaya's silence act as a symbol of the intense pain she bears.

Jaya begins to react after the twenty-one slaps, but for the first time, everyone gathers when Rajesh is struck, and nobody queries the twenty-one slaps. The movie is a direct response to those who believe that males are free to act in ways that aggravate them while women are constrained to restrictions.

The use of flashbacks and symbolism, such as "scraping of the jeep," mother's repeated remarks that "he is good at heart" following her son's obscene activities, Jaya's questioning of the number of slaps she has had in her lifetime, etc., has been effective to get the sense involved. With the use of humour,

the movie raises awareness of a significant social issue and could successfully appeal to a larger audience.

This is a narrative that reflects the plight of many women throughout India in the systemic patriarchal abuse that women endure at the hands of their partners and the pathetic truth is that it is with the support of their families. Jaya got her name as it rhymed with her brother's name. Even her friend at school tries to convince that she is a lucky girl even when she is facing so many discriminations. Even after securing good marks, she was not allowed to do the course of her choice. Everyone in the family has a single voice in deciding that she should learn in the local parallel college. Her decision was that she would learn BSc Anthropology even if she had to die, but ended up in learning BA Malayalam at the parallel college. When her teacher proposed and they had a relationship that was also a trauma bonded one with so much of restrictions and ended up in becoming a drop out in college and culminated in a marriage against her wish.

People belonging to various cultures, attitude and aptitude have diverse effect when they face trauma bond. On the other hand the same situation raises trauma differently in different people. In stereotypical cases, there is the refusal of fault, justification of their actions and people who support them isolates them more and the dependence on the life partner also increases.

Jaya suffers from the trauma of abuse from a very young age, and every effort to get away from it is greeted with another prod into an even more abusive circumstance. Trauma bond becomes severe when it occurs between life partners. In trauma bonding, the victim gets intermittent reinforcement: Jaya is taken out for a movie and they dine out whenever she is slapped by her husband. But she is not given the choice to order a dish according to her wish. This describes how both positive and negative behaviours in a relationship are unpredictable. Rather strong emotional ties are formed by the uneven reinforcement. The conflict that already existed in the family is shown through drying chilies and the narrow parking space. Even her sister in law insists that she should not try to get out of the trauma bond, since nobody would accept her in such a situation.

When an abuser separates their victim from friends, family, or other support systems, the victim may develop a greater attachment with the abuser as their main source of validation and connection. Jaya is isolated and distanced from her family and friends.

Because of the emotional experiences they have shared, victims may develop survival mechanisms as well as a sense of attachment or allegiance to their abuser. Jaya experiences confusion and cognitive dissonance as a result of her inability to make sense of the abusive behaviour in light of the good times that can be associated only with her childhood days.

When there is inconsistency in belief and action (such as being violated by someone who is supposed to love you) our mind has to make an adjustment so that thought and action are aligned. So sometimes the adjustment that the mind makes is for the victim to bring her or his behavior in line with the violator, since the violator cannot be controlled by the victim. Our greatest source of survival is to adapt to our environment. So increasing emotional intimacy with a person who is forcing physical intimacy makes sense in our minds. It resolves cognitive dissonance. (Bakari 39)

It takes a long time for Jaya to comprehend the mechanics of their relationship, and create plans to break free from the trauma bond. It's critical to recognise that recovery from a trauma bond requires time and a thorough strategy that takes into account the relationship's psychological and emotional components. It is very difficult to break a trauma link and frequently needs the assistance of mental health specialists, a strong support system, and a safe space apart from the abuser.

By recognising and illustrating these problems, a trauma bonding character's tale can gain depth and complexity while highlighting the internal tensions and hardships they go through in such poisonous relationships. It can help clarify the nuances of psychological and emotional abuse. Estella from Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* is one instance of a character in English literature that bonds over trauma. Estella's interactions with Pip, reveals her trauma bonding. She keeps a cold, almost cruel distance from Pip. Miss Havisham's influence on Estella's behaviour and emotional aloofness point to a type of trauma bonding. Because she was tricked by Miss Havisham, Estella is unable to develop

positive emotional relationships with other people. The traumatising attachment she formed with Miss Havisham is the reason she is unable to feel true love and connection. The growth of a character whose relationships and emotional reactions are shaped by the abuse and manipulation they endure at the hands of powerful people are impacted by the abuse and manipulation one endured at the hands of a powerful person.

