

Thanatos and Life: A Psychoanalytic study on select characters in *13 Reasons Why*, *All the Bright Places* and *Looking for Alaska*

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Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled *Thanatos and Life: A Psychoanalytic study on select characters in 13 Reasons Why, All the Bright Places and Looking for Alaska* is a bona fide record of sincere work done by, Anjana M Rajesh, Register Number: 210021000949, Bharata Mata College, in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature under the Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam during the year 2023-2024.

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Declaration

I, hereby declare that the presented dissertation *Thanatos and Life: A Psychoanalytic study on select characters in 13 Reasons Why, All the Bright Places and Looking for Alaska* is based on the research that I did on under the supervision and guidance of Ms. Haritha Rajan Baby, Guest Faculty, Research Centre and Postgraduate Department of English, Bharata Mata College, in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature from Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam. This is a report of my hands based on the research done on the selected topic and it is my original work and interpretations drawn therein are based on material collected by myself. It has not been previously formed basis for the award of any degree, diploma or fellowship or other similar title or recognition.

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Introduction

Life and death are the two sides of a coin. They are mutually correlative. Humans tend to romanticise the concept of life and death. Death, often more than that of life. The aim of this project is to analyse the influence and the deep force of Thanatos, and how it shapes the life of characters in select works.

Sigmund Freud, with his studies about human psychology and its functioning, has contributed much to the world. One of his major findings is the theory of Thanatos and Eros amongst which, Thanatos is the centre of this project. Thanatos is the overpowering urge and fascination towards death that is hidden within almost all human beings. Despite being universal, Thanatos may not affect everyone with the same destructive force. People who have a background of weak mental health, dysfunctional family, and traumatic backstory are highly affected by Thanatos and ultimately end up taking their lives.

Theodore Finch of *All the Bright Places* (2015), Hannah Baker of *13 Reasons Why* (2007) and Alaska Young of *Looking for Alaska* (2005) are the characters that are being studied in this project. Their life is analysed by taking their mental health into consideration along with their familial relations. All of these characters at some point of time in their life are forced to deal with traumas that altered both their psyche and personality traits, which eventually forced them to take their own lives. Thanatos influences one's psyche by shaping attitudes towards death, aggression, escapism, relationships, and creative expression, often manifesting in complex and nuanced ways that impact mental well-being and behaviour.

In the first book, we have Theodore Finch of *All the Bright Places* (2015), by Jennifer Niven, a contemporary American author who crafted the novel based on an experience she had in her life that forever changed her. The book portrays a myriad of human emotions in such a form that helps us feel empathetic to the characters in the most humane way possible. The central characters of the story reach a point where they are forced to change the way they used to see life and a certain tragedy makes their life unrecognisable to them. The work, portrays the role of family in shaping an individual, how their surroundings affect the mental health of an individual and how all these led to the holistic development of an individual and how all these led to a deteriorating mental health that ultimately leads to their untimely death, most likely a suicide in relation to the overpowering fascination towards death. The feeling of Thanatos in this book is overpowering and the psyche of Finch can be analysed through the lens of Thanatos as he grapples with self-destructive tendencies, an obsession with death, and his constant escape from the world around him by disappearing for a long period of time.

The next character is Hannah Baker from *13 Reasons Why* (2007) by Jay Asher. In the work, we can see Hannah Baker, an ordinary girl full of life and dreams slowly losing herself and being overpowered in the race of life and eventually ends her life due to the overpowering desire for death that her surroundings slowly forced upon her. Hannah Baker leaves a tape describing thirteen reasons that leads her to her suicide. Although she wished to be stopped at some point, there's not a single person left for her to stop her, to save her from herself. Along with other people who have actually contributed a great deal towards her untimely death, Hannah's deteriorating mental state also plays an important role in forcing her to take her own life. Although many could have stopped her, for there were signs for what she was going through, none was there to

notice that or to help her identify the state in which she was trapped. The one person who could have stopped all these remained silent thereby slowly pushing her off the cliff.

The next character that's taken into consideration in this project is Alaska Young of the novel, *Looking for Alaska* (2005) by John Green. Alaska is a university student who is the heart and soul of her friend circle. She is admired by all and looked up as the phenomenal college prankster who can outwit anyone. Despite that, deep within her, she is a lonely girl. Through numerous instances in the plot, we can see Alaska phrasing her desire towards death and she implies the same in her actions and words occasionally. On a sudden day, the world has it that Alaska Young is no more. Heartbroken, her friend, Miles Halter, intending to find out about her death discovers her car accident to be deliberately done by Alaska herself, in a moment where she was overcome with the feeling of Thanatos. Although the truth behind her unfortunate death is vague, it is perceived as she took her own life in the frenzy of the moment. Alaska also has a destructive mental health, and childhood trauma that plays an important role in driving her to death.

All these characters, at some point of their life, or at multiple instances, are forced to face Thanatos and Eros. Although in this case, the Eros of their life wasn't strong enough for them to stay. Despite the people in their life, and the love they supposedly received were not enough for them to stay a little longer, nor were their mental health in a good enough state for them to have Eros, the urge to live. All these characters were grasped in the vivacious clutches of Thanatos, leaving them, or forcing them to die. The overpowering fascination, the urge to die was stronger than that to live.

One of the common traits in all these characters is their deteriorating mental health that eventually leads them to their final deeds that further pave the way for their untimely death. Although they try to seek help from professionals, the help they sought and yearned for, still remained far away for them to actually do something about it so that they could stay a little bit longer. Another common factor that the characters possess is their dysfunctional family. Family plays a major role in shaping individuals and their life choices. This sociological aspect is made relevant through numerous studies and these select books and their characters. Theodore Finch and Alaska Young come from highly dysfunctional families. Theodore Finch, with his childhood traumas, an abusive father and uncaring mother is clearly an example of how dysfunctional family affects children, growing up. The beatings he used to receive while he was a child and the hereditary bipolar disorder shows how problematic his whole life growing up with such a family was. The traumatic experience that Alaska had to go through in her childhood that ultimately resulted in the death of her mother scars her for life. Alaska, guilty for her mother's death, constantly puts her life in situations where it felt challenged or threatened. The numbness of Hannah as she was being assaulted by the people around her also pushed her down to the rock bottom of life.

Theodore Finch from *All the Bright Places*, (2015) Hannah Baker from *13 Reasons Why* (2007) and Alaska Young from *Looking for Alaska* (2005) can be analysed theoretically through the lens of Thanatos, which is the Freudian concept of the death instinct or drive. The said characters exhibit traits that align with this theory in several ways: Self-destructive tendencies, escape from reality, and obsession with death.

The manner in which the characters Theodore Finch, Hannah Baker and Alaska Young, negotiate the satisfaction of their physical and physiological requirements, with a particular focus on the significant influence of fundamental necessities on the psychological welfare of young individuals. This is analysed with the hierarchy proposed by Maslow commences with physiological needs, which highlights the relevance of fundamental requirements such as oxygen, water, food, sleep, and warmth. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a psychological framework developed by Abraham Maslow, which outlines the essential needs that an individuals must fulfil in a hierarchical manner in order to attain self-actualization.

