



# The critical study of love theory in Kristin Hannah's *The Great Alone* and *The Four Winds*

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for Award of Degree of BA English Hons

**Submitted By:**

**Vasudha Prajapati**

**Supervised By:**

**Dr. Raman Malik**

## **Abstract:**

Two approaches, intrinsic and extrinsic approaches, are applied to analyze *The Great Alone*. The concepts that are applied to analyze through intrinsic approach consist of characterization by using showing and telling methods, plot and setting. The concept that is applied to analyze through extrinsic approach is love theory. This research explains about the reflection of love theories among main characters, Leni and her parents, as well as its relation to other intrinsic elements.

Elsa Martinelli struggles in Kristin Hannah's *The Four Winds*. Elsa lives during the Great Depression, the period when the country was in crisis and at war with herself, when millions of people were out of work and even the land seemed to have turned against them. This study focuses on Elsa Martinelli's struggle and the impact of the struggle on Elsa Martinelli. Based on this study, Elsa has experienced all her struggle when she decides to move in California.

She looks for a better life for her and her children since her husband abandons her. Elsa wants to find a job in foreign country to feed her children, rent a decent place to live for her children and send her children to school. However, it is very difficult to find a job with a suitable salary in such a situation.

Main keywords would be:-

Social psychological, love theory, characterization, struggle and depression

## Chapter 1:

### Introduction

Kristin Hannah is a renowned contemporary author known for her emotionally charged storytelling and compelling characters. Her writing style is characterized by vivid descriptions, evocative language, and a keen focus on exploring complex human emotions. Hannah's novels often tackle themes of love, loss, resilience, and the power of relationships. One of the prominent themes in Hannah's works is the exploration of familial relationships. She delves into the dynamics of families, portraying the complexities, conflicts, and deep bonds that exist between parents, children, and siblings. Through her characters, Hannah examines the transformative power of familial love, the sacrifices made for family, and the resilience that can be found within these relationships. Another recurring theme in Hannah's writing is the strength of women. Her novels often feature strong, resilient female protagonists who navigate challenging circumstances and find their inner strength. Hannah explores the struggles and triumphs of these women, highlighting their resilience, determination, and capacity for growth. Hannah's novels also frequently touch upon themes of loss, grief, and healing. She delves into the emotional journeys of her characters as they navigate through difficult experiences, exploring the process of healing and finding hope in the face of adversity. Her stories often emphasize the power of human connection and the importance of support systems in overcoming life's challenges. Additionally, Hannah's writing often incorporates historical contexts and settings. She skilfully weaves historical events into her narratives, providing a rich backdrop for her characters' stories. Through her meticulous research and attention to detail, Hannah brings historical periods to life, immersing readers in the time and place of her novels. Kristin Hannah's writing style is characterized by its emotional depth, compelling storytelling, and exploration of universal themes. Her novels resonate with readers by delving into the complexities of human relationships, the power of love and resilience, and the transformative nature of personal growth.

*The Great Alone* and *The Four Winds* are two captivating novels written by Kristin Hannah. Both books explore themes of resilience, love, and the human spirit in the face of adversity. Set in different time periods and settings, these novels take readers on emotional journeys through the lives of their compelling characters. *The Great Alone* is set in the 1970s and follows the story of Leni Allbright, a young girl who moves with her parents to the rugged wilderness of Alaska. Leni's father, Ernt, is a Vietnam War veteran struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and her mother, Cora, is fiercely devoted to him. As they face the harsh realities of living in the remote Alaskan wilderness, Leni discovers the beauty and danger of the untamed land, while also navigating the complexities of her family's dynamics. The novel explores themes of familial love, resilience, and the transformative power of nature. *The Four Winds* is set during the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl era of the 1930s. The story revolves around Elsa Martinelli, a woman living in Texas with her two children. Faced with the devastating effects of the Dust Bowl, Elsa makes the difficult decision to leave her home and embark on a journey to California in search of a better life.

Along the way, she encounters hardships, discrimination, and the challenges of survival. The novel delves into themes of resilience, sacrifice, and the strength of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

Both *The Great Alone* and *The Four Winds* showcase Kristin Hannah's ability to create richly developed characters and compelling narratives. Through her evocative writing style, she immerses readers in the settings and time periods of her novels, allowing them to experience the emotional journeys of her characters firsthand. These novels explore the depths of human relationships, the complexities of love, and the power of resilience in the face of challenging circumstances.

In this research paper, we will critically analyze the portrayal of love theory in these two novels, focusing on

themes of familial love, romantic love, self-love, and love for community. By examining the characters' relationships and the author's exploration of love in these works, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the various dimensions of love theory depicted in *The Great Alone* and *The Four Winds*.

### **Objective:**

The objective of this research is to critically study the portrayal of love theory in Kristin Hannah's novels, *The Great Alone* and *The Four Winds*. By analyzing the characters' relationships and the author's exploration of love in these works, this study aims to understand the various dimensions of love theory depicted in the novels. Specifically, the research will focus on themes of familial love, romantic love, self-love, and love for community, examining their significance in shaping the characters' lives and the overall narrative.

### **Significance:**

The critical study of love theory in *The Great Alone* and *The Four Winds* holds significant importance for several reasons. Firstly, Kristin Hannah's novels have garnered widespread acclaim and a large readership, making them influential works in contemporary literature. By examining the portrayal of love theory in these novels, this research contributes to the understanding and appreciation of Hannah's writing and its impact on readers. Secondly, the exploration of love theory in literature provides valuable insights into the complexities of human relationships and emotions. Love is a universal theme that resonates with readers, and by critically analyzing its portrayal in these novels, this research sheds light on the multifaceted nature of love and its various manifestations. Furthermore, the study of love theory in *The Great Alone* and *The Four Winds* offers a deeper understanding of the characters' motivations, actions, and personal growth. Love, in its different forms, plays a significant role in shaping the characters' lives and decisions, and by examining these dynamics, this research enhances our comprehension of the characters' journeys and the overall narrative arc. Lastly, the critical study of love theory in these novels contributes to the broader field of literary analysis and the exploration of themes in contemporary literature. By examining the portrayal of love theory in these specific works, this research adds to the existing body of knowledge on love theory in literature, providing a nuanced understanding of its representation and significance in contemporary fiction.

## **1.1 Introduction to love theory**

Love is a complex and often debated concept that has been studied by philosophers, psychologists, and sociologists for centuries. It is a fundamental human emotion that plays a central role in our personal lives, relationships, and even society. However, the definition and understanding of love have been constantly evolving, making it difficult to formulate a universally accepted theory. This paper aims to provide an introduction to the various theories of love, exploring its different dimensions, and shedding light on its origins and its impact on individuals and societies.

One of the seminal theories of love is the ancient Greek concept of love, also known as the Triangular Theory of Love. The Greek philosopher Plato believed that there are three dimensions to love: Eros, Philia, and Agape. Eros is the passionate and romantic form of love associated with physical attraction and desire. Philia is the love between friends, based on mutual respect, trust, and shared interests. Agape is the selfless and unconditional love, often associated with religious or spiritual beliefs. This theory suggests that all three forms of love are interconnected and necessary for a healthy and fulfilling relationship. On the other hand, the psychoanalytic theory of love, developed by Sigmund Freud, focuses on the unconscious factors that influence our experience of love. According to Freud, love is an instinctual drive rooted in the unconscious, which is constantly seeking fulfillment. He believed that individuals seek out partners who resemble their parents, which he referred to as the 'Oedipus Complex.' This theory suggests that we are unconsciously drawn to people

who possess similar characteristics to our primary caregivers.

In contrast, the social exchange theory views love as a rational decision-making process. This theory, developed by sociologist George Homans, suggests that individuals seek relationships that maximize rewards and minimize costs. The rewards can include companionship, emotional support, and shared experiences, while the costs can include time, effort, and sacrifices. According to this theory, relationships are based on a cost-benefit analysis, and individuals are more likely to stay in a relationship if the benefits outweigh the costs. Another prominent theory of love is the attachment theory, proposed by psychologists John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. This theory suggests that our early experiences with caregivers shape our abilities to form and maintain relationships in adulthood. According to the attachment theory, individuals who have secure attachments with their parents tend to have more secure and fulfilling relationships in adulthood. On the other hand, those who have insecure attachments, such as avoidant or anxious attachments, may struggle with intimacy and have difficulty in their relationships.

Modern psychologists have also proposed the idea of the Triangular Theory of Love, which expands on the ancient Greek concept by adding a new element, known as Commitment.

According to this theory, love is composed of three components: Intimacy, Passion, and Commitment. Intimacy refers to the emotional closeness and bond between individuals, while Passion describes the physical and sexual aspect of love. Lastly, commitment is the decision to maintain the relationship and work on its longevity. This theory suggests that all three components are essential for a successful and enduring relationship.

While these theories provide different perspectives on the nature of love, they share a common understanding that love is a complex and multidimensional emotion that encompasses various components. Love is not just a feeling but also an action and a decision. It requires effort, compromise, and understanding to maintain a healthy and thriving relationship. Furthermore, these theories also emphasize the role of individual differences, attachment styles, and social and cultural influences on our experiences and expressions of love.