When the trauma bond culminated in a situation where Jaya began to live with the fear of being beaten anytime, she developed a kind of mental strength where she wanted to come out of the situation. She recognises the relationship's dynamics, acknowledges the pattern of mistreatment, sporadic reinforcement, and control. Breaking the bond starts with being aware of these habits rather than accepting them.

She gains knowledge about abusive relationships, trauma bonding, and the psychological ramifications of abuse at a later period of her life. Acquiring knowledge helps her to comprehend the situation and provide with guidance on how to proceed.

Jaya could have got legal help earlier for domestic violence. At least she sets feasible limits with the abuser by cutting off communication. Establishing and upholding personal boundaries with clarity becomes crucial for her mental and emotional health, otherwise she would have to seek the assistance of psychological experts. The legal measure was initiated by the husband himself. At a juncture, as a measure of self care she practices karate from YouTube tutorials. She takes part in stress-relieving activity like sewing and practicing karate that made her happy, relaxed, and feel good about herself.

As a survival mechanism, she seeks assistance from her family, makes contact with dependable relatives, and support networks. Having a support system in place can help shatter the isolation the abuser has imposed by offering emotional support, perspective, and validation. Jaya gives considerable thought to the exit strategy as she finds herself in a position where she must physically leave the hostile environment. This could entail making financial plans, finding a safe place to stay, and, if needed, obtaining legal counsel. The survival tactics of mastering the martial art karate makes her adamant to get out of the trauma bonding.

It takes some time for Jaya to work with her feelings, traumatic experiences, and realize that wife beating was not normal. When she strives towards healing, she begins to practise self-compassion. When she comes to know that the love making and pregnancy was the result of a plan to domesticate her, she is completely broken. Even at the hospital her mother is saying every decision in her life was according to her wish. Only after the miscarriage she was able to get the assistance of her brother to live in a working women's hostel and to take over an existing chicken business with the financial support of a bank.

Many survivors have such profound deficiencies in self-protection that they can barely imagine themselves in a position of agency or choice. The idea of saying no to the emotional demands of a parent, spouse, lover or authority figure may be practically inconceivable. Thus, it is not uncommon to find adult survivors who continue to minister to the needs of those who once abused them and who continue to permit major intrusions without boundaries or limits. Adult survivors may nurse their abusers in illness, defend them in adversity, and even, in extreme cases, continue to submit to their sexual demands. (Herman 81)

Jaya tried to cope up with her situation to the maximum. She gets peace only after getting released from the trauma. In the end she succeeds in getting out of the bonding. She went through all the seven stages in trauma bonded relationships like growing reliance, becoming more reliant, judgment, undervaluation, showing too much of love, giving in and giving up, losing one's sense of self and worth, gas lighting and being emotionally dependent

Jaya develops both long term and short term effects as a result of trauma bonding with her husband. The emotional abuse causes a few issues in her both physical and mental. Jaya's husband yells at her, calls her name loudly, hurling insults at, makes fun of her; punish her for not doing things as he says, in short he was trying to control her life; keeps her away from her family and friends; and making threats.

She was able to break up the trauma bond when she made drastic change in her character. She began to concentrate on the present: She was maintaining the trauma attachment with the hope that her abusive husband will change. She develops a good inner dialogue to make him feel less confident in himself and that she came of the thought that she could not their live without the abuser. One might start to modify this by recognising negative self-talk and confronting it with constructive alternatives. Her attempt to seek refuge in karate to defend her happened out of her tactics in self care.

In the court Jaya could establish that she can do the same business as running a poultry farm like him without getting angry and torturing others. The judge at the court asserts that what a lady wants after marriage is justice, equality and liberty. The movie is a slap on the face of those who deliberately or without knowledge become abuser in each trauma bonded relationship.

The addition of humour alleviated the hate propaganda on the existing norms in the society embedded in trauma bonding. It can be very difficult to break out from the trauma bond even when the character realises the relationship is poisonous because of the emotional attachment, fear, and lack of support. The process of severing a trauma link is intricate and frequently challenging. It is important to practise self-compassion, it is not unfeasible.

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