

## FEMINISM AND DOMESTIC ABUSE: AN ANALYSIS OF 'ROSE MADDER' BY STEPHEN KING

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study is to highlight the degree of domestic violence that women faced at the hands of romantic partners in the 1990s through the analysis of Rose Daniels' character in Rose Madder by Stephen King. Stephen King also sheds light on the traumatic impact and negative psychological effect of domestic violence on the victim via Rose Daniels' character. This research was conducted after analyzing dialogues, inner monologues and incidents present in the novel under the theory of feminism. Domestic violence of extreme extent, the struggle of running away and finding freedom from an abusive marriage, the struggles of starting a new life after being a victim of abuse for more than a decade, and the psychological impact of long term domestic abuse are discussed in this study. This research article also discusses the nature of the abuser, Norman, who is Rose Daniels' husband as his wife is not the only woman who becomes a victim of his abuse. The Battered Woman Syndrome is an aspect of the theory of feminism and Rose Daniels' character is analyzed under this aspect as she finds it near impossible to leave her abusive marriage. The Cycle of Abuse theory is also applied to analyze Rose's character development as she also starts to exhibit and adapt the behavioral patterns of her abuser.*

Keywords: violence, Women, Psychological effect, marriage

### Introduction

Themes of feminism and domestic violence are seen throughout Stephen King's Rose madder and they play a major role in the character development of the female protagonist, Rose Daniels, as she tries to escape an abusive marriage with her husband, Norman. Stephen King wrote this book in 1995 and the novel is set in the 1980s and 1990s, a time when the second wave feminist movement was making its way into the minds of the common house wives, making them take a stand for themselves. Stephen King wrote Rose Madder after being inspired by the large number of domestic violence victims finally coming out with their abuse stories and escaping the horrors of an abusive marriage to live healthier and somewhat happier lives, as being haunted by the traumas of their past lives often makes it difficult for most victims to go back to being normal. This is not the first time King has portrayed the themes of domestic abuse and feminism in his writings. *It*, *Carrie* and *The Shinning* also carry themes of domestic abuse as the female protagonist (Beverly) in *it* is a victim of domestic abuse from her biological father and later on in life faces domestic abuse from her husband. In *The Shinning*, the female lead is also subjected to domestic abuse by the hands of her husband. Lastly, in *Carrie*, Carrie is a victim of mental domestic abuse from her mother. There are also several occasions or cases of domestic violence where the victim is so passively used to the abuse that it slowly starts changing their personality as they start accepting it, and in return it starts to shape them into something they are not.

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Mostly what happens is that the victim starts mimicking the behavioral patterns of their abuser, they will use the same tactics that their abusers used whenever they did something trivial that upset them. This shows us that long term abuse can have a long lasting impact on the human mind and personality.

### **Feminism and Domestic Abuse**

The concept of 'feminism' is described as a range of social and political movements that fought for the rights of women and for gender equality. Basically Feminism is the advocacy of the rights of women mainly on the basis of the equality of the sexes. Even though the feminist movement originated in the west, the feminist movement has now spread worldwide. Whereas 'Domestic abuse' is defined as any kind of violence or abuse that takes place in a domestic environment such as marriage or a live in relationship. Domestic abuse is also known as intimate partner violence and mostly happens when one person in the marriage or relationship starts getting verbally, physically or sexually violent/abusive with their spouse or partner. From a broader perspective, it can also take place between a parent, child or even an elderly family member. Domestic violence can range from subtle emotional or verbal abuse to physical abuse.

### **Research Statement**

This research aims to shed light on the abuse that women faced at the hands of romantic partners in the 1980s, a time period when domestic violence was not that openly discussed and most victims were pressurized by society to stay quiet and to bear with it for as long as they could, and how domestic violence has an impact on a person's mental health as well as their personality, since a victim of domestic abuse can still take up on the characteristics of their abuser and become abusive themselves in the future. This research will highlight the instances in the novel where the essence of domestic violence is reflected and they will be analyzed under the theories of cycle of abuse and battered women syndrome.

### **Significance of the Study**

Stephen King's novel *Rose Madder* showcases the extent of domestic abuse that an average woman faces in an abusive household by their husbands/significant others all the while being told that this is being done to them in order to discipline them and that this act of violence is being committed out of love and affection. The work that has been previously done on this novel only from the perspective of domestic violence is little to none. This research may provide a broader narrative of domestic abuse faced by Rose Daniels in the novel and the research will analyze the effects on the mental health of the victim.

### **Research objective**

To ascertain the domestic abuse faced by the female protagonist in the novel and rule out the psychological impact of the experience.

### **Research Question**

What relation does the intensity/severity of domestic violence faced by the female protagonist of the novel have with manifestation of psychological effects after it occurs?

### **Limitations of the study**

The theme of feminism and domestic violence has been researched on many times in the past however this research will be focusing on these themes only using the novel as a reference. This research will be analyzing the theme of domestic abuse and feminism along with the theme of mental trauma that is followed by abuse using the novel as a source material.

## **Literature Review**

### **Domestic Violence**

Domestic abuse is an evil in society that has just recently been given more voice to. Domestic abuse is defined as acts of violence or extreme injustice towards any member of the household, whether it is your own blood or not. It is usually associated with any unsavory or unjust act against a partner you are intimate with. Domestic abuse can be categorized in many different divisions (What is the Definition of Domestic Violence? – Find Law, 2018). These divisions of domestic abuse are:

1. Physical Abuse: Any physical harm that affects someone's physical well-being in any way. Denying someone from your household any kind of medical assistance is also in the same category, as well as forcing intoxicants of any sort on someone.
2. Sexual Abuse: Coercing a significant other into performing sexual acts without their consent. Harming sexual body parts, sexually demeaning remarks.
3. Emotional Abuse: Attacking someone in the house holds self-esteem to the point that their self-worth starts slipping and damages their mental health.
4. Economic Abuse: Making or trying to make the victim financially reliant. Economic abusers often seek to maintain total control over financial resources, withhold the victim's access to funds, or prohibit the victim from going to school or work.
5. Psychological Abuse: Remarks and actions that directly affect the mental health of a person in your household.
6. Threats: Verbal remarks relating to hit, injure, or use a weapon are a form of psychological abuse.
7. Stalking: Following the victim, spying, watching, harassing, showing up at the victim's home or work, sending gifts, collecting information, making phone calls, leaving written messages, or appearing at a person's home or workplace is all considered stalking. These acts individually are typically legal, but any of these behaviors done continuously results in a stalking crime.
8. Cyber stalking: Online action or repeated emailing that inflicts substantial emotional distress in the recipient.

Domestic Abuse is an everyday problem, with the frequency at an alarming high. According to the National Coalition against Domestic Violence, one of the biggest voices regarding domestic violence in the United States of America, reports that per minute, 20 people are physically abused, both men and women. This makes it a total of 10 million abuse victims annually (NCADV | National Coalition against Domestic Violence, n.d.). These acts of harm and abuse are usually recorded considering abuse of one intimate partner on another. Regarding the book, *Rose Madder*, we consider the use of violence against women came to be associated with the social and sexual control of women by men in patriarchal societies. The biological difference between men and women contributes to the unjust behavior. It is also an expression of abusive men that they use to

establish control over women in the household (Martinez, 2011). This has become extremely common in the so called patriarchal society we currently reside in. The United States has just recently been active in regard to addressing the issues of domestic abuse in their society. This is due to the new wave of feminism that has made it apparent that the old laws will not be efficient to take care of not only the women that have to deal with this abuse, but other members of the household (Rolle, Ramon & Brustia, 2019).

### **Feminism**

Feminism has given a voice to all women to tell the world their demands. Just treatment and equality has been the main demand for feminists in patriarchal societies. This wave began from the time from when women were denied the right to work or even vote in the United States, and today has gone to the extents of being the largest voice against domestic violence, discrimination regarding gender and the unjust treatment of women.

