

BEWILDERMENT AND LIMINALITY: AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED POST-2000 CANCER NARRATIVES

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by

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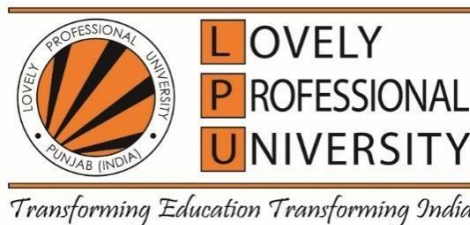
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DECLARATION

I, hereby declare that the present thesis titled “**Bewilderment and Liminality: An Analysis of Selected Post-2000 Cancer Narratives**” is in fulfillment of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** is the outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of Dr Muzafar Ahmed Bhat working as Associate Professor, in the School of Social Sciences and Languages of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgements have been made, wherever work described here has been based on findings of other investigators. This work has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shalini Rana". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name of the scholar.

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ABSTRACT

The present study is a qualitative analysis of cancer narratives. The title of the thesis is, "**Bewilderment and Liminality: An Analysis of Selected Post-2000 Cancer Narratives**". For the study of cancer narratives, five novels based on cancer stories have been selected. All the novels are authored by five different authors. Out of the five authors, three authors are American while the other two authors are British. The theory selected for content analysis is theory of Liminality. The five novels are *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green, *A Walk to Remember* by Nicolas Sparks, *Before I Die* by Jenny Downham, *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower* by Elizabeth Hein and *A Rather Unusual Romance* by Stevie Turner.

Why should one study cancer narratives? In the present times, the world has again woken up to understand the importance of study of illness, disease and health. The Post-Covid world is realizing the importance of a disease free life. It not only helps in understanding the trauma that the cancer sufferer goes through but also educates the reader about how cancer sufferers should be given care and support. Cancer narratives have brought awareness among doctors, caregivers, medical support staff, fellow sufferers and general readers about the problem that a cancer sufferer goes through. Writing of texts based on cancer, itself initiates cathartic effect in the writers as well as the readers. The study of illness narratives is beneficial for policy makers and the health departments of different countries. Better medical care has emerged as an important phenomenon after Covid. Holistic approach towards overall wellbeing of the mind, body and of the consciousness of human beings is of utmost importance in the current scenario.

The application of the theory of Liminality helps the readers and scholars to understand the state of the mind of the liminal beings going through changes, transitions and transformations in their lives due to the onset of cancer. Arnold van Gennep had studied the phenomenon of liminality extensively and documented it in his seminal work, *The Rites of Passage* (1909). *The Fault in Our Stars* showcases the struggle of three teenager's viz. Hazel Grace, Augustus Waters and Issac against cancer. Cancer is a mysterious disease and so far no exact reasons are known that causes cancer. Since

teenage is a time of hope, dreams and excitement, the entry of cancer sabotages all the hopes, dreams and excitement. But the teenage characters, after a lot of churning of the inner recesses of their mind, heroically accept their condition and come to terms with cancer, life and their own existence as a whole. After going through the metamorphic liminal stages, they evolve a new understanding of the meaning of life, death and dying at a tender age.

A Walk to Remember is based on the struggle of Jammie Sullivan against cancer. She is also a teenager and the Bible becomes her greatest strength in the hours of crises. She is just a sixteen year old girl and she becomes the most charitable girl in the town. She accepts that she is left with limited time period in her life but she bravely decides to spend each and every minute of her life in serving humanity. For her, the real meaning of life comes out to be serving the humanity.

The third novel *Before I Die* is a fictional cancer narrative of a teenager Tessa Scott. She is a reckless teenager, who wants to enjoy life. Late night parties, drugs, fun and frolic are the ideas that dominate her life. She wants to become the most popular girl in her school. She is shocked when her doctor declares that there is no hope for her survival. She becomes clueless when the doctors deny giving her any hope of living. She regrets that she will not be able to do a job become famous, have relationships and enjoy life. These are basically, the constructed notions that the post- industrial society has given to human kind. Cancer breaks these constructed notions. The cancer sufferer has to revisit the constructed notions of life, living, death and dying during the liminal journey. Later on, he/she comes to terms with a new and evolved meaning of life. Tessa's liminal journey begins with the preparation of her wish list and she goes on to fulfill them one by one. It includes taking drugs, sex, stealing, touring and breaking the law etc. But soon she realizes the emptiness of all these activities. It does not give her peace and happiness. She realizes the temporariness and hollowness of all these activities. She knows death is at her doorstep.

Wisdom dawns upon her, when she happens to go for a jungle safari. It is among the dense woods that she realizes that she is nothing but a miniscule part of the entire ecosystem. She is part of nature only. Her new found wisdom is not something that she

gets easily, it comes only after bearing the extreme physical pain, suffering and near death like experiences. The liminal journey that she has to go through compels her to develop her own coping mechanisms while some counts of breath are still left in her life. Her liminal condition forces her to cross the threshold of fear of life and death.

The fourth text is based on the suffering of a twenty nine year old woman, Miss Lara Blaine. It is written by American author Elizabeth Hein. Her novel *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower* is a telling tale of the traumatic journey of Lara. Her fight against cancer compels her to rethink, reevaluate and reorganize her life. Cancer also opens up the hidden childhood wounds that she was carrying as a mental baggage with herself. Elizabeth Hein has successfully narrated her own cancer journey in a fictionalized manner. Hein was born in Madrid, Spain but later on she settled with her parents in Massachusetts. Presently she is settled in Carolina. Her stories are mainly based on the struggles of women. Her novels also depict the strong bond among women and how they help out each other in times of crisis. The frequent visit to hospitals, anesthesia, the unbearable physical pain, the fear of disfiguring of the body, the glaring lights of the operation theatre, the surgical tools, the way the body is subjected to inspection through different angles which are normally awkward for a woman, the doubtful faces of the doctors, the suspicious glances of the nurses leaves the patient into in-betweenness, ambiguity, chaos and helplessness.

The fifth novel chosen for the current study is *A Rather Unusual Romance*. It is written by British author Stevie Turner. The novel is a beautiful depiction of blossoming of love under the clouds of cancer. Eric and Alan are in their late forties and fifties. They are diagnosed with cancer. They first meet in a radioactive chamber where they are subjected to radiotherapy. It is a typical liminal situation because the way initiands are separated from the society, similarly when the cancer disease is diagnosed and confirmed, the cancer sufferer believes that he/she is not normal. Suddenly the person finds himself neither among the living nor among the dead.

The theorists, Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner have extensively explored the dilemma of being neither here nor there. The ambiguity, the chaos and the in-betweenness creates a lot of trouble and mental disturbance in the liminal beings.

This situation is graver in cancer sufferers. The research study found that liminality, the threshold, the betwixt and the between is very much prominent in cancer narratives. The theorists had studied liminality primarily on cultural rituals but as the theory became popular, it is now being applied to wide variety of areas like the boundaries, borders, immigrants, landscapes, balconies, Diaspora, adventure sports etc. As per cultural rituals the theorists claimed that all the ritual processes were designed to restore behavior in the society, in the garb of rituals. The outcome of the study is that the phenomenon of liminality is prominent in the selected cancer narratives. The characters suffering from cancer go through liminal stages. As the disease is revealed they consider themselves as the other, as someone who is separated from the society just like the neophyte in the ritual process. The cancer sufferer's daily routine is disturbed. Dropping out of school, missing office hours, loss of business is common in the pre-liminal stage. In the middle stage i.e. the liminal stage the cancer sufferer goes through the most difficult and unbearable phase. It is marked with near death like circumstances besides utter physical pain, surgeries, amputation and looming fear of death. The sufferer always finds himself/ herself under the whirlpool of death. Loss, lack and hopelessness mark this stage.

However this stage also helps in developing a new philosophy of life which helps in coping with the situation. The post-liminal stage is marked by attitudinal difference, looking at life from a higher perspective and not from the established notions of the society. Life is looked as an organic whole rather than just from the material perspective. It happens only after crossing the mental threshold which requires lot of mental strength, determination and holistic understanding of life.

INTRODUCTION

The study is based on the selected fictional cancer narratives. The selected novels are analyzed through the lens of theory of Liminality as proposed by Victor Turner. The title of the thesis is ‘Bewilderment and Liminality: An Analysis of Selected Post-2000 Cancer Narratives’. Several researchers have tried their hands at exploring various aspects related to cancer narratives but not much is researched through the lens of Liminality. Terminal illnesses like cancer, pushes a human being to the threshold of life and death. In many cases, when pain, fear and anxiety reaches its limit the sufferer often resolves that, that is it. Either he/ she crumbles or comes out as a fighter to live as a survivor or die heroically. However, the transition is not that easy, the sufferer goes through several stages that begins from shock to denial to accepting the new condition of life. After going through several trial and error methods of cure the sufferer bears the pain, agony and distress. Ultimately the sufferer resolves to overcome his/her ambiguous condition.

The liminal, spatial and temporal conditions of the characters suffering from cancer has been explored in the novels, *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green, *A Walk to Remember* by Nicholas Sparks, *Before I Die* by Jenny Downham, *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower* by Elizabeth Hein, *A Rather Unusual Romance* by Stevie Turner. Canonical works of Victor Turner acted as the foundation for this study. Besides Turner, other major works by theorists of Liminality, contributors like Arnold Van Gennep, Paul Stenner, Bjorn Thomassen and Spariosu Mihai have also been incorporated as secondary texts for the study.

The narratives based on illness, particularly cancer, offer an opportunity to understand the implicit schism between the life that a terminally ill patient lives and the life that otherwise a fit person lives. In the western countries, medical educationists are exploring narratives based on illnesses like cancer in order to understand their psyche and the pain. Fictional and non-fictional accounts about illness allow us to understand the nuances of human life in a better manner; the pressing time, the unfulfilled desires, loosing organs one after the other, the fear of being consumed by the spreading of cells like cancer offer a better understanding of life. Critical illness often shatters the constructed identity and often takes the sufferer to the margins of life and death. During surgeries, difficult treatments and critical life

conditions like becoming unconscious, the sufferer often goes through near death like experience. Narratives based on illness, especially illnesses like cancer offer the opportunity to study the liminal experience that the characters go through. The five texts that are taken for the present study are all based on characters that are suffering from cancer.

On the whole cancer narratives have helped in opening a new vista of research in academic arenas. It has revolutionized the way cancer has been looked at. Western countries have witnessed remarkable change in the way cancer is treated both clinically and personally although much research has to be done in eastern countries in order to make a collective conscious effort to defeat and deal with cancer in an efficient and proficient manner. Cancer narratives have brought fresh perspective in understanding the new meaning of old terminologies and phrases like war, fight, journey, attitude, positivity, meaning making, quest, self, identity, death, time, self – discovery, empowerment and the list is enriched with the publication of each new book whether it is fictional or non-fictional; by a survivor or a sufferer and even the cure of cancer. Narration or narratives is not a fixed compartmentalized entity. It is a shared space that translates an individual's story into a plethora of readings by the reader. Each reader, scholar, sufferer, curer, caregiver, friend or relative is enriched and becomes aware by the shared spaces provided by cancer narratives.

Narrativity has drawn even the interest of the medical field because these days treatments are moving towards a patient-centered approach. The study of narratives on cancer helps to bring into focus all possible cures for respective sufferers in society. Human beings are born narrativists. When humans talk they are basically narrating their ideas through language: it can be oral and it can be written. These days it is available in digital form also like Cancer blogs are quite popular, some of the popular blogs are Colorado Cancer blogs, Cancer Research Catalyst, The Cancer Chronicles etc. They are being run by individuals as well as cancer cure organizations and it has greater outreach.

Life moves on like a story with events of different shades but diseases like cancer suddenly disrupts the on- going story. It brings a change, it interrupts: it comes as a threat to the self- constructed identity. Common illnesses bring discomfort for a few days but if the doctor breaks the news that the individual has only three months or

six months left to his credit - it comes as a shock, it shatters the self-constructed identity, it causes dislocation, it threatens the maintenance of that living entity, called life. The on-going story now adds a new threatening character or a villain named Cancer.

Cancer narratives have played the role of an authentic insider about this disease. It has helped the medical field also because now they give more attention to patient centric individualized treatment. At least in the West, the patient has taken the center stage otherwise, earlier they had been the silent spectators and sufferers during the whole process of treatment. Cancer narratives have also shattered the stigma that was once attached to Cancer. The narratives reveal how the characters fight with the disease? What was the outcome of their journey? Did it change their psyche? How did the characters manage to protect their identity that too at the threshold of life and death? Did it make them a strong person? Is their understanding of life better than the non-sufferers? Have they become more useful in terms of their existence?

Fictional and non-fictional cancer narratives have crossed several stages of evolution ranging from silence to talking about it, to expressing through letters like Fanny Burney did in the early 18th century, to publishing books and now up to writing blogs and connecting with the whole world. Is there any benefit of studying about these narratives? The answer is in the affirmative because it is helping the doctors, paramedics and family members in providing better cure to the sufferers, it has helped in sensitizing their attitude also. Cancer narratives have encouraged the demand for holistic healthcare. It has even changed the outlook of medical education because earlier medical education was not inclusive about overall healthcare factors. As far as the west is concerned, many concerned medical teachers raised their voice against the highly technical and mechanical nature of medical treatment.

It is a pity that in the present day scenario the pain and suffering of the patient is not healed, rather it is fixed with the help of drugs that may be applied on trial basis sometimes even without the consent of the patient as is revealed in *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green. Due to the highly dehumanizing way a patient is treated, there is a need to study painful narratives of patients so as to understand and evolve methods for holistic health care. In 1980, K. Danner Clouser who used to teach ethics in the USA raised a valid question, 'Where do we train for understanding suffering and joy?'

Where do we gain perspective on our own life, on others and the relationship between them?' (Bates 29). The answer to all these greatly lay in patiently listening to the narratives of sufferers whether it is in oral or written form.

Illness is not related just to the external body; it affects the entire psyche of the sufferer. In many cases the entire family suffers and thus they also need to be taken care of as well as involved in the process of healing. Cancer narratives like *The Fault in Our Stars*, *A Walk to Remember*, *Before I Die* etc. offer an insight to all such grave issues. Its educative nature offers suggestions for the people around the cancer patient. It tries to go beyond chemical and mechanical treatment to understanding the human condition as an organic whole and not just as part. Therefore, literature offers a glimpse into a patient's psyche, his mental state and his expectations in times of health crisis.

Sociologists also acknowledge the importance of research on Cancer narratives. They understand the problem of terminal illness through the body and the wound acts as a central motif in painful narratives according to their observation. Famous sociologist and author Arthur W Frank says in his bestselling book *The Wounded Storyteller*. 'The stories that ill-people tell are about their bodies' (1). He also observes that, 'each person has a story that is to tell' (Frank 1). On the basis of his research on stories of illness he divides the narratives into three categories: Restitution narratives, Chaos narratives and Quest narratives. Similarly books like Jackie Stacey's *Teratologies: A Critical Study of Cancer* develops an empathetic attitude among readers, researchers and doctors.

Siddharth Mukherjee, the famous Indian-American doctor, whose book *The Emperor of All Maladies* is considered as the most selling book in America as it is because he has given a thoughtful account of his experiences about the treatment of cancer patients. He honestly expresses his dilemma about his success and failures in treating his patients. Thus the narratives whether the sufferers, the doctors or the caregivers, they all have helped in demystifying and giving a voice to once, 'whispered about illness' (Mukherjee 14).

Why is it important to explore Cancer narratives or any other narrative of pain or illness for that matter? Life is complex, life is uncertain, and it is so for everyone. Diseases, especially lethal diseases often present paradoxical situations where the rate of uncertainty of life rises suddenly. Diagnosis of disease, especially at a grave stage e.g. fourth stage of cancer, poses a sudden threat to one's existence, the consciousness about the repercussions of disