



A Brief Psychological Study on Jay Asher's *13 Reasons Why*

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Abstract:

This paper focuses on the importance of mental health and how it's been sadly ignored by the society. It also intends to examine on how the depression and suicidal thoughts are not built within a day or just with substantial occurrences, but even the little incidents and events which one may consider as trivial, might have huge impact in the mental health of a person. Further, it might become the last straw for them to commit suicide. This paper is a brief analysis of the novel *13 Reasons Why* by Jay Asher. The objective of this paper is to explore the minds of the people under depression with reference to psychoanalysis, specifically with the teenagers. It is the age where they are prone to be more fragile when it comes to instances related to feelings and emotions. Their actions most of the time follows their sensitive mind, because of which they tend to breakdown easily, very often. Most of them do not open up to the elders to hide their vulnerable side, even if they do, not everyone gets their emotions validated. The protagonist of this novel *13 Reasons Why* is such a victim to the depression.

Keywords:

Mental health, Depression, Psychoanalysis, Teenage, Suicidal behaviour, Self –harm, Awareness.

Introduction:

American literature works are highly correlated with expressing the harsh reality of life, as they render the realism in portraying characters as much as natural. Jay Asher is one such American novelist, who brought out the dark side gone through by the teenagers in his work. Jay Asher, who was born on September 30, 1975, have published Young adult novels, Comics and Non- fiction. His major works are *13 Reasons Why* (2007), *The Future of Us* (2011), *What Light* (2016), *Piper* (2017), etc., Asher published *13 Reasons Why* in 2007, which has become the New York Times bestseller for over 3 years. It explored the frame of mental attitude of teenagers, who suppress their feelings and take wrong decision by committing suicide. This novel brings out the realistic story about teenagers and spotlights on important issues like sexual harassment, bullying, drug abuse that are faced by them. In 2017, Netflix released the series version of *13 Reasons Why*, which gained more popularity among the viewers.

Glimpse of the novel:

Clay Jenson, a 17-year-old high school student, one day receives a box full of tapes recorded by the protagonist Hannah Baker, who took her own life a few days earlier. She recorded the reasons behind her committing suicide in 7 tapes with its 13 sides and sent it to the people who made her to take such decision in her life. Sadly, some of the people who gets to listen to the tapes were the ones whom she once trusted the most and had a good relationship with, in her life. Every person receiving the tape have to listen to it completely, without skipping or trying to destroy it. Once they listen to it completely, as per the instructions, the tapes should be passed on to the next person as mentioned in the list given by Hannah Baker. With the people involving in the tapes listening to it, one gets to know how even little actions of others can destroy

the mental health of a person. The reasons behind Hannah Baker's death might be trivial to the people who watches it from outside, but to her they are the terrible events she has been through, which made it hard for her to live in the cruel world and to end her own life.

Impact of events in suicidal behaviour:

Trauma and mental health problems comes in various sizes. The criteria for mental breakdown and suicidal thoughts cannot be fixed. In the verge of hopelessness and unable to tackle with one's life, suicide is seen as a way to get away from the psychological pain caused by depression and trauma. To Hannah Baker, suicide became a portal to escape from the traumas caused by the mistreatment she experienced during her high school days.

Hannah being new to the school did not expect to experience things which would make her life drastic. Justin Foley, her very first relationship turned out to be a nightmare, when he started spreading bad rumours about her, causing her to earn bad reputation. As a result of which she got bullied and looked down by everyone at school. No one listened to her when she tried to correct the rumour. It further paved way for her classmates to sexually assault her. This caused the lack of self-confidence and power, which affected her personality.

Her loneliness was at its peak, when her only best friend Jessica Davis slapped and insulted her, thinking that Hannah has betrayed her with Alex, the boy Jessica likes. Her world became darker, when she realised even her best friend, who knows her well is not willing to trust her.

Hannah's free will validation has been revoked, when Ryan Shaver stole her poetry, she made for her private collection from her notebook and published in the school magazine. It made her classmates to tease and make fun of her. Her will to not live got worse, when Bryce Walker raped her. Reaching her teacher, Mr. Porter to seek counselling after confessing her being sexually assaulted and her suicidal thoughts were the last straw for her to commit suicide. Since the advice she received from her teacher is to move on, unless she is ready to address the issue by confronting Bryce.

"No one knows for certain how much impact they have in the life of others" (Asher 156). Even the people who are the reasons for Hannah's death were unaware of their impacts until they listen to the recordings. This clearly states how every person's action knowingly or unknowingly affects the mental health and life of a person. With reference to the article psychological conflict in Anita Desai's *Cry the Peacock* by Suganya B and M John Suganya, this paper explores A Brief Psychological Study on Jay Asher's *13 Reasons Why*.

People, whom she trusted, spent the most of the time left her and made her to embarrass about her existence. Even though, she got friendly parents, who were lovely and caring enough, she was unable to bring herself to open up about her hardships to them, given her introvert personality. Her emotions got invalidated and did not receive any concerned advice from her teacher, when she deliberately gone to him to seek help. More than positive influence, negativity took over her as she continuously encountered the above mentioned traumatic events. These incidents brought her to a hopeless state, which worsened her mental health, causing her to commit suicide to have permanent relief from her sufferings.

Conclusion:

Hannah has undergone both physical and mental abuse by the people around her. She became helpless and hopeless. The way she perceived the society has changed. Given that she was in her teenage, which made it harder to tackle with world. The events gone through by her might look trivial to others when it is seen individually, But to the person who kept on going through traumatic events consequently, it has become unbearable happenings to Hannah. So, she reached the limit, where her mental health got worse to the extend that she decided to kill herself, in order to escape from the reality. If Hannah's teacher were to given her mental support and listened to her, validating her feelings, she would not have committed suicide. Teenage is a very sensitive age, where they suppress their emotions and feelings most of the time. Opening up to the elders about their feelings are very rare. Their thoughts and emotions must be given validated since

mental health is no joke. Every action which one does, affects everything. No one knows the mental state of others, where even little events would hurt a person and become the breaking point for them to ruin their mental health.

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