Feminism is:

1. The advocacy of women's rights on the basis of the equality of the sexes.
2. The theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes.
3. The belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities.
4. The doctrine advocating social, political, and all other rights of women equal to those of men.

Feminism argues that men and women should have the same status in society, not just be the same. A lot of arguments are put forth that men and women can't be equal in this society because they aren't the same. The similarity is judged on the basis of appearance and physical and mental capabilities, which may be different for both. This portrays an extremely negative propaganda that women are in some way inferior to men. It is a different case whatsoever. Women perform communicative tasks better than men and are better at multitasking and dealing with human resources, so the just treatment and fair share in the work industry is absolutely warranted.

One of the biggest issues raised by feminism is domestic violence against the large amount of women that have no voice to speak up and have to endure the unjust behavior of the men and women around them (Bagshaw, 2011). Postmodern feminism focuses on the contribution of toxic masculinity and femininities that exist in our society which play a huge role in enabling this type of behavior. These norms contribute to the gendered violence that is prevalent in society today (Weedon, 1987). The feminist post-structuralist theory is very essential for the women of today in order to voice the problems that they have regarding the society in order to make society better and the laws governing it better (Gavey, 1989). This will help safeguard the rights and wellbeing of people who have been a victim of domestic abuse and can potentially fall into the category.

Due to the many efforts of people, domestic abuse prevention hot-lines have been established in order to deal with domestic abuse and violence, all thanks to the many voices and efforts of the feminist movement. Awareness has been created in order to prevent the increase of victims as much as they can.

In the context of the book, physical, emotional, psychological, abuse take place. Norman Daniels had isolated Rose to her home, with no financial backing of her own, no one to hear her cries for help. Her husband was in law enforcement, so she had

no idea who to go to in order to be saved from him. She was hit, abused and threatened on a regular basis. These actions forced Rose to leave her home and seek asylum with the Daughters and Sisters, a place and community that gave refuge to those women and children that had no-where else to go. The asylum and Rose provided a feminist narrative to the book. However, the woman in the painting, who was a sexual and physical victim of Norman Daniels and his partner, Howard, represented an extremist feminist narrative, where she had the vision to have dominance over men and make those suffer who treated women unjustly (Stephen King: *Rose Madder* (1995), 2013). Stephen King tries to define the feminist and extremist feminist narrative side by side, where all the feminist wants is to be treated fairly and justly without being in the fear of being harmed or abused in any way. On the other hand, the extremely feminist narrative, often called the feminazi, is adamant on having dominion over man, considering them as feral beasts without any distinction (Simpson & McAleer, 2019).

The study aims to highlight how abusive men can be towards women and how difficult it is to voice the concerns that may come about. Which is why supervisory bodies and domestic abuse hot-lines are extremely necessary in order to create better living standards for men and women alike. Feminism has no doubt played an important role for the victims of domestic abuse and is working continuously to provide a better life to those women that have been discriminated against and wronged by other men and women.

## **Methodology**

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The researcher has used qualitative research method for the data analysis and the nature of this research will be descriptive and exploratory. In order to analyze the collected data from the novel *Rose Madder* by Stephen King, contextual analysis is applied. To extensively evaluate and find out the themes of the research topic that has been picked, the body of text within the novel, where the author talks about the domestic abuse faced by the female protagonist as well as the psychological after math of domestic abuse, has be extracted. Secondary resources used for this research were published researches that contained data related to domestic violence, domestic abuse, feminism and the psychological affects that domestic abuse has on a victim. All of this data has been collectively used in order to prove the purpose of this research.

### **Research Methodology**

The collection and analysis of the data is done from the passages of the novel *Rose Madder* written by the king of horror Stephen King. The analysis of the collected data has been done with reference to the research objectives and the research questions presented. A detailed account of the results and the conclusion will be given once the research is completed.