According to the non-dualistic interpretation of the Freudian theories of Eros and Thanatos, the elimination of the death instinct is dependent on how well the life drive, Eros performs in one. This transition of drives can be analysed by the individual organisation of these instinctual forces that regulates life, but since individuals are dependent on their very immediate environment, this shift is also related to the sociohistorical conditions that regulates and facilitates the collective patterns of psychic contexts. The personal and collective state of the psyche are mutually formed and transformed.

Another methodology used to analyse the said characters is Emile Durkheim's thesis on suicide. Initially published in 1897, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, by the French sociologist Emile Durkheim, was a methodological study of a social fact in relation to the context of one's society. It is exclusively, a case study of suicide, a kind of publication

unique for its time that provided an example for what a sociological monograph should look like. This illustrious work is still relevant in contemporary society due to the accuracy and efficiency that makes it a phenomenal work in the field of sociology. In Durkheim's view, suicide comes in four types, which are based on the degrees of imbalance of two social forces of life as well as society: social integration and moral regulation.

This study focuses on the lives of Finch, Hannah Baker and Alaska Young, and analyses them with the lens of psychoanalytic theory making use of the methodologies and theories of famous theoreticians such as Sigmund Freud, Abraham Maslow, and Emile Durkheim. The characters are subjected to the close scrutiny of the lens of their theories and analysed thereby creating a clear picture about their psychic state, and their physical and mental state. As their lives unravel through a series of events that played a crucial role in their downfall, we could get a clear peek into their lives.

The question of life and death in the contemporary world is of utmost importance. As the question and relationship between mental health of an individual in contemporary society is relevant. Thus, the question for Thanatos and Eros are also gaining importance in the current circumstances. Eros, the primary instinct to live is as relevant as mental health is concerned. Freud assumed the existence of an urge, overpowering as it could be, in tending and regulating towards the destruction or the dissolution of life, of which he perceived to be an expression of a force of entropy in human beings, whose primary aim is a return to the primordial undifferentiated condition that does not arise and never cease to exist. This tendency to obey the principle of Thanatos or the Death drive, can possess

the power to be manifested energetically, often as destruction, aggression, and negativity,
or in a passive sense as mental dullness, apathy, and a general abstention from life.

Chapter 2

The Theory of Thanatos

“Wellness is the complete integration of body, mind, and spirit – the realisation that everything we do, think, feel, and believe affects our state of well-being.”

(Anderson). c, “Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions.” As for emotions, studies have also been made in close relation with literature as well.

Literature has always had an irrevocable relationship with human emotions and the various dimensions of the same. Emotions and feelings of the human psyche, was one of the major themes in literature from a very early period. The complexities of mind and various phases of it always amazed authors as well as readers. Thus, literature that deals with the complexities of mind took birth. *The Tale of Genji* by Lady Murasaki, written in 11th-century Japan, was considered by Jorge Luis Borges to be a psychological novel. Thus began an era concerning more works with the human psyche at its centre. This paved the way for a literary breakthrough in the field of criticism as well. Psychoanalytic criticism is a form of literary criticism which make uses of the techniques of psychoanalysis in interpreting literature. The psychoanalytic theory, developed by the Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud, is a practice based upon the theories of how the human mind, the instincts and sexuality of it work. Introduced first in his book, *Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (1917), Freud outlines his theory of psychoanalysis inculcating the unconscious mind, the idea of neuroses, and dreams. In founding psychoanalysis, Freud made use of therapeutic techniques such as the use of free association and discovered transference, establishing its central role in the final analytic process. In Freudian psychoanalytic theory, the death drive is the drive that leads one toward death and destruction, which forms the core of this study, and is often expressed

and exercised through behaviours such as aggression, repetition compulsion, and self-destructiveness. It was originally proposed by Sabina Spielrein in her paper “*Destruction as the Cause of Coming into Being*”, later borrowed by Freud and formed the theory of death drive or Thanatos. In “*Destruction as the Cause of Coming into Being*” (1912), Sabina Spielrein theorised the death drive as the relational drive toward the death of the I, resulting ultimately in the destruction one’s self.

With the publication of his book “*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*” in 1920, Freud concluded that all major instincts of life fall mainly into one of two major classes: life drives and death drives—later dubbed to Eros and Thanatos by other psychologists. In this book, Freud outlines these two major divisions of his drive theory, Eros and Thanatos. Freud christened Eros, the Greek word for love, as the life instinct, that produces creativity, love, sexual reproduction, and self-preservation. The opposite of which is Thanatos, the Greek word for death which stimulates destruction, aggression, repetition, compulsion and self-destruction. This theory forms the core of this study and is used to analyse the characters of select works like *All the Bright plac es*, (2015) *13 Reasons Why* (2007) and *Looking for Alaska* (2005). In sections IV and V of his phenomenal work, Freud comes to the conclusions that the process of creating living cells binds certain energy and creates an imbalance. It is the pressure of the matter to return to its original state which provides these cells their quality of living. The process is analogous to the creation and exhaustion of a battery. This pressure for molecular diffusion, that continues constantly is referred to as a “death-wish”. The compulsion of the matter in cells to return to the state of diffuse, inanimate state extends to the whole living organism. Thus, the psychological death-wish is a manifestation of an underlying

physical compulsion present in every cell, That Freud later comprises into Thanatos or the death drive.

Death drive is a force that is present in every individual, dormant in some and powerful in some. Freud understood death as hard to conceptualise and understood because it is not experienced and, therefore, it remains theoretical or abstract. Thus, it is not represented in the unconscious. The central characters in this study, Theodore Finch, Hannah Baker, and Alaska Young take their own lives following a series of events that in a way leaves them no choice but to end their lives. These events of their lives are analysed through the lens of Thanatos and various methodologies.

The death drive could be analysed through various instances in the lives of the characters, giving more importance to their past traumas if there is the presence of any such traumas. This is proven further while coining his ideologies in his book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud encountered certain problems that further led him to develop his theories on life and death instinct. The problem he faced was the phenomenon of repetition of traumatic experiences, mainly caused by war, into the mind of individuals. He observed that the victims tend to repeat these traumatic incidents. Freud derived his theory of death drive, with its “pressure towards death”, and the resulting “separation of the death instincts from the life instincts” (Beyond pg 316 and 322) seen in Eros. The death drive later manifests itself in the individual creature as a force “whose function is to assure that the organism shall follow its own path to death”. (Beyond pg 311) In his book, *The Ego and the Id* (1923) he stated that “the death instinct would thus seem to express itself—though probably only in part—as an instinct of destruction directed against the external world”. (Ego pg 381)

Schopenhauer, a German philosopher in his work, *The World as Will and Representation* (1818) comes to a finding that everything exists by a specific will, which more likely is a will to live. Although, as a pessimist, the interpretation of this 'will' is termed as a negative one by him, more like an immoral thing as he deemed that life produces more suffering than happiness. The death drive would seem to manifest itself as a natural and psychological negation of the 'will'. This is evident in the case of Finch Hannah and Alaska, whose definition for the 'will' merely as an exercise of existing without any form of love or hope. The pessimistic view of will and the emptiness of it is evident when Finch says "I open my eyes and sit straight up, gasping, filling my lungs. I'm happy no one's here to see me, because I'm sputtering and splashing and coughing up water. There's no such rush of being survived, only emptiness, and lungs that need air, and wet hair sticking to my face." (Niven 2015. Pg 107). Just after he tries to drown himself in his tub.

The next milestone in the field of sociology, that's used to analyse the select characters is the theory on suicide by the French sociologist and philosopher, Emile Durkheim. Durkheim's theory on suicide is addressed in his book, *Suicide: A study in Sociology* (1897) was a form of methodological study of social fact in context of the society. According to Emile Durkheim, the term suicide can be applied to all causes of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim. In Durkheim's view, suicide can be classified into four types, based on the degrees of social integration and moral regulations. The four types of suicides, identified by Durkheim are: egoistic suicide, altruistic suicide, anomic suicide and fatalistic suicide. Among these, two

of these divisions are taken into consideration while scrutinising the select characters. Egoistic suicide, a kind of suicide, triggered from the absence of social integration. It's committed by individuals who are social outcasts and sees themselves as being alone or an outsider. They are unable to find their own place in the society and have problems adjusting to groups. They receive little or no care or support from their living sources. Suicide is seen as their sole solution to free themselves from loneliness or excessive individuation. The next one is the anomic suicide, that reflects an individual's moral confusion and lack of social direction that's related to dramatic social or economic upheaval. The egoistic methodology of suicide, is used to analyse the characters Theodore Finch and Hannah Baker, who were forced to unalive themselves as they thought themselves as social outcasts and treated as such. Suicide seemed the only solution for them to be at peace with their life. While Alaska Young, triggered by her childhood incident that constantly haunted her for life, confusing her whether she is fit to live. Her moral confusion regarding her part in the death of her mother, and for the expulsion of her fellow friends and the whole downward spiral that has been happening in her life, forces her to take her own life in a moment of temptation.

The psychological needs of a person are as important as that of their physiological needs. It's only with the proper balance of both these needs, one could lead a healthy mind and a peaceful life. This is further analysed with the help of Abraham Maslow's theory on Hierarchy of needs. Initially published in his paper, *A Theory of Human Motivation* (1943), Maslow's Hierarchy of needs is a five-tier system, the five levels of which are psychological, safety, love or belonging, esteem and self-actualisation. Lower-level basic needs like food, water and shelter must be met before satisfying the higher needs. Although the select characters manage to meet the last two levels of the pyramid,

that being the psychological needs and safety needs, they fail to the further levels like love or belonging, esteem and self-actualisation. The theory is a classification system intended to reflect the universal needs of society as its base, then proceeding to more acquired emotions. The hierarchy of needs is split between deficiency needs and growth needs, with two key themes involved within the theory being individualism and the prioritisation of needs. To reach a full and healthy life, the psychological needs of an individual should be met along with their basic needs of food, shelter and clothes. It's only with the balance of both these needs, can one lead a peaceful and happy life. A healthy life depends on a healthy mind and lifestyle. Thus, mental health is as important as anything else. This study focuses on realms of the human psyche and the force it exerts on the day-to-day life and decisions of an individual.

Chapter 3

Traits and life of Hannah Baker and Alaska Young

Suicide is a rapidly growing phenomena in contemporary society. Deteriorating mental health and dysfunctional relationships play a major role in the increasing rates of suicides. Although suicide exists in the society from the beginning of the history of homo sapiens itself, no record of it is to be found until recently. In ancient Greece suicide was considered a disgraceful act. A person who had committed suicide thus did not receive the death rites accorded common citizens. Evolution of the concept of suicide as society progressed towards relative freedom of thought, the loosening of the concept of “sin” as the cause and effect of suicide allowed more inquiry into the act of suicide. Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist, proposed the idea of suicide as a societal problem with integration of the individual in the society as a central theme in a suicide. He felt that an over identification, under identification, or disconnection from society in an individual had an impact on the risk of suicide. The inculcation of suicide into literature began in 1774, when Johann Wolfgang von Goethe published a novel entitled *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (*The Sorrows of Young Werther*), that tells of an unhappy romantic infatuation that ends in suicide. Ever since then, suicide and mental health began to appear in literature occasionally. Especially in the contemporary literary world, many works deal with the complexities of the human psyche and vividness of it.

Jay Asher’s *13 Reasons Why* (2007) and John Green’s *Looking for Alaska* (2005) are two such works with suicide, and the disturbed human psyche as the central theme. Both Hannah Baker and Alaska Young, the central characters of these works, end up in such a situation where they are forced to take their own lives. Both of them have a background of distressed life and their basic psychological needs are constantly ignored

and often ridiculed. Both these characters are mentally distressed leading up to their moment of death. They are deeply misunderstood, often isolated and pushed to a verge of the precipice, where they have no other option than to take their own lives. The complexities of these characters and their deeply troubled mind makes them more alike than they are.

Hannah Baker of Jay Asher's *13 Reasons Why* (2007) was a normal teenager like any other girl, until her life took a drastic turn. Her story, narrated by herself via thirteen tapes, distributed after her decease to the thirteen people who directly and indirectly played a huge role in pushing her towards suicide. The story unravels from the point of view of Clay Jensen, a friend of Hannah's, who receives the tape against his better judgement. As Hannah's voice explains that there are thirteen reasons why she died - and Clay is one of them. The aim of this study is to analyse the egoistic suicide of Hannah Baker and the hold of Thanatos in leading her to her untimely decease. This is described through three points. The first being the lack of social integration between Hannah Baker and her society, the second, the lack of support from family and school, and the final, Hannah Baker's final decision to commit suicide. Due to the lack of social integration, feeling loneliness, disappointment, depression, and futility, Hannah Baker commits suicide as an escape to free herself from all problems in her life.

Hannah's life was pretty normal like every other teen girl until she, along with her parents, shifted into Evergreen County, California. A seemingly happy girl, her life went upside down ever since her first year in High school. Hannah was constantly isolated by her peers and at a point, even those whom she thought as her friends began to outcast her.

Her friendship with Alex, Jessica and Courtney could be taken as an example. Maslow's hierarchy of needs can be used to analyse the state of Hannah and the deprivation of the same in her life. Maslow's Hierarchy of needs is a five-tier system, the five levels of which are psychological, safety, love or belonging, esteem and self-actualisation. Lower-level basic needs like food, water and shelter must be met. Hannah's need to be loved and to feel belonged, along with her needs of self-esteem and self-actualisation are ignored and are unable to meet. It's evident in one of the tapes of Hannah when she says, "The first to drop out was Alex. We were friendly when we saw each other in the halls, but it never went beyond that. At least with me, it didn't" (Asher. pg 63).

"Then Jessica stopped going, and though I went to Monet's a few more times hoping one of them might wander in, eventually I stopped going, too." (Asher. pg 63).