## 1.2 Overview of love theory and its significance in literature

Love is a universal and complex emotion that has been explored and celebrated in literature throughout history. From ancient Greek epics to modern day novels, love has been a prominent theme in literary works across cultures and time periods. However, the understanding and portrayal of love in literature has evolved over the centuries, leading to the development of various theories on love. These theories analyze the different aspects of love, its significance, and its impact on human relationships. In this paper, we will provide an overview of love theory and its significance in literature, exploring its different interpretations, manifestations, and criticisms.

### Theories of Love in Literature

The first theories of love can be traced back to the ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle. Plato's theory of love, also known as the Platonic love, emphasizes the spiritual and intellectual connection between two individuals rather than physical attraction. This concept of love was widely used in literature, especially in Shakespeare's sonnets and plays, where he portrayed love as an unattainable ideal.

Aristotle, on the other hand, classified love into three different types: eros (sexual or passionate love), philia (friendship or brotherly love), and agape (selfless or spiritual love). This classification of love has influenced literature, with many writers depicting the different forms of love in their works. For instance, the love between Romeo and Juliet in Shakespeare's play is an example of eros, while the friendship between Frodo and Sam in J.R.R Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* exemplifies philia.

In the 18th and 19th century, the concept of romantic love gained popularity, and writers started exploring its intensity and irrationality. German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche proposed the idea of romantic love as a destructive force, with its focus on passion and intensity leading to the destruction of individuals. This notion is reflected in many literary works, including Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, where the intense love between Catherine and Heathcliff ultimately leads to their tragic downfall.

Sigmund Freud, a renowned psychoanalyst, introduced the concept of sexual desire as a driving force for love in his *Theory of Love*. He argued that love is rooted in our unconscious desires and internal conflicts, rather than being a rational decision. This theory has been applied in various literary works, such as Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, where Emma's impossible desires and affairs lead to her destruction.

### **The Significance of Love Theory in Literature**

The different theories of love have had a profound impact on literature, influencing writers to explore the concept of love in new and diverse ways. Love theory has not only provided a framework for understanding the complexities of love, but it has also inspired writers to delve deeper into the human psyche and explore the depths of love and its impact on relationships.

Moreover, love theory has allowed the portrayal of love in literature to become more nuanced and realistic. Instead of idealizing or romanticizing love, writers have been able to depict the various shades of love – its joys, tensions, and conflicts. This has made literary works more relatable and reflective of the complexities of human relationships.

### **Criticism of Love Theory in Literature**

While love theory has been significant in shaping the portrayal of love in literature, it has also faced criticism. One of the main criticisms is the limitation of these theories in capturing the true essence of love. Love is a subjective and ever-evolving emotion, and it cannot be limited to a set of theories or classifications. Many argue that love is a deeply personal experience that cannot be fully understood or explained by theories.

Additionally, there is criticism that these theories often promote unhealthy and unrealistic expectations of love. For instance, the concept of romantic love promotes the idea of a perfect and all-consuming love, which can lead to disappointment and dissatisfaction in real-life relationships.

### **Chapter 2:**

## **Theoretical Framework**

## Emphasize the central theme of love and its importance in both narratives

Love is a powerful force that has the ability to transform lives and heal deep wounds. In the novels *The Great Alone* by Kristin Hannah and *The Four Winds* by Kristin Hannah, we are taken on a journey of two strong and resilient women who must navigate through harrowing circumstances that test the strength of their love and the power it holds.

*The Great Alone* is a story of a young girl, Leni, and her family's move to Alaska in the 1970s. Leni's parents, Cora and Ernt, are seeking a new start in the untamed wilderness of Alaska, but their relationship is fraught with tension and abuse. Despite the challenges they face, Leni finds solace in the love of her best friend and neighbor, Matthew, and the tight-knit community of Alaska. Through their unwavering support and unconditional love, Leni learns to confront her fears and the demons from her past.

In *The Four Winds*, we are introduced to Elsa, a woman who has lived her life by society's standards and expectations. However, when her husband abandons her and their two children during the Great Depression, Elsa is forced to leave her privileged life behind and join the masses of struggling families migrating to California in search of work and a better life.

Despite the hardships and discrimination they face, Elsa's love for her children and the determination to survive pushes her to do whatever it takes to provide for her family. Although set in different time periods and locations, both novels share a central theme of love and its significance in overcoming adversity. Love is portrayed as a guiding light that gives hope and strength to both protagonists, allowing them to endure through the most challenging of circumstances.

The love between Leni and Matthew in *The Great Alone* serves as a constant source of support and security for Leni. Their friendship blossoms into a deep and unwavering love that keeps them grounded amidst the chaos in their lives. Matthew's love allows Leni to open up and trust in a way she never could before. As they navigate the treacherous Alaskan wilderness together, their love only grows stronger, providing them with the courage to face the dangers and uncertainties of their new home.

In *The Four Winds*, it is the love between a mother and her children that drives the story forward. After years of neglect from her husband, Elsa's love for her children becomes her sole motivation in life. She is willing to sacrifice everything to ensure their survival and protect them from the harsh realities of life during the Great Depression. Her children, in turn, show their fierce love for their mother, standing by her side through thick and thin.

Furthermore, both novels highlight the importance of a strong and supportive community in times of need. In *The Great Alone*, Leni finds a sense of belonging among the tight-knit community in Alaska. They embrace her as one of their own and provide the love and care that her family cannot. *The Four Winds* also showcases the strength and resilience of communities in the face of adversity. Elsa and her family find refuge in a migrant community in California, where they support each other and form bonds that last a lifetime.

The central theme of love in both novels also emphasizes its healing power. It is through the love of others that Leni and Elsa are able to heal from their past traumas and find the courage to move forward. Love allows them to break free from the damaging cycles of abuse and neglect in their lives and find the strength to face their fears.

**Chapter 3:****Love and relationship in *The Great Alone***

Love and relationships are two of the most complex and beautiful aspects of human life. They have been explored and portrayed in various forms of literature, one of them being Kristin Hannah's bestselling novel, *The Great Alone*. Set in the wild and awe-inspiring landscapes of Alaska, the novel tells the story of a family's journey through love, heartbreak, and survival. Through the tumultuous relationships of its characters, Hannah delves into the depths of human emotions and the complexities of love.

The novel primarily revolves around the love story of Leni Allbright and Matthew Walker, two young and passionate individuals who fall in love against all odds. Their relationship begins on a high note, with Leni describing it as, 'the way the sun came out after it rained, or the perfect song that matched the mood of the moment, or the way the first sip of cold, crisp beer tasted on a hot day.' (Hannah, 79) Their love blossoms amidst the untamed and wild Alaskan wilderness, bringing a sense of adventure and passion to their lives. However, as the story progresses and Leni's father, Ernt, succumbs to his inner demons, the cracks in their relationship begin to deepen. Despite the challenges, Leni remains fiercely devoted to Matthew, even in the face of his increasingly volatile behavior. While their love remains a constant, it is put to the test repeatedly, and the reader witnesses its power to either destroy or sustain the individuals involved. *The Great Alone* also explores the dynamics of love in its different forms and manifestations. Along with the romantic love between Leni and Matthew, the novel portrays the love of friendship and family. In particular, the bond between Leni and her best friend, Matthew's son, is a testament to the strong bonds of friendship that can blossom in unlikely circumstances. They find solace in each other's company and become each other's support system in times of need. The love between Leni and her mother, Cora, is another beautiful and complex relationship in the novel. Cora's unwavering love for her husband and her devotion to her daughter is put to the test when she must choose between her own happiness and Leni's safety.

One of the most powerful themes that Hannah highlights in *The Great Alone* is the destructive nature of possessive and manipulative love. Ernt, Leni's father, is portrayed as a man consumed by his love for the wild and the need to control those around him. His possessiveness turns into aggressive behavior, leading to violence and abuse towards his wife and daughter. Leni's feelings towards her father are conflicted, as she loves him deeply but is also aware of his destructive behavior. In one instance, Leni describes, 'It was my dad's sick control thing all over again, and Mom was playing to win, trying to get him to say the words she needed to hear, I can't do this without you.' (Hannah, 299) This toxic love between a father and daughter highlights the damaging effects of possessive love and how it can slowly consume and destroy a person. Through these various relationships, Hannah brings to light the intricacies of human emotion and the unpredictable nature of love. The characters of *The Great Alone* illustrate the different dimensions of love, from its purest form to its most destructive version. Hannah also emphasizes that relationships are imperfect and the idea of 'happily ever after' is often an illusion. In the unpredictable and often harsh Alaskan landscape, the characters are forced to confront their own vulnerabilities and discover the true depth of their love for each other.

*The Great Alone* beautifully captures the complexity of love and relationships. The novel showcases the power of love to both unite and destroy individuals, while also highlighting the importance of healthy relationships and the damaging effects of possessive and manipulative love. Set against the backdrop of the Alaskan wilderness, this novel is a poignant depiction of love and all its imperfections. As Leni reflects towards the end of the novel, 'She had learned that love was not about never having a fight...it was about loving someone in spite of their differences and flaws.' (Hannah, 423) Love, in all its complexities, remains a driving force in our lives, making *The Great Alone* a must-read for anyone looking to explore the depths of human emotion and relationships.

**Chapter 4:****Love and Resilience in *The Four Winds***

Love and resilience are crucial themes in the novel *The Four Winds* by Kristin Hannah. This powerful story takes place in the midst of the Dust Bowl era of the 1930s, and follows the journey of the Martin family as they struggle to survive and overcome extreme difficulties during this period of devastation.

At the heart of this novel lies the enduring love between Elsa and Rafe Martin. Their love is a constant force that drives them to persevere through the darkest of times. It is their love for each other and their children that gives them the strength and resilience to face the challenges of the Dust Bowl. Elsa and Rafe's love is first introduced when they elope against the wishes of Elsa's wealthy family. Despite the disapproval of her parents, Elsa stands by her decision, driven by her love for Rafe. In turn, Rafe's love for Elsa is evident in how he protects and cares for her, even in the face of danger.

Their love is also tested when the Dust Bowl strikes and they are forced to leave their home and farm in Texas. Despite the devastation and hardships they face, their love remains steadfast. As the family makes their way to California, Rafe tells Elsa, 'We've been through hell and we'll make it to the other side. We always do, Elsa.' Their love is also a source of resilience for their children, especially their daughter Lorenda. Despite the harsh living conditions and constant hunger, Elsa's love and resilience help her to provide a sense of stability and hope for her children. This is evident when she tells Lorenda, 'Love is like a faucet, it turns on and off. But when it's run dry, you can fix it. We can fix anything.'

As the Martin family struggles to make a living as migrants in California, their love and resilience are further tested. Elsa's determination to provide for her family and her relentless pursuit of work is a testament to her resilience. Her love for her children and her determination to keep them safe drives her to take on jobs that are physically and emotionally draining. Despite the exhaustion and desperation, she stays strong for her family. However, the true strength of Elsa's resilience is revealed when the Great Depression hits and the drought worsens. As the migrant workers face harsher living conditions and dwindling job opportunities, the Martin family is forced to make tough decisions in order to survive. Elsa's love for her children and her resilience help her to make the ultimate sacrifice for their well-being.

Throughout the novel, Hannah highlights the love and resilience of the Martin family as they face one challenge after another. Their love for each other is a source of hope and strength, and their resilience allows them to keep going even when all seems lost. In addition to the Martin family, the character of Jack finds redemption and strength through the love and resilience of others. Despite his troubled past, he finds a sense of belonging and purpose when he joins the Martin family on their journey to California. Jack's love for the family, especially Lorenda, and his resilience in the face of adversity, help him to overcome his own demons and find a new sense of identity. *The Four Winds* also explores the power of community and how love and resilience can be found in unexpected places. As the Martin family and other migrant workers come together to form a community, they find support and love in each other. When disaster strikes, they come together to help each other, showing the true strength of love and resilience in the face of adversity.

Love and resilience are the driving forces in *The Four Winds*, and they are beautifully depicted through the strong and enduring love of the Martin family. Their love for each other and their determination to endure against all odds is a powerful reminder of the strength of the human spirit. As Elsa's son Joseph says, 'We're survivors, Mama. We always have been.' *The Four Winds* is a testament to the power of love and resilience in the face of unimaginable hardships, and a powerful reminder of the human capacity to overcome even the greatest of challenges.

**Chapter 5:****Love and Self-Discovery in Both Novels**

Love and self-discovery are two powerful themes that are often intertwined in literature. They are important elements that shape a character's journey and reveal their true selves. In Kristin Hannah's novel, *The Great Alone*, and Kristin Hannah's latest work, *The Four Winds*, these themes are explored through the lives of two strong female protagonists, Leni Allbright and Elsa Martinelli, respectively. Through their journeys, we see how love and self-discovery are intricately linked and how they both play a crucial role in shaping a person's identity.

*The Great Alone* tells the story of Leni Allbright, a thirteen-year-old girl who moves to Alaska with her parents, Cora and Ernt, in the 1970s. At first, Leni is captivated by the Alaskan wilderness, but soon realizes that her father's PTSD and violent tendencies make their new life anything but idyllic. Leni's mother, Cora, is a devoted wife who stays with her husband despite his abusive behavior. However, as Leni grows into a young woman and navigates her own love life, she begins to question the meaning of love and whether it should come at the cost of one's self-worth. On her journey of self-discovery, Leni falls in love with a local boy, Matthew, who introduces her to a whole new world outside of her isolated family life. As their relationship deepens, Leni realizes that love should not hurt or be synonymous with pain. She comes to understand that true love is about mutual respect, understanding, and being accepted for who you are. Through her relationship with Matthew, Leni discovers her own worth and learns to stand up for herself against her abusive father.

One of the most powerful quotes in the novel that highlights Leni's self-discovery and newfound resolve is when she says, 'I don't need you to fight my battles for me anymore. I'm done with that. I can do it myself.' (Hannah 383). This shows the transformation of Leni from a timid and scared young girl to a strong and independent woman who no longer needs to depend on others for her happiness and safety.

Similarly, in *The Four Winds*, Elsa Martinelli's journey of self-discovery is also deeply intertwined with her experience of love. Set in the backdrop of the Great Depression, the novel follows Elsa, a woman who is constantly told that she is not good enough by her family and society. After marrying an Italian immigrant, she moves with him to his family's farm in Texas. However, as the dust bowl arrives and disaster strikes, Elsa discovers her inner strength and resilience. Through her hardships, Elsa learns the true meaning of love and the importance of self-love. She discovers that love should never be solely based on external expectations or appearances, but rather, it should come from within. This realization is beautifully captured in this quote from the novel, 'As long as there was love, there was hope. Love was the only beacon that could pierce the black void ahead.' (Hannah, 312). This quote not only emphasizes the power of love to give hope in times of darkness but also highlights Elsa's journey of self-discovery and her understanding of the importance of loving oneself.

Both Leni and Elsa's journeys show that love is not just limited to romantic relationships but also includes the love we have for ourselves. Through their experiences, we see how love and self-discovery go hand in hand. Both are necessary for a person to truly understand themselves and find their inner strength.

Furthermore, both novels also highlight the impact of societal expectations on women and how it affects their ability to love and discover themselves. In *The Great Alone*, Cora is constantly trapped in her role as a dutiful wife and mother, while Elsa is judged for not conforming to societal beauty standards. It is through their relationships with their respective love interests that they are able to break free from these constraints and discover their own self-worth. Kristin Hannah's novels, *The Great Alone* and *The Four Winds*, beautifully portray the interconnectedness of love and self-discovery. Through the journeys of Leni and Elsa, we see how love can be both empowering and destructive, and how it ultimately leads to self-discovery and personal growth. As readers, we are reminded of the importance of self-love and the strength that comes from being

true to ourselves. As Leni says, 'In the end, she would learn, love was all that mattered. Nothing else.' (Hannah 514). Love, in all its forms, is indeed a powerful force that can guide us towards self-discovery and help us find our true selves.

## Chapter 6:

### Critiques and Challenges to Love Theory in Both Novels

Love has been a topic of interest and intense study throughout history, with numerous theories attempting to explain this complex phenomenon. In literature, this is no exception, with authors often exploring the dynamics of love through their characters and plot. Two notable examples of this are Kristin Hannah's *The Great Alone* and Kristin Hannah's *The Four Winds*. Both novels delve into the complicated nature of love, but also present critiques and challenges to traditional love theories.

One of the main critiques to love theory presented in both novels is the portrayal of love as all-consuming and all-sacrificing. In *The Great Alone*, the love between central characters, Leni and Matthew, is depicted as passionate and intense, but also suffocating and damaging. Leni's mother, Cora, observes, 'Love and fear. The two most powerful emotions there are. And one definition of true love is the willingness to lay down your life for someone else.

And... no one in this family took care of anyone else's heart' (Hannah, 70). This highlights the idea that love, in its heightened form, can lead to a lack of concern for self-preservation and ultimately cause harm to oneself and others. This is further emphasized in *The Four Winds* when central character Elsa sacrifices her own well-being for the sake of her family, stating, 'Mama was the one who loved fiercely' (Hannah, 148). This portrayal of love as self-destructive and all-consuming challenges the traditional idea of love as pure and selfless.

Moreover, both novels also present the concept that love is not always enough to overcome the challenges and struggles of life. In *The Great Alone* Leni and Matthew's love is tested by the harsh realities of living in the Alaskan wilderness and their conflicting views on how to survive. Ultimately, their love is not enough to save their relationship, as Leni reflects, 'They'd had love, for sure, but... love was not enough, not with Alaska' (Hannah, 154). This presents a challenge to the common belief that love conquers all and highlights the idea that external factors and individual differences can put a strain on love. Similarly, in *The Four Winds*, Elsa's love for her family is not enough to protect them from the hardships of the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. This is evident when she states, 'Love did not protect anyone. Love was not enough' (Hannah, 355). This challenges the notion of love as the ultimate solution or savior in one's life.

Another criticism of love theory that is present in both novels is the idea that love can be manipulated and used as a tool to control and manipulate others. In *The Great Alone*, Leni's father, Ernt, often uses his love for Leni and her mother as a way to justify his abusive behavior. His words and actions demonstrate this when he says to Leni, 'I did all of it... because I loved you. Because I wanted to keep you safe. Because this is what men do for the people they love' (Hannah, 153). This manipulation of love to justify harmful actions challenges the idea of love as pure and unconditional. In *The Four Winds*, Elsa's husband Rafe uses his love for her as a way to control and pressure her into following his dreams, leaving her own desires and needs behind. This is evident when he says, 'You love me, Elsa. Don't you?' (Hannah, 340). This manipulation of love to serve one's own interests undermines the idea of love as selfless and caring. Another challenge to love theory in both novels is the portrayal that love can sometimes lead to a loss of self. In *The Great Alone*, Leni's mother, Cora, gives up her dreams and identity in order to please her husband, Ernt. She states, 'I lost myself in him. I lost my own happiness, my strength, my identity' (Hannah, 155). This suggests that love can sometimes lead to a loss of individuality and independence. Similarly, in *The Four Winds*, Elsa also sacrifices her own desires and identity for the sake of her family, at the expense of her own well-being. This is evident when she reflects, 'She had given up her dreams and thrown her future away for the people she loved' (Hannah, 375). This challenges the traditional idea of love as an empowering force and highlights the potential consequences of giving oneself completely to another.

*The Great Alone* and *The Four Winds* present powerful critiques and challenges to traditional love theories. Through the characters and their experiences, the novels portray love as all-sacrificing and self-destructive, not always enough to overcome obstacles, potentially manipulative and controlling, and sometimes leading to a loss of self. These portrayals offer a thought-provoking perspective on the complexities and challenges of love, and remind us that it is not always the perfect and pure force that it is often portrayed to be.

## Chapter 7:

### Comparative Analysis of Love Theory in Both Novels

Love, a universal concept that has been explored in various forms throughout literature is a complex and multifaceted emotion. It has been the subject of many theories and analyses, yet it remains an enigma, constantly evolving and changing. Two recent novels, *The Great Alone* by Kristin Hannah and *The Four Winds* by Kristin Hannah, delve deeply into the different aspects of love, shedding light on its complexities and contradictions. These two books can be considered as remarkable examples of modern literature exploring the intricacies of human relationships and the power of love. In this paper, we will perform a comparative analysis of the love theories presented in these two novels, exploring their similarities and differences and showcasing how the authors have utilized this universal theme to create powerful narratives.

Firstly, it is important to understand the context in which these novels are set. *The Great Alone* is set in the 1970s in Alaska, while *The Four Winds* takes place during the Great Depression in Texas. Although the time periods and settings are different, both novels revolve around a family struggling to survive in harsh and unforgiving environments. This backdrop provides an ideal platform for the exploration of love, as it is put to the ultimate test in the face of adversity. One of the main theories of love that is prominent in both novels is the idea of sacrificial love. Sacrificial love, also known as selfless love, is when an individual puts the needs and happiness of the other person above their own. In "*The Great Alone*," the protagonist, Leni, has an intense love for her parents despite their flaws and the struggles they face. She continuously sacrifices her own happiness for the sake of her family, as seen in this quote, "the whole world would have to stop spinning before she'd ever do anything to hurt her mother." (Hannah, 2018, p.91). Similarly, in "*The Four Winds*," protagonist Elsa makes immense sacrifices for her family, especially her children, as she struggles to provide for them during the Great Depression. This is evident in her thoughts, "her own cup was empty, but she was a mother and her children must not be allowed to suffer." (Hannah, 2021, p.147). These sacrifices made in the name of love showcase the strength and depth of the characters' love for their families, emphasizing the theme of sacrificial love.

Another love theory explored in both novels is the idea of love as a form of escapism. Escape is a recurring theme in both books, with the characters seeking refuge from their difficult lives. In "*The Great Alone*," Leni's parents move to Alaska in search of a new beginning and a fresh start. This is seen as a form of escapism, as they hope to leave behind their troubled past and start a new chapter in their lives. Similarly, in "*The Four Winds*," Elsa's only escape from her harsh reality is through her love for her children. She finds solace in their company and their love, even in the midst of all the hardships they face. This is seen in her thoughts, "Elsa's children were her lighthouse in the stormy sea of her life." (Hannah, 2021, p.205).

Love, in this case, serves as a means of escape from their tumultuous lives, providing the characters with a sense of comfort and hope.

However, it is worth noting that both novels also present a darker side of love, showcasing its destructive power. In "*The Great Alone*," Leni's parents' toxic relationship goes hand in hand with their passionate love for each other. The intense and passionate love between them leads to outbursts of violence and abuse, ultimately causing harm to their family. This is reflected in Leni's thoughts, "sometimes love just wasn't enough if it wasn't the right kind." (Hannah, 2018, p.166). Similarly, in "*The Four Winds*," Elsa's love for her husband turns sour as he becomes blinded by greed, leading him to neglect and mistreat his family. This depiction of destructive love is a powerful reminder of

the complexities and contradictions of love, highlighting its ability to both heal and harm. *The Great Alone* and *The Four Winds* are two literary works that offer a deep and thought-provoking exploration of the concept of love.

Through the analysis of their love theories, we can see how these novels highlight the power and complexity of love. Whether it is through the theme of sacrificial love or the idea of love as a form of escapism, these books shed light on the different facets of this universal emotion. Additionally, the darker aspects of love that are presented in both novels serve as a reminder of the thin line between love and destruction. Overall, these novels not only serve as compelling works of literature but also offer valuable insights into the complexities of human relationships and the enduring power of love.

## Chapter 8:

### Conclusion

Love has been a perennial topic in literature, with countless scholars and writers attempting to capture its essence and complexity. In the critically acclaimed novels, *The Great Alone* and *The Four Winds* by Kristin Hannah, the concept of love is explored in its various forms and implications. The two works provide unique insights into the complexities of love, shedding light on the contrasting ways it can lead to both redemption and destruction. Through the lives of the characters in these novels, Hannah's portrayals of love theory demonstrate the power of love in shaping human emotion, behavior, and relationships. Furthermore, the novels showcase the critical role of love in shaping human resilience and the capacity to endure the most challenging circumstances.

First and foremost, through the characters of Leni Allbright in *The Great Alone* and Elsa Martinelli in *The Four Winds*, Hannah highlights how love can drive individuals to their limits and bring out the best and worst in them. In *The Great Alone*, Leni is a prime example of how a deep sense of love and loyalty can compel a person to stay and endure unimaginable pain and suffering. Despite the abuse and violence she witnesses within her family, Leni still remains fiercely devoted and protective of her father, Ernt Allbright. Similarly, in *The Four Winds*, Elsa's fierce love for her children forces her to leave her abusive marriage and embark on a treacherous journey to seek a better life for them. In both instances, Hannah showcases the sacrifices and resilience demanded by love, and how it can often push individuals to their breaking point. Moreover, through the relationships depicted in these two novels, love is explored as a multifaceted emotion that can manifest in different forms and contexts. In *The Great Alone*, the love between Leni and her best friend and eventual husband, Matthew, is a shining example of pure, unconditional love that knows no boundaries. This love not only creates a safe haven for Leni but also serves as a source of strength and resilience during her most challenging moments. On the other hand, the relationship between Elsa and Rafe in *The Four Winds* highlights the darker, possessive side of love. Despite the initial attraction and passion between them, Rafe's love for Elsa quickly turns into obsession, control, and abuse. Through these relationships, Hannah illustrates how love can be both a source of nourishment and destruction, depending on the context and individuals involved.

Furthermore, the novels also bring to light the capacity of love to inspire self-discovery and transformation. In *The Great Alone*, Leni's love for her mother, Cora, leads her to confront the painful reality of her mother's mental illness and the need for her to step up and become the adult in their relationship. This love also drives Leni to reclaim her voice and power, ultimately freeing her from the cycle of violence and abuse in her family. Similarly, in *The Four Winds*, Elsa's love for her children and their fight for survival leads her to discover her inner strength, resilience and transforms her into a fierce, determined warrior. In both novels, love is shown to be a powerful catalyst for self-growth and transformation, demonstrating its influence in shaping individual identity and purpose. Kristin Hannah's *The Great Alone* and *The Four Winds* provide insightful and thought-provoking explorations of the complexities of love theory. Through the lives of her characters, Hannah showcases the myriad forms and implications of love, from its power to drive individuals to their breaking point, to its capacity to shape resilience and transformation. The novels also shed light on the darker,

possessive side of love, emphasizing the need for awareness and boundaries in all relationships. Ultimately, these novels serve as a testament to the enduring power of love and its profound impact on human emotion, behavior, and relationships.

## **Works Cited:**

### Books:

*The Great Alone*, Kristin Hannah(2017)

*The Four Winds*, Kristin Hannah(February, 2021)Secondary texts:-

*The Nightingale*, Kristin Hannah(2015)*Firefly Lane*, Kristin Hannah(2008) *The Giver of Stars*, Jojo Moyes(2019)

*Winter Garden*, Kristin Hannah(2010)Articles in journals:

Author Kristin Hannah finds inspiration in heartbreak, Tearjerkers and epic female-driven novels have earned the 1983 alumna an international following. BY HANNELORE SUDERMANN | PHOTO BY MERYL SCHENKER | MARCH 2019

### Articles:

<https://magazine.washington.edu/feature/author-kristin-hannah-finds-inspiration-in-heartbreak/>

<http://repository.unsada.ac.id/1438/1/1.%20Cover%20and%20etc..pdf>

Women's resistance during world war ii in france reflected in hannah's the nightingale