### **Theoretical Framework**

i. The theory that will be applied in this research to explain the domestic abuse phenomenon is the theory of feminism. According to the theory of feminism, domestic abuse carried out on the wife is directly linked to society's patriarchal establishment which is evident because of the behavioral patterns of men and their

attitudes towards the fairer sex. The feministic approach argues that gender inequality is a crucial aspect in the male-female violence. As abuse and violence are often considered as statements of social authority, these two things are used by men as methods to dominate and manipulate women. When a man feels like he is no longer powerful, he will resort to hostility to restore his authority over women. In the past, significant civil establishments have condoned the adoption of physical abuse by men in order to control women. All these factors contribute to creating and promoting a social setting where women are abused and where other manners of violence against family members takes place. The battered women's syndrome that was presented by L Walker in 1983 put forward a feminist perspective of understanding the impacts of domestic abuse and its dynamics. It helps us understand the psychological effects of victimization under domestic abuse and what makes women stay in such situations. It was imperative in understanding the setting of the plot where the protagonist Rosie takes years to realize that she was in a situation that she needed to get away from, and by then the major impacts of domestic abuse had already left an impact on her psychological functioning. The theory also explains that apart from the majorly identified factors such as background, circumstances, economic conditions, personality etc. there is no fixed criteria for being a victim of domestic abuse, the only condition being that you're a woman who the patriarchy has enabled to be at risk of it.

ii. In comparison to the feminist theory, which defines the patriarchal essence of the society and one's family, the theory of conflict focuses on family members and the society as someplace that involves conflict. This conflict can be between the members and their diverse concerns. The theory of conflict and the theory of feminism focus on the basic social conditions present in the society and in members of the family, while the theory of social learning gives us an account for patterns of interaction between family members that foster violent and abusive behavior. The theory of social learning also gives the argument that a major part of behavioral learning takes place by observing and imitating as well as reinforcing. According to this theory, violent and aggressive behavior is often observed in one person, it is then imitated and reinforced. This can happen in the case where a child will learn abusive behavioral patterns from a parent who is abusive. A theory that helps explain the continuity of abuse via the victim themselves is the Cycle of Abuse theory that was also presented by L Walker. It helps us to conceptualize the ways in which domestic abuse can be cyclic in nature, repeating over and over again between the victim and the abuser and shown in the novel and also explains the continuity of abuse when the victim is finally able to rid themselves of the abuser. This is particularly noted in the aspect where the protagonist Rosie who is timid and mild by nature also begins to experience and develop abuse tendencies later on. The theory helps us identify different stages in the abuse cycle and how to aptly intervene in each given stage.

### **Textual Analysis**

The text taken from the novel has been analyzed in the light of the feminist theory, mainly the Battered Woman Syndrome aspect of the feminist theory that tell us that domestic violence victims can have a hard time leaving their abusers and the Cycle of Abuse theory that explains how the abusive mentally can transfer to the victim,

hence making them the abusive as well. The only solution given for such acts of violence against the female gender was to take a stand for themselves and to seek freedom.

## Discussion and Analysis

### Domestic Violence and Rose Madder

*Rose Madder* is Stephen King's 29th novel and is highly reflective of Greek mythology, bringing to use many of its metaphysical elements (Carrietta N. White, *Rose Madder* 2004). *Rose Madder* consists of themes of domestic violence intertwined with supernatural elements. The novel was published in 1995 when several movements for women's rights were at their peak; leaders from 189 nations had come together in Beijing for the sake of women's rights (Silva, 2014).

Gruesome violence, gore, and graphic details anxiety and fear are a prominent aspect of *Rose Madder*. King uses explicit details to explain the grotesque acts of domestic violence that Rose was being subjected to. The novel begins with four-month pregnant Rose Daniel suffering from a painful miscarriage after her husband Norman punches her three times in her belly. Norman Daniel is a violent, ill-tempered policeman with a history of abuse. Norman took out his frustrations on Rose, one such incident being a lawsuit filed by an African American prostitute Wendy Yarrow who accuses him of sexually assaulting her, which results in Rose's miscarriage.

After her miscarriage, Rose Daniels begins to think about leaving her abusive and manipulative husband. However, with time, this idea fades away from her mind and she continues living with her husband for 9 more years in a state of delusion until one day she decides to just run away from the abuse after a drop of her blood dries up on her bed covers. It makes her think to herself that if this goes on, eventually, "He will kill me" (pg. 28). All her life Rose lived with Norman mainly because he threatened to kill her. Another reason is the reality that Norman is an excellent detective and is good at tracking people down (Silva, 2014). Battered Women Syndrome causes the victims to be in state of anxiety at all times, due to which women cannot seem to take a stand for themselves and deal with abuse for as long as they can until one day they snap. Same is the case with Rose. She endures her husband's torture for 14 years of her life until the day he punches and fractures her nose for spilling iced tea on his hand. This leads to a stray drop of blood dropping and drying on her white sheets, causing her have an epiphany which leads to her running away. Stephen King has used the following lines from the novel to describe the moment Rose realizes she cannot go back:

"In that instant, she knew what it must feel like to cross a river into a foreign country, and then set fire to the bridge behind you, and stand on the riverbank, watching and breathing deeply as your only chance of retreat went up in smoke" (pg. 38).

These lines describe perfectly describes Rose's situation as one where a person has come to terms with the fact that the decision they took can only lead forward and towards freedom.

When conducting an in-depth study of the novel *Rose Madder*, we analyze that Rose's character is subjected to physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, economic

abuse, psychological abuse. She is living under a constant life threat and is stalked by none other than her husband. The readers applauded the character's resilience in the face of adversity for emerging as a survivor despite gruesome abuse. 14 years of violence flashed before her eyes and she realizes that Norman is eventually going to kill her. She decides to leave with her husband's ATM card and only a wedding ring on her finger. She gets on a bus and leaves for the next city in the Midwest only to be hunted down by her detective husband. On departing from her unappreciative husband, Rose begins to discover the beauty of life, begins to become independent, and to replenish her self-esteem. Despite being away from her husband, however, her mind is still anxious about the thought of being caught. When Rose makes her first transaction, her mind is anxious and she knows that if she is caught, he will beat her up to the point where she ends up in a hospital and it would be because, as she think to herself, "she dared to steal his ATM card and to use it" (pg. 40). However, this only convinces her to make a transaction of \$750 instead of \$300.

Upon reaching her last stop to start her new life, she meets Peter Slowik who guides her to an organization called "Daughters and Sisters" which is a women's shelter run by his ex-wife Anna Stevenson. Anna helps Rose get a hotel housekeeping job and offers her 8 weeks of stay at the shelter for free. Initially Rose feels like all this is unrealistic due to being abused for 14 years; "But she stayed where she was a moment longer, like an animal which has been kept in a cage so long it cannot believe in freedom even when it is offered" (pg. 33). Eventually Rose accepts the freedom she has been offered. Rose is just beginning her new life when financial troubles befall her and she decides to pawn her wedding ring. Ironically, it's not as expensive as Norman had told her. But this does not surprise her since Norman had been deceptive during their entire marriage.

Before leaving the pawn shop, Rose sees a beautiful painting portraying a woman with her back turned, donning a Rose Madder gown, golden hair, and a gold arm circlet, looking in the direction of a temple. There is no artist's signature on the painting. Regardless, she bargains her gold ring for the painting. This point is of critical importance from a feminist perspective. A broken woman, Rose Daniel, connects with a woman wearing a Rose Madder gown, which can be interpreted as the emblem of female freedom, equality, and protection of feminine rights.

Upon leaving the shop, a stranger asks her to read a paragraph from a novel. The stranger tells Rose she has a beautiful voice and offers her an audiobook recording job. Bill Steiner, the pawnshop manager, asks her out and with each moment that Rose spends with him, she realizes that he is not like Norman, and begins to develop feelings for him. As the two are bonding and planning life together, Norman is on Rose's tracks like a dog maddened by the scent of its prey. The romance between Rose and Bill shows that healing for domestic violence victims is possible, there is light at the end of the tunnel and life can take a turn for the unexpected at any point.

Rose soon discovers that there was something odd with the painting as it changed periodically. The oil painting was a portal to another world, to which she can travel. She expedites in the unknown world where she meets a woman named Dorcas. She was a dark-complexioned woman, aesthetically similar to Wendy. Wendy was the African girl who was a prostitute and was raped by Norman. Rose is introduced to a



woman whom she calls the Rose Madder, owing to her gown and ferocious appearance. The lady asks Rose for her help in rescuing her baby from an underground labyrinth, home to a one-eyed bull. Rose helps her and Rose Madder promises to repay her. Rose lets this incident pass.

Meanwhile, Norman is on Rose's trail. He tracks her to Midwest, murders her friends and two policemen. Norman is vengeful, he wants to hurt Rose bad and punish her for leaving him. He is homophobic, racist, and a rapist. Norman even goes to the extent of squeezing a guy's testicles until he tells him about her whereabouts, kills a policeman assigned to protect Rose, and poses as him in the patrol car. When Bill and Rose enter the police station, they are attacked by Norman. Norman is about to strangle Bill to death when Rose intervenes as she thinks she is wearing the golden arm circlet from Rose Madden. Later, she realizes that her armlet was in her room. Stephen King gives a message to all the women that they do not need an enchanted circlet or amulet to fight for their lives, all they need is a strong will and determination.

At the end of the story, Rose tricks Norman to follow her into the painting where Rose Madder kills him, putting an end to his tyranny. Rose starts a new life with Bill and has a child with Bill. She puts the seeds that Rose Madder gave her, in a groove by her favorite lake which grows up to be a deadly tree. She visits the tree as it grows and gets on with her remaining life happily.

Norman's character needs some thorough examination being the main villain. His abuse began from the wedding night when she bit her for slamming a door. The one-eyed bull also bit people to death. Here, Stephen King cleverly created an analogy between the mythical creature and the abusive misogynist cop (King, Rose Madder 2020).

### **Domestic Violence and Feminism**

The opening scene of the novel, when Rose is losing her baby, is simply heart-rending and too painful to read. King declared it as his worst book, himself (U.S.: number of rapes 1990-2018 2020). It may be a fairly average book in terms of plot but the issue it highlights is not. Domestic abuse is an issue that is put under the curtains by the male-dominated society, and victims of abuse are always encouraged to forget about the horrors they have faced and enjoy their freedom the best they can, as Docras tells Rose that "It's best to be ruthless with the past. It ain't the blows we're dealt that matter, but the ones we survive." (p. 271). This is a message by King to all victims of abuse to move forward and celebrate the fact that you are a survivor.

There are a few points where Stephen King portrayed feminine needs which absolute perfection. "What women want?" is a question that has baffled men for a long. Simply put, all women want to be respected and treated with affection. A fragile aspect of Rose's character beneath her scared body is visible from this excerpt:

"As his arms went around her, she wondered how much of the human race understood about hugging- how good it was, and how a person could want to do it for hours on end. She supposed some did understand but doubted that they were in the majority. To fully understand about hugging, maybe you had to have missed a lot of it" (pg. 443).

Rose is a fragile creature; her frailty and fragility are misused by the Tyrant who is none other than her husband, Norman.

To understand the setting of the novel and Stephen King's real narrative, we have we traverse back three decades. In 1990, 109,000 marital rape cases were reported to the authorities (U.S.: number of rapes 1990-2018 2020). This is an alarming yet sharp pointer towards the cruel treatment that the women were receiving. The phenomenon of intimate/domestic violence is not new, yet the so-called civilized society has just begun to register it. Domestic violence is not just between the husband and wife, it has a ripple effect that extends to the entire family. In most cases, women continue to be abused because they are worried about their children and their future. Women are worried that if they leave the person, the children will grow without a roof over their heads and food in their stomachs. So, they continue to walk down the road filled with oppression and pain (Silence by Silence 2011).

According to the National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline, an estimated figure of 10 million children witness abuse. Nearly 40% percent of the girls aged between 14 and 17 have been at least once beaten by a boyfriend. One in five high school students, meanwhile, reported being sexually abused (7).

On analyzing the situation from a feminist and human rights activist lens, Rose Daniels lacked the confidence and courage to take a stand for herself. She is forced to accept Norman's sharp rebukes, verbal, physical, and sexual violence for years. With each insult and beating that she faces, her self-esteem and confidence decreases. She cannot make a call for help either because Norman himself was a police officer. In situations like these, who could protect her if the culprit was also seen as the protector?

Plato, a great philosopher, was an advocate for gender equality. He proposed that women possess equal capabilities for the defense of ancient Greece. Audre Lorde, the black American feminist poet, wrote in her essay "Transformation of Silence into Language and Action" that "your silence will not protect you" (Audre Lorde, "Your Silence Will Not Protect You" 2017). Audre urged the oppressed and depressed women to speak for their rights. This idea is also found in the "Rose Madder" as Rose's inner monologue just as she is about to leave her house after making up her mind that she is going to take a stand for herself and run away from this life of abuse. In that moment Rose enlightened as it's not just her who is standing up to herself; "The whole world is waking up," she thought "It's not just me" (p. 33). A growing culture is the establishment of domestic violence hotlines where women can reach out and ask for assistance in event of domestic violence. All this was made possible by the prompt and aggressive feminist movements that brought women's problems to the limelight.

We are living in a male-dominated "patriarchal" society where feminine voices are silenced by hook or crook. The so-called physical strength is used against women to make them abide by manly desires. The cases of domestic violence are taken seriously in the United States of America but a lot of improvement is still needed. Education and preaching of gender equality are a must if we want to eliminate the menace.

Feminism is a hugely misunderstood concept. Due to the excessive misuse of the term, many men and women abhor the concept. Demystify the true feminist mindset and unveiling this empowering abstraction is a key objective. The 'true' feminist agenda is to

demand equal educational and professional opportunities for women (Feminism 2020). Feminists have campaigned for a long time, demanding women's rights including the right to vote, to hold a public office or earn equal pay, to own property under their name, enter contracts, right to maternity leave, and to have equal rights within marriage. Sexual harassment, domestic violence, and rape are a frequent occurrence and massive movements have been undertaken against these issues. Feminist movements have altered the course of history, not once but many times. Today, we see women working in all spheres of life all thanks to these campaigns. Eminent scholars have given due credit to these feminist campaigns. Women today reserve their reproductive rights, including the right to abort and use contraceptives. This concept is so powerful that it has leveled the field of play between the genders, ensuring men, women, boys, and girls have access to the same resources.

### **Domestic Violence and Mental Health**

#### Domestic Violence and the Male Mindset

Norman's behavioral patterns are as important as Rose's. In the understanding of these behavioral patterns lies the cure for domestic violence. The two most important yet less frequently asked questions are: Why men rape women? Why men beat women? On talking to an abuser, it becomes apparent that the woman has been inadequate for the man. Women do not leave the abuser because of socio-cultural factors ("The Psychology of a Rapist", 2020). The frustration of a man's daily life manifests itself as an event of domestic violence or abuse. As far as the rapist mentality is concerned, male pride is a key reason. Most rapists lack empathy and have feelings of animosity towards women for one pretext or another ("The Psychology of a Rapist", 2020). In Norman's case, he resorts to raping Wendy as a way to assert dominance and to show her that he's in charge when he is investigating a robbery. His hatred for Wendy is intensified due to her being African American and a prostitute on top of being a woman.

### **Domestic Violence and Battered Women Syndrome**

The 1980s were an important era as the first battered women program was inaugurated in North Carolina and victims gained an ample amount of confidence to share their story. The era is significant even more because 2000 domestic violence programs were launched nationwide to adequately respond to victims and provide emotional support. A breakthrough was achieved in 1994 after the ratification of the "Violence against Women Act" causing considerable improvements in the judicial structures and a drop in the number of cases was observed ("Feminism", 2020). The protagonist is seemingly suffering from the "battered women's syndrome" which arises when abuse victims cannot seem to abandon their abusers or even take a stand for themselves. In the case of Rose and Norman, despite their toxic marital relation, Rose stayed because she had nowhere else to go and also because Norman was a police officer who could track her. Years of captivity and isolation from the world made Rose think that despite the abuse, being with Norman would keep her safe. In her own words, when Rose first gets off the last stop, she faces reality and for a brief moment regrets her decision of running away as she says that "I can't live in this world, the door he beat me behind was also the door that kept all this madness and confusion out" (pg. 41). Eventually, she begins to find a rationale for Norman's wrongdoings in her skin. Many clinical

psychologists refer to battered women's syndrome as a coping mechanism to bear the excessive amount of pain and torment incurred during a terrifying situation.

### **Cycle of Domestic Abuse**

Rose faces what can be described as the "Cycle of Abuse" which states that domestic violence can have a severe psychological impact on the victim which in turn makes them abusive as well since their subconscious mind picks up this behavioral pattern and thinks it is okay to beat up people if they mess up. Understanding the patterns and cyclic nature of domestic abuse is extremely important. Children (especially girls) who are abused or witness abuse are likely to grow up to perform the same deeds, only intensified. Such children's developmental and physical health problems are likely to fall victim to some sort of substance (drug) abuse.

When Rose remarries Bill, she is finally at peace. However, her husband's violent behavior has made its way to her subconscious mind and hence Rose starts to think like him. When Rose and Bill have an argument about which home to buy, Rose goes to the kitchen and starts boiling some water on the stove. Bill hugs her from behind and apologizes for his behavior. Rose, however, does not reply and this makes Bill think she is angry and giving him the silent treatment;

"She is in a black rage, almost a killing rage, and her silence has not been something as childish as 'giving him the cold shoulder,' but rather an almost frantic effort to (...) keep from seizing the pot of boiling water on the stove, turning with it in her hands, and throwing it in his face" (pg. 472).

Rose is not silent because she is being petty and giving her husband the silent treatment, she silent because in her mind is in a murderous, killing rage. And in her mind she sees her husband screaming in pain and it doesn't bother her at all. Hence continuing the cycle of abuse.

### **Conclusion**

Domestic violence and abuse was fairly common during the 1990s and even in today's era there are several women who are victims to all sorts of domestic, sexual and psychological violence by the hands of their significant others or husbands. It's unfortunate to think that even in today's time there are still those who are suffering at the hands of their lovers or husbands despite feminism being common in the society and women having equal rights as men, hence making them not that dependent on men for their economic or social needs. Rose Daniels can be hailed as an icon of feminism because of how she finally decided to take a stand for herself and leave her abusive husband and toxic marriage behind and run away to another city to start a new life for herself. Despite being extremely anxious and scared of this new experience of being out into the world along with the fear that her husband will catch her and beat her to death for running away and stealing his ATM card, Rose still learns to be an independent women, all the while healing and moving on with her life. The psychological effects of domestic violence can have a very long lasting impact on the victim. Due to this the victim tends to stay with the abuser despite being aware of the fact that what is happening to them is not right. Sadly the reason for this is that they become so used to the abuse that

it becomes a part of their daily life and they eventually learn to live with it. Rose also goes through the same experience, but after 14 years of being abused at the hands of Norman, she snaps out of it and makes up her mind to leave and live her life to the fullest. Even though Rose finally found the confidence to run away from the abuse, some victims never muster up the courage to do so mainly because they are dependent on the abuser in one way or another and hence they perish at the hands of their abusers. Despite running away and starting a new life, the abuse Rose went through deeply impacted her mental health as well. Eventually she also starts thinking like her abusive husband Norman and her mind subconsciously starts thinking that abuse is the only answer to show someone that what they said have angered her is to be psychically abusive towards them. This is common in abuse victims and the only way to fix this is to seek therapy for it, thus ending the cycle of abuse. Despite many researches being conducted as to why men are abusive towards their partners and feminism being present in the society, domestic violence cases are still at the large. Concluding this research, we can say that the only way domestic violence can be erased is if women gain the confidence to run away from such toxic marriages and learn to be independent on their own before it's too late and they are stuck forever in a toxic and abusive marriage.

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