And in the next tape when she is seen to be reciting to Courtney,

Did you say good-bye on any other day? No, not often. But after the previous night, this time it felt intentional. I guess I thought that after what we'd experienced less than twenty-four hours before, we would now be more than just casual acquaintances. But that evidently, is what we'd become once again. We said hello in the halls and sometimes you said good-bye to me after class, but never more than you said it to anyone else. Until the night of the party. Until the night you needed me again. (Asher, 97)

The loneliness of Hannah and her deprivation of the third tier of the pyramid of needs is evident through her words. Hannah's need to be loved and to feel belonged are constantly neglected by those around her leaving her feeling detached and isolated from the world. She constantly feels that she's being used by those around her, bending the

truth so as to fit their wants. She neglected the sense of connection and intimacy from both her friends, family and love interests. As she says,

My parents love me. I know they do. But things have not been easy recently. Not for about a year. Not since you-know-what opened outside of town. When that happened, my parents became distant. There was suddenly a lot for them to think about. A lot of pressure to make ends meet. I mean, they talked to me, but not like before. When I cut my hair, my mom didn't ever notice. (Asher, 169).

Hannah was also deprived of the third level of her needs that consists of confidence, self-esteem, the need to be a unique individual. The constant ignorance from the people around her and the bullying she had to endure along with physical and emotional assaults destroyed her self-esteem. The stealing of her positive notes by Zach and being physically assaulted in the name of a list all took a toll on her mental health, eventually depriving her from what little ounce of self-esteem she possessed.

Hannah's deprivation of the basic psychological needs plays a massive role in deteriorating her mental health, and thus fuelling the sense of Thanatos. The encounter at Rosie's Diner with Marcus Cooley on Valentine's Day took a heavy toll on Hannah's mental health. The physical abuse that she was subjected to, in the booth at the diner despite her plain refusal, had a huge role in rekindling the sense of Thanatos in Hannah considerably. It's evident that the thought of death arises in her when she says, "I can tell you this, at that table, the worst thoughts in the world first came into my head. It's there that I first started to consider ... to consider ... a word that I still cannot say." (Asher, 161) This incident enhances the already existing Thanatos in the life of Hannah Baker. It's

after this incident that she chops her hair off and write a note to Mrs Bradley about suicide in Peer conversation elective.

Thus, her deprivation of basic psychological needs fuelled her death drive results in the egoistic suicide of Hannah Baker. Egoistic suicide was first discussed in Emile Durkheim's *Suicide: A study in Sociology* (1897) a study based on a social fact. Egoistic suicide, a kind of suicide, triggered from the absence of social integration. It's committed by individuals who are social outcasts and sees themselves as being alone or an outsider. They are unable to find their own place in the society and have problems adjusting to groups. They receive little or no care or support from their living sources. Suicide is seen as their sole solution to free themselves from loneliness or excessive individuation. The egoistic suicide of Hannah Baker can be analysed through three points. The first being the lack of social integration between Hannah Baker and her Society, Next, is the lack of support from family and school, and the last, Hannah Baker's final decision to commit Suicide. Due to her lack of social integration, feeling loneliness, disappointment, depression, and futility, Hannah Baker commits to do suicide as an escape to free herself from all Problems in her life. Egoistic suicide happens to Hannah Baker in *13 Reasons Why* (2007) novel is affected by society who has lack of social integration and support. Hannah's lack of friend circle, her constant isolation from those around her and being ignored by them unless for a personal gain of theirs, shattered her faith in friendship and humanity, leaving her with a strong sense of loneliness. Constant ignorance from her friends and family as well as from school faculties play a strong role in her egoistic suicide.

Hannah's relationship with her friends, teachers and her family were strained and in constant friction. By the reasons that she mentioned in the Tapes she made before committing suicide, it can be seen that Hannah's tape elaborates the reasons for her to commit suicide and by taking it into account, we can clearly analyse the lack of social integration in her immediate society. It's evident through the lack of norms, values, and beliefs of society. In fact, those aspects are important to build good social integration in society. Economic activity in Hannah Baker's society also plays a huge role in the lack of social integration in society. The novel tells that there is an economic problem that happened to Hannah Baker's parents, and it affects the relationship between Hannah and her parents. According to Durkheim's theory on suicide, lack of social integration becomes the leading cause that can lead someone to do egoistic suicide. Hannah Baker's society shows a lack of social integration which then influences her to commit suicide. The treatment of society towards Hannah Baker deeply scars her relation with society. The tapes she left behind prove her lack of social interaction and the part of the people around her in her lack of social integration. Hannah was constantly bullied, ridiculed and physically and mentally taken advantage of by the people around her. This bullying plays a major role in her decision to take her own life. The verbal, physical and emotional bullying created a negative impact on individuals and reduces social integration in the society. The first bullying that Hannah experienced is verbal bullying that she got from her friends. It started from her senior, Justin Foley, who spread false rumours about Hannah. Justin spread a rumour concerning Hannah about their kiss that further ruins her reputation and her personality. He added his own imagination into the story so as to make it a bit juicier and gossip worthy. This made everyone think of her as a 'slut'. Hannah described it in the novel, "I know what you're all thinking. Hannah Baker is a slut." (Asher, 23). "The freshman list" also played a huge role in her death drive and the

following egoistic suicide of Hannah Baker. The list was made by Alex Standall, and it concerned with “who's hot / who's not” in the freshman class. And Hannah’s name was voted as the “best Ass in the freshman class”. This stirred up a chain of unfortunate events that led Hannah's life into a downward spiral. As she says,

The day your list came out wasn't too traumatic. I survived. I knew it was a joke. And the people I saw standing in the halls, huddled around whoever had a copy, they knew it was a joke, too. One big, fat, happy joke. But what happens when someone says you have the best ass in the freshman class? Let me tell you, Alex, because you'll never know. It gives people-some people-the go-ahead to treat you like you're nothing but that specific body part. (Asher, 44)

She further states that, “I've had my butt grabbed before-no big deal-but this time it was grabbed because someone else wrote my name on a list.” (Asher, 52). All other mis happenings concerning Hannah happened because of her name being on that list.

This study thus finds two reasons that lead Hannah Baker to her death drive. As Durkheim says about society, “But society is not only something attracting the sentiments and activities of individuals with unequal force. It is also a power controlling them. There is a relation between the way this regulative action is performed and the social suicide-rate.” (Durkheim, 201)

Her lack of social integration from her immediate society is a matter of fact that deeply troubled her and further played an important role in her egoistic suicide. Along

with her deprived psychological needs. The constant bullying she had to endure is another matter of importance.

The next character that is being analysed in this study is Alaska Young, from John Green's novel *Looking for Alaska* (2005). The story is narrated from the point of view of Miles Halter, a friend of Alaska, in snippets of events before and after her death. Miles was referred to as Pudge and he came to know Alaska from a common friend who was called The Colonel. As for Alaska, she is the heart of the group with her carefree attitude and phenomenal prank ideas. Although moody at times, she is a good friend who cares about her loved ones. In their first conversation, she talks about this book by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *The General in His Labyrinth* as one of her favourite books. Alaska seemed to be so intrigued by the labyrinth which the general is trapped in, and conceives it as a mystery. In her own words, she considers the labyrinth to be, "that's the mystery, isn't it? Is the labyrinth living or dying? Which is he trying to escape - the world or the end of it?" (Green. Pg 28). Alaska relates her to that of the labyrinth and is on a constant quest to figure the answer to it. Alaska Young had always had a strong fascination towards death that could be interpreted as her death drive. She constantly puts her life in situations where it feels challenged, so that she could relive the moments in which she comes in close contact with death, yet evading it, like she does during the many pranks she organised and her habitual smoking. Alaska's fascination towards death is evident in the following conversation with Miles:

Why do you smoke so damn fast? I asked. She looked at me and smiled widely, and such a wide smile on her narrow face might have looked goofy were it not for

the unimpeachably elegant green in her eyes. Smile with all the delight of a kid on Christmas morning and said, “Y’all smoke to enjoy it. I smoke to die (Green, 57).

Her constant love and happiness on the prospect of her death and her impeccable happiness regarding the same reveals the impending fascinating death drive of Alaska. The same is also evident when she says, “I may die young, but at least I’ll die smart.” (Green, 66).

As for her personal life with her family is a bit vague in the book, snippets of it could be used to analyse her familial situation. In one of her conversations with Miles, she talks about her parents. Her mother in particular. She describes her mother to be a “hippie”, a certain someone who wore oversized sweaters knitted by herself, and who smoked a lot of pot, on contrary to her dad, who was a real Republican type. She reveals the reason for her to choose the name Alaska for herself as Alaska is big just like she wanted it to be. She says, “But at the time, I just saw Alaska up there. And it was big, just like I wanted to be. And it was damn far away from some Vine Station, Alabama, just like I wanted to be.” (Green, 67/68). Her need to be far away from her family hints about a discomfort and a forbidden memory. She also further states that “Getting out isn’t that easy.” (Green, 68). Regarding getting out of the relationship and that town that so closely bound her. As for Alaska, her whole life was a labyrinth in which she is trapped and lost in. According to her, life is like a labyrinth in which people get stuck, thinking of ways to escape it and how awesome it would be when one finally does it but they do nothing about it other than imagining the escape but doing nothing about it. They just use the future to escape the present. As for Alaska, she’s doing the same by not doing anything to escape the labyrinth of suffering in which her mind is trapped in, and imagining a

beautiful future for which she doesn't do anything. Alaska, mysterious as she is, intrigues Miles as well as those around her. No one around her completely knows her. Although she is socially integrated in a certain way, she never really integrated herself to the society in the most basic of ways as none really knows her.

Alaska is also deprived of her basic psychological needs as to be loved and to belong. Her family plays a huge part in this deprivation. Her family, as mentioned earlier is a contradiction of opposites as her parents are too different from each other. Her animosity towards her family, more like her distance from her family could be seen as she avoids going home during the holidays, the fear and hollowness Alaska Young harbours towards her family is evident when she says, "I'm scared of ghosts, Pudge. And home is full of them." (Green, 99). She mentions her mother to be a "hippie", someone who always smoked substances. Alaska's sense of detachment from those around her and the reason for her deprivation of the basic psychological need is the demise of her mother. Alaska holds herself responsible for her mother's death. In her own words she recites the incident as such:

She gave me a hug and told me to go do my homework in my room so I could watch TV later. I went into my room, and she sat down at the kitchen table, I guess, and then she screamed, and I ran out, and she had fallen over. She was lying on the floor, holding her head and jerking. And I freaked out. I should have called 911, but I just started screaming and crying until finally she stopped jerking. And I thought she had fallen asleep and whatever had hurt didn't hurt any more. So, I just sat there on the floor with her until my dad got home an hour later,

and he's screaming, 'why didn't you call 911?' and tried to give her CPR, but by then she was plenty dead. Aneurysm. (Green, 145).

The feeling that Alaska experiences here is the survivor's guilt. She blames herself for her mother's death and her part in it. Although she could have saved her, she didn't as she was frozen at the time in confusion as to what to do. In an article named, Regaining the 'Lost Self': A Philosophical Analysis of Survivor's Guilt Amber L. Griffioen states the guilt that comes after someone's death to be:

In another form of survivor guilt, however, an agent may know precisely what she feels guilty for – namely for an act or omission of hers that under normal circumstances might be considered morally suspect or even impermissible but which either is excusable under the circumstances or bears no moral relationship to the traumatic event itself. Call this manifestation of survivor's guilt transgression guilt. (Griffioen)

Her father blamed her for her mother's death as well as her. That thought still haunts her and that makes her think that she doesn't deserve to be loved.

On the day of her death, Alaska Young was in a turbulent mental state and utterly drunk. She rushed out of the campus in a frenzy, guilty and muttering incoherent sentences. None really know why she left and her friends didn't stop her from going in such a condition. Another theory that is used to interpret Alaska Young is Emile Durkheim's anomic suicide, that reflects an individual's moral confusion and lack of

social direction that's related to dramatic social upheaval. To be said in Durkheim's own words, "The stronger a young person's family or other community ties, the less likely the young person are to commit suicide, and the larger the size of the family or peer group, the less likely the young person is to commit suicide." (Shea, 2013, pp. 7-8)

Alaska Young was triggered by her childhood incident that constantly haunted her for life, confusing her whether she is fit to live. Her moral confusion regarding her part in the death of her mother, and for the expulsion of her fellow friends and the whole downward spiral that has been happening in her life, forces her to take her own life in a moment of temptation. The death of her mother, functioned as the primary source of her death drive, for that incident not only led to the death of her mother but also her own moral and innocent self. As her father blamed her for this incident, her only source of love just caved in. Ever since her childhood, especially after the unfortunate demise of her mother, she had been living in a house haunted by the ghost of how things could have been if Alaska had the courage to dial 911. The physical interaction between Alaska and Miles also plays an important role in her death as she felt like cheating her boyfriend, someone she loved so much. Alaska's death could be interpreted as an anomic as well as an egoistic suicide, as she regarded herself as the sole reason for her mother's death as well as the lack of social integration from her part as none around her know the real Alaska Young. They saw what she wanted them to see, hiding her from view. The lack of social integration with her family and friends made her decision to take her own life. Although her death was written off as an accident, Miles and the Colonel discover it to be done deliberately by Alaska in a moment of overpowering death drive.

Both Alaska and Hannah had a dysfunctional family background that deprived them of their basic necessity to be loved and to feel belonged. Their home, their family, although at a certain point were their safe haven, it suddenly ceased to be so. Their family suddenly considered them to be more like a duty that they are obliged to fulfil. At a certain point in her life, especially after the economic ridge that her parents were going through, Hannah began to feel like an imposter at her own home. Her parents began to be more invested in their business rather than their daughter, turning a blind eye to the changes that had been coming over her. Hannah states that her mother didn't even notice her new haircut. Her falling grades were their only concern about their daughter and they even grounded her for that. Likewise, in Alaska's family, the contradictions between her parents were always a matter of inconvenience for her. She states that her mother was a drug addict who occasionally was moody and while in that state, didn't care for anyone else. Although in her good days they used to go out together, the good days were rare to come by. Her rigid relationship with her family is evident from her refusal to go home on vacations. She further adds that her home is full of ghosts. The guilt of not saving her mother haunts Alaska Young every moment of her life. And her father blaming her for the same also adds to the already full bag of guilt that she carries. The lack of acceptance from friends and lack of social integration also plays a huge part in fuelling their death drive. Hannah's non-existent friendships and Alaska's friends who are there, but do not really know her, are more alike in attributes. None of their friends knew who they were for real until they had already passed. None of their friends cared about their psychological state or what they were going through. Their modes of suicides are also more alike in term of these reasons, although the only difference could be the deliberate planning of Hannah Baker and the impulsive decision of Alaska Young. The two characters underwent massive psychological struggle with society, family, friends and

themselves, along with their strong urge and fascination towards death. Their death drive, despite seeking help, had remained unattended and helpless pushing them towards their untimely demise.

Chapter 4

Theodore Finch: A Bright Place

A person is said to be in complete health when along with their physique, their psyche also remains healthy and palpitating. It's an ancient practice to overlook the sickness of mind and to only be concerned about that of the body. Even if people might be dealing with challenges concerning their mental health, however small that might be, they are immediately branded into labels namely, "freak" or "Insane" and then put into a box of labels. And as unfortunate as this might be, these labels tend to follow those people for their whole life. A socially acquired phenomenon, this is deemed as the reason for suicide in teens, with the background of bullying.

This chapter examine the ways in which Jennifer Niven's novel *All the Bright Places* (2015) deals with the central themes such as suicide, egoistic suicide of Theodore Finch conceptualizing the endorsement of Emile Durkheim's theory and defines a lack of social integration, a lack of social interest, bullying, and the psychological and social needs of teenagers. Along with Freudian theory of Thanatos and the influence of the same in the life of Finch and his egoistic suicide, backed by the depletion of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

All the Bright Places (2015) indulges in a poignant portrayal of the challenges faced by young adults, primarily focusing on the central characters Theodore Finch and Violet Markey. The novel successfully portrays the life of the students in its raw and untouched form along with the many problems they have to undergo in their society. The main aim of this chapter is to do an in-depth analysis of the psychological and

sociological topics that are evident in the novel, with a particular emphasis on the viewpoints put forth by Sigmund Freud, Emile Durkheim and Abraham Maslow.

The protagonist, Theodore Finch, is a high schooler who constantly puts his life in jeopardy, where it comes in close contact with death. Finch is oscillating between his periods of being “awake” and “asleep”, a side effect of the bipolar disorder. The very first words of Finch at the beginning of the novel are, “Is today a good day to die?” (Niven, 3). He is standing on a ledge in the bell tower of the high school, his arms outstretched, as if he is conducting a sermon. There are students milling around on the ground, and one of them looks up in his direction, as if he heard Finch, and the other students do not look up, either because they have not spotted Finch, or because they know that he was up there. They all consider him as “just Theodore Freak”. That’s when he first notices Violet Markey, standing on the ledge, poised to jump. Finch talks Violet off from jumping and manages to coax her to move back, and in turn she helps him from the ledge. Later a story spreads in the school portraying Violet as the hero, for rescuing Finch from jumping off the ledge. Later, Violet and Finch get back together on a school project named ‘Wander Indiana’ that further brings them close on their expeditions to see the small state of Indiana and explore the famous sights. These wanderings bring about a huge impact in the lives of Finch and Violet. Violet Markey, had an accident prior to a few months in which she lost her sister Eleanor Markey. That accident had changed her life and her survivor’s guilt got the better of her and her psychological state was constantly blaming her for the death of Eleanor. As Violet suggested the way in which they were travelling in the night of that accident, and also because she survived and Eleanor died, Violet slipped into a depressive episode where she quit writing, as well as riding a car. The wanderings with Finch, brought this lost side of Violet back to her, with his help, she resumed writing

and started getting in a car. As for Finch, Violet kept his “asleep” at bay. She made him want to fight against the blackness and be there awake.

Finch is labelled as a “freak” by those around him and as for this, he was subjected to constant bullying due to his way of doing things. He was bullied by his classmates as well as his father. He was constantly isolated from society and family. His family consists of his mother, and two sisters, his father had divorced his mother and had remarried again and lived with his new wife and her son. Dysfunctional family is another factor in Finch’s declining mental health. His father had these ‘black moods’ as he calls them. He used to beat Finch and continues to do so even now. His mother was never around for him, as she constantly works and is hardly available for the family. Finch is the kind of person who exists outside the social group. His friends consist of only two people, Brenda and Charlie other than Violet. Others in the school view him as a ‘freak’ and treat him with contempt.

Finch’s deprivation of the basic psychological needs plays an important role in his constant isolation as well as his disrupting mental health. The pyramid of his psychological needs is not at all fulfilled. Finch hardly sleeps and could go on for days without food. He constantly tests his limits on breathing by immersing himself underwater until he could not anymore. This is evident when he says,

Water is peaceful. I am at rest. In the water, I am safe and pulled in where I can't get out. Everything slows down-the noise and the racing of my thoughts. I wonder if I could sleep like this, share on the bottom of the bathtub, if I wanted to sleep, which I don't. I let my mind drift. I hear words forming as if I am sitting at the computer already. Six minutes? Seven? The longest I've held my breath is six and

a half minutes. I open my eyes and sit straight up, gasping, filling my lungs. I am happy no one's here to see me, because I'm sputtering and splashing and coughing up water. There's no rush of having survived, only emptiness, and lungs that need air, hand wet hair sticking to my face. (Niven. 106/107)

He constantly tries to test his limits by holding his breath for as long as possible. There were times when he had gone without food during one of his blackest days of being asleep. During one of these days, Finch could be seen rearranging his room, painting everything blue and baring the furniture to a minimum and then moving into the closet where he spends the rest of his days. He mentions the night in which he moves to the closet to be the same as surviving a quicksand. In Finch's own words he says, "That night, I moved into my walk- in closet, which is warm and cozy, like a cave. I push my hanging clothes to one corner and lay the comforter from my bed on the floor." (Niven, 244). Finch lives in the closet for a long time until he is forced to leave from there. When Violet visits him in the place, the room seems to be hospital bare and painted blue from floor to ceiling. The closet contains only the essentials, a blanket, his laptop, a water bottle and post notes and a picture of Violet. Later Finch ran away from home, following his argument with Violet. Thus, we can see Finch forsaking even the basic needs of shelter, clothing and sleep. Finch is further deprived of his basic psychological need to be loved and to feel belonged. Growing up in a dysfunctional family with an abusive father and a busy mother, he was deprived of any sense of being loved and understood in that household. Regarding his mother, Finch says, "When my dad left us this last and final time, my mom earned her realtor's licence, but because the housing market is less than booming, part-times times at a bookstore. She is always tired." (Niven, 105) His mother was not around when he needed her. There was no display of affections, not even a subtle

one. Her self-esteem shattered along with her sense of being a mother when she and Finch's father divorced. Finch's father also failed as a parent. During one of their customary family meetings, Finch senior is seen to be in "one of his moods". And while he is in a state like this, it ends up in violence. Just like:

He slams the beer so hard against the coffee table that the bottle shatters. Don't you come into my house and tell me what to do. And then he's off the couch and lunging for me, and he catches me by the arm and wham, slams me into the wall. I hear the crack as my skull makes contact, and for a minute the room spins. (Niven 159/160).

The physical abuse in the Finch household is evident in the further lines when Finch says, "Have a since I was ten and he sent mom to the hospital with a busted chin, and then a year later when it was my turn." (Niven.160). Finch had never had a proper loving family in which he could confess his heart or feel belonged in. Thus, the second tier of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is also neglected in the case of Finch when he is deprived of safety and security, with a family, property and social ability.

Finch further neglected the need to be loved and to feel belonged. His friendship is limited to a handful of persons as the other children view him as a freak. Brenda and Charlie are the only friends Finch had, as they never judged him or picked at him, apart from Violet. In one of their conversations, while talking of Violet's deceased sister Eleanor, she describes her as her best friend to which, Finch replies,

She always had my back, even if we fought sometimes. I could tell her anything, because the thing about Eleanor was that she didn't judge. She was my best friend.

"I've never had one. What's it like? (Niven. 128)

Finch's despair and loneliness also plays an important role in the building up of the feeling of Thanatos that further proceeds to ruin his life. His lack of self-actualisation and self-esteem, along with his constant feeling of being isolated as well as the turbulence of his mind, all accelerate his feeling of Thanatos that further drives him to his egoistic suicide.

The Freudian theory of drives gave prominence to the idea that there is an inherent principle of entropy, a tendency for dissolution of life, referred to as the Death drive, or Thanatos. Freud recognized a counterbalancing tendency for sustaining life, known as the Life drive, or Eros. (Kli." *Psychoanalytic review*).

Thanatos in the life of Theodore Finch was a manifestation of childhood trauma, his bipolar disorder and his neglect of basic psychological needs. Finch's overpowering death drive came to be evident throughout many instances in the novel constantly. During the very first time at the bell tower, Finch is seen to be thinking,

I could just step off. It would be over in seconds. No more "Theodore Freak". No more hurt. No more anything. I try to get past the unexpected interruption of saving a life and return to the business at hand. For a minute, I can feel it: the sense of peace as my mind goes quiet., like I'm already dead. I am weightless and free. Nothing and no one to fear, not even myself. (Niven. 9)

There are instances like this throughout the novel regarding Finch's obsession over death. There are snippets of information, regarding suicides and its efficiencies.

Less than 2 percent of people in the U.S kill themselves by drowning, maybe because the human body was built to float. The number one country in the world for drowning, accidental or otherwise, is Russia, which has twice as many deaths as the next highest, Japan. The Cayman Islands, surrounded by the Caribbean Sea, has the fewest drownings of all. (Niven. 224)

Snippets of information regarding suicides like this are incorporated in Finch's narrative in order to show his fascination and obsession towards death.

Finch undergoes an egoistic suicide, a sociological notion proposed by Emile Durkheim in his book *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (1897), deems Egoistic suicide as a form of suicide in which an individual came to experience lack of social integration and interpersonal connections with family, friends and society. Finch experiences challenges regarding his mental health and the social isolation that he had to endure following that, contributes in accelerating his Thanatos and thereby, prompting him to his egoistic suicide. Emile Durkheim's theoretical framework, emphasises the importance of social integration and highlights the significance of social relationships in upholding the societal cohesion and mitigation of aberrant conduct.

According to Durkheim, egoistic suicide is a phenomenon that arises when individuals undergo a deficiency in social integration, resulting in sentiments of isolation and alienation. This form of suicide is frequently linked to civilizations characterized by low social cohesion and individuals experiencing a limited sense of belonging. (Turner, 1981 pg. 379-391).

Finch's lack of social integration is made clear throughout the novel with many examples. The pain is evident in the words, "worthless. Stupid. These are the words I grew up hearing. They're the words I try to outrun, because if I let them in, they might stay there and grow and fill me up and in." (Niven. 2015. 63). His isolation from his family, from his mother and the pain in his words is evident in the lines,

I can go downstairs right now and let my mom know how I'm feeling-if she's even home-but she'll tell me to help myself to the Advil in her purse and that I need to relax and stop getting myself worked up, because in this house there's no such thing as being sick unless you can measure it with a thermometer under the tongue. (Niven. 2015. 185)

The social isolation he faces from the society and his struggle to be integrated into the society is evident in his words when he says,

Which is why it pays to pretend you're just like everyone else, even if you have always known you're different. It's your own fault, I told myself then my fault I can't be normal, my fault I can't be like Roamer or Ryan or Charlie or the others. It's your own fault, I tell myself now. (Niven, 141/142).

All the Bright Places (2015) is filled with metaphors that symbolises depression and gloominess, for example, Finch discloses to Violet that he experiences episodes characterised by a sense of despondency and emotional decline" kind of black, sinking moods, I imagine it's what being in the eye of a tornado would be like, all calm and blinding at the same time" (Niven, 2021 pg. 294). Although Finch does not explicitly

disclose his depression, he endeavours to elucidate the same through the use of metaphors. The depiction of being situated within a tornado elicits the sensations of confinement and turbulence, thus, portraying a profoundly disorienting experience.

Theodore Finch, drowns himself following a deep period of being asleep although he tried to fight against it for the sake of Violet. His overwhelming Thanatos, along with his deprivation of psychological needs as well as lack of social integration and the isolation from his immediate society played an important role in leading unto his egoistic suicide.

Conclusion

The human mind is the greatest enigma that is yet to be unravelled and explored completely. Although much research has been conducted, the wonders of the brain still elude humanity and the scientists. Emotions, enzymes that regulate the same, and the capabilities and secrets of the human psyche had always been wonder inducing. This study focuses on the complexities of the human mind, and its connection and the influence of the human psyche in regulating and leading one into their deaths. The Freudian theory of Thanatos, or the death drive, is the central theme of the Study that's used to analyse the characters, Theodore Finch from Jennifer Niven's *All the Bright Places* (2015), Hannah Baker from Jay Asher's *13 Reasons Why* (2007) and finally, Alaska Young from John Green's *Looking for Alaska* (2005).

Finch, Hannah and Alaska are characters coming from a background of dysfunctional families, who received little to or no affection or appropriate care that one should be receiving from their families. They grew up in an atmosphere where they did not feel safe or sound and that affected their psyche altogether. Their strained relationship with their parents, families, friends and the society play a pivotal role in changing the course of their life and channelling it into a more complex and disturbed state that ultimately results in their tragic deaths. Their egoistic suicide is the result of lack of social integration and lack of support from their families and friends.

Another similar trait among these characters is their neglect of basic psychological needs. A person is said to be healthy when their psychological needs are fulfilled along with their physiological needs. Just as the basic physiological needs consists of food, water, shelter, clothes and all, psychological needs also consist of certain

things that an individual need to be alive and healthy. It also paves way into social integration of an individual into the society as well. *The Hierarchy of Needs* is a theory formulated by Abraham Maslow that consists of five levels. The basic being the basic physiological needs, the second being safety and security that consists of health, family, employment, property and social ability. The third level being love and belonging, that consists friendship, family, intimacy and a sense of connection. The fourth level is self-esteem, that consists confidence, achievement, respect to others, the need to be a unique individual. The final level is the self-actualisation, that consists of morality, creativity, spontaneity acceptance, meaning and inner purpose. Finch, Hannah Baker and Alaska Young are deprived of all these needs throughout their lives. Some more than the other. The deprivation of these needs plays an important role in leading them to their tragic and untimely deaths.

This study mainly focuses on the role of Thanatos in the life of the characters and how Thanatos influenced them throughout their life and especially after their mental health starts declining. Their already disruptive mind shatters to its maximum when the life they thought to be in control slips away from their hands. Their social isolation, dysfunctional relationships and depression consists the major factor in fastening their suicide. The lack of help they got both from their respective relationships as well as professional, is also a major factor in their egoistic suicides. Though their death could have been stopped by those around them, they directly or indirectly did not do so, and thereby playing a part in pushing them off to their deaths.

The role of Thanatos in their life is the major factor that eventually ends up in their tragic deaths. Even though there were signs foretelling the outcomes of their life, the

people around them chose to ignore it even though some of them noticed. Sigmund Freud's theory of drives gives prominence to the idea that there exists an inherent principle of entropy, a tendency to dissolute life, that is rendered as Thanatos or the death drive, and the counterbalancing tendency of the same is regarded as the Eros or the life drive. The theory of Thanatos further points out that all individuals are deemed to reach their lowest possible point eventually. Thanatos leads people to experience a myriad of emotions such as aggression, engage in risky behaviours, and re-experience past traumatic experiences.

By using the theory of Thanatos to closely analyse the characters Theodore Finch, Hannah Baker and Alaska Young, it is evident that the select characters indeed reached a point in their life where they were looking forward to ending it. These characters, before their death, were going through severe depression that rendered them numb towards feelings of any other kind. All they were left with was severe hopelessness and aggression, towards the world and to their loved ones, and even with themselves. Their aggression towards themselves leads them to engage in risky behaviours. In the case of Hannah Baker from *Jay 13 Reasons Why* (2007), it was her decision to join Courtney Crimson and Bryce Walker in the afterparty, where she was abused by Bryce in the hot tub. Hannah knew what she was indulging in even before she joined them in the pool, as she had had close contact with Bryce Walker's abuse and entitlements before on many occasions. She saw him raping Jessica, a former friend of Hannah's and he abused her and touched her without her consent, in multiple times. This decision of Hannah Baker to join the same Bryce Walker is nothing else but her own risky behaviour, stemming from an aggression directed to herself. The abuse in the pool was Hannah's way of revisiting the

past traumatic experiences that she had to experience, that lead her unto her egoistic suicide.

As for Alaska Young, in John Green's *Looking for Alaska* (2005), had a past traumatic experience in which her mother had passed due to aneurysm. It was partly Alaska's fault as she did not call 911, even though she could have, and that could have saved her mother, but Alaska remained with her mother, frozen and not knowing what to do, and this made her responsible for her mother's tragic death. Her father, following this incident, blamed her for the death of her mother, and this took a huge toll on Alaska's mental well-being. The guilt also made it difficult to appreciate life and she adopted measures to cope with her grief. Alaska Young resorted to pranks that constantly put herself at risk. She used to visit her past traumatic experiences through a novel that she held dear to her, Marquez's *The General in His Labyrinth*. The labyrinth, for her, was life itself and she deemed it as the labyrinth of suffering. During the night of her death, she was under the heavy influence of alcohol as she was driving to her hometown. In a moment of aggression, she drove the car straight and fast and slammed into an obstacle, which resulted in her death.

As for Theodore Finch from Jennifer Niven's *All the Bright Places* (Niven, 2015), his aggression was directed towards himself as he constantly tried to stay awake and not to slip into the deep dark moods of bipolar disorder. Though his aggression was directed inwards, occasional outbursts were there directing often towards people that picked at him or bullied him physically like Gabe Romero. Finch directed his aggression towards himself and tried to push past his limits constantly. He tried to hold his breath under water for as long as he possibly could and he ran for miles until he was utterly exhausted. He

engaged in risky behaviours of swimming in what seems like a bottomless lake, and striving to touch the bottom of the same. Finch's past traumatic experiences that he had to endure at the hands of his father, who constantly bullied him also played a huge role in rekindling his Thanatos. Finch, at the day of his death, went to the same lake where he had been with Violet Markey. He drowns himself, while he dove into the bed of the lake, although he knew that he would never find it and would die trying.

Though it was not necessarily their first attempt at doing activities that put them at risk, the people around them fail to understand their need to be noticed and to be saved. Had they been given the love and care or the help they asked for without asking explicitly, they could have been saved from their chosen fate.

This study thus focuses on bringing about the role and hold of Thanatos and how its destructive force, changes the life of those who are grappled by it. Although there are kinds of help that is available in the contemporary society for those who are in dire need of it, it often fails to bear the fruit of its labour. It's evident that Hannah Baker and Theodore Finch had been undergoing professional help measures, but their counselling and therapy were of little to no use in keeping their destructive force at bay. They could have been saved, had they been given proper care and help they deserved despite their refusal. Therapy, thus even after being a pivotal role in the protection and safekeeping of mental health, failed to save these characters.

Multiple factors affect mental health. The more risk factors adolescents are exposed to, the greater the potential impact on their mental health. Factors that can contribute to stress during adolescence include exposure to adversity, pressure to

conform with peers and exploration of identity. Media influence and gender norms can exacerbate the disparity between an adolescent's lived reality and their perceptions or aspirations for the future. Other important determinants include the quality of their home life and relationships with peers. Violence (especially sexual violence and bullying), harsh parenting and severe and socioeconomic problems are recognized risks to mental health.

Some adolescents are at greater risk of mental health conditions due to their living conditions, stigma, discrimination or exclusion, or lack of access to quality support services.” (*Mental Health of Adolescents*, WHO)

In the contemporary world, where the importance of mental health is receiving serious attention, the relevance of social phenomenon like suicides and depression are also elevating. The mental health problems among the young adults are rapidly increasing and demands serious attention. Thus, its important to provide appropriate care and help to those who need it. In the survey conducted by World Population Review, it is seen that the rate of suicides has increased. In the first place is Lesotho with 72.4 percent of suicide rate. The rate of suicides is high among adults as well as young adults. The rate of suicide in India per one lakh population has increased to 12.4 in 2022, and is still increasing day to day. In such a context, the importance of mental health awareness as well as suicide prevention shall be given utmost importance.

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