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**TRAUMA AND ITS IMPACT ON COMMUNICATION: A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BLESSY'S AADUJEEVITHAM (GOAT LIFE)**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study investigates the intricate relationship between mental wellbeing and a person's ability to communicate effectively, highlighting the importance of communication for human survival. While many individuals, particularly students, experience common issues such as stage fright or fear of communication, some struggle more profoundly due to traumatic events in their lives. By analyzing the character of Najeeb, the protagonist of Blessy's film Adujeevitham, which is based on real-life experiences, this study draws parallels with a case study of a student facing communication difficulties rooted in trauma experienced in the classroom. The research explores how trauma can deeply affect one's ability to express themselves and how overcoming these challenges is crucial for personal and academic development. Through this dual exploration, the study sheds light on the psychological impact of trauma on communication and offers insights into supportive interventions for individuals facing similar struggles.*

**Keywords:** Trauma, Mental wellbeing, Communication, Adujeevitham

**INTRODUCTION**

Communication is the ability of an individual to create the exact replication of his/her ideas within the listener. It is the essence of every society for its better understanding and survival. The ability of a person to communicate effectively determines his/her personal success and career growth. At the same time, if one is unable to put forth his ideas he may be marginalized from everywhere and gradually others may not even ask for his/her personal choices at all. Even though stage fear is a common issue of every person in the world, anxiety in communicating needs to be addressed in connection to the traumatic experiences we face in our life. The Malayalam movie *Adujeevitham* (Goat life) directed by Blessy, based on the novel by Benyamin with same title, portrays the theme of mental wellbeing, trauma and its effect in one's communication.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The novel *Adujeevitham* by Benyamin on which this movie is based has been a subject of various literary analysis which explored the themes of isolation, survival, and the loss of identity. Critics have admired the novel for its stark realism and its portrayal of the migrant experience.

The depiction of migrant labor in cinema has garnered significant attention from film scholars, especially within the realms of Indian and global cinema. Movies such as *Gaddhama*, *The Lunchbox*, and *City of Gold* delve into themes like displacement, exploitation, and the quest for identity, offering nuanced perspectives on migration. The study on trauma and communication is very limited and this study itself is a contribution to the same.

**METHODOLOGY**

The methodology for this study on the Malayalam movie *Aadu Jeevitham* is structured around qualitative content analysis, which allows for an in-depth exploration of the film's narrative, themes, and cultural significance especially the traumatic experiences faced by Najeeb and a parallel analysis of the case study of a student facing communication difficulties rooted in trauma experienced in the classroom. The Researcher has taken inputs from various magazines and journals for this dual exploration.

**Najeeb's traumatic experience and its effect on his communication.**

*Adujeevitham* or Goatlife is the life of Najeeb who went to Saudi Arabia for his livelihood during the 90s. It was a transition from Kerala's greenery to Saudi Arabia's desert in all dimensions. It was not only a geographic transition but also from an energetic to a numb or dry Najeeb due to the drastic changes in work life, habits and other traumatic experiences in the 'masara' (a goat pen in the desert in Saudi Arabia) where he was forced to work as a slave of an Arab to take care of his goats and camels. This change even resulted in the change of his identity as a result he became extremely panicked when he saw himself in the mirror of a public carrier that came to the masara. The intensity of the change can be understood from the movie review by Neelima Menon published in Mathrubhumi.com. "He is deprived of basic amenities and forced to sleep in a corroded truck. During the day he has to milk and tend the sheep and survive on a frugal meal and rationed water. The Arab takes out his belt and lashes at him for even a trivial act of dissent." In various senses the movie portrays the geographical change of Najeeb from his regular labour at water bodies in Kerala to a forced labour in a desert with rationed water as a traumatic experience. More than this, Arab's belt terrified him for every mistake he

committed. Especially the mistakes like consumption of enough water for his existence and making use of the opportunity to flee from the masara.

Vignesh Madu clearly states in his online movie review that Najeeb's desert life was a traumatic phase, "He is mostly seen getting physically hurt, either by his master or the goats or the ferocious desert climate. It's also quite natural for anyone going through such a traumatic phase to have suicidal thoughts, but strangely, the film doesn't get a lot into such spaces." Due to all these experiences the talkative keralite became mute. When he landed in Saudi along with his friend Hakkim, both spoke too much about their gulf dreams, but at same time when they met again in the desert Najeeb struggled to speak. The same struggle in Najeeb's communication is evident in the desert scene especially after the death of Hakkim. The traumatic experiences in the desert life made a negative impact on Najeeb's ability to communicate effectively.

### **Case Study: Impact of Teacher's Behavior on a Student's Communication Skills**

Ananya, a bright and cheerful six-year-old, started her academic journey in first standard at a reputed school. She exhibited an innate curiosity, excellent problem-solving skills, and a keen interest in learning. Her parents were supportive and encouraged her to express her thoughts and ideas freely at home.

Ananya's initial enthusiasm for school began to wane within a few months. Her parents noticed a marked change in her behavior—she became withdrawn, avoided talking about school, and started hesitating to express her thoughts even at home. Over time, she also began stuttering during conversations, a behavior she had never displayed before.

Concerned about these changes, Ananya's parents sought feedback from her teachers and classmates. They discovered that Ananya's first standard teacher had a habit of shouting at students who made mistakes or failed to follow instructions promptly. The teacher's terrifying demeanor created an environment of fear rather than learning. Ananya, being a sensitive child, was deeply affected by this behavior.

In one particular incident, the teacher publicly scolded Ananya for a minor mistake during a class activity. The loud reprimand and the attention it drew from her peers made her feel humiliated. This incident became a turning point, as Ananya started associating communication with the fear of being judged or reprimanded.

#### **Impact on Ananya's Communication Skills**

- **Fear of Expression:** Ananya became reluctant to speak in class, fearing that she might say something wrong and face her teacher's wrath.
- **Stuttering:** The constant anxiety led to the development of a stutter, which further hampered her confidence.
- **Social Withdrawal:** Ananya avoided interacting with her classmates, fearing they might mock her or report her mistakes to the teacher.
- **Decline in Academic Performance:** Her reluctance to ask questions or participate in discussions led to gaps in her understanding of subjects, which reflected in her declining grades.

As John Finch, clinical psychologist, explains in his article titled 'How does trauma affect communication',

Trauma survivors may use vague or guarded language, or avoid talking about the traumatic event altogether. This can come in the form of not even talking about topics that have emotional content. Feeling detached from family and friends is a common trauma symptom and can obviously make it hard to open up with others or to experience empathy. Trauma survivors can sometimes describe a wall between them and others. "Zoning out", feeling like everything is surreal or as if you are outside your body is something that can occur to trauma survivors and can make it hard to be present during communication. (<https://ccp.net.au/how-does-trauma-affect-communication/>)

### **RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION**

Najeeb and Ananya faced all the above mentioned communication issues stated by Mr Finch due to the circumstances that they have undergone. Irrespective of age, traumatic experiences of an individual can result in a negative impact on their ability to communicate effectively. If it is in childhood as in Ananya's case the impact would be more severe. Timely parental and teachers support and counselling can help her to regain the track. The same is applicable in regaining the mental stability of Najeeb. As he managed to escape the tragic situations of Masara and desert, he got his life back in kerala which resulted in his mental wellbeing.

Every individual including parents and teachers should have a basic knowledge in psychology and mental wellbeing. The Parents and teachers trying to control kids through shouting and terrifying nature are actually

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deteriorating their personality and confidence to face life. Even though the effect is lesser the same is applicable for adults as well. The terrifying experience in our workplace can make us mute and socially detached.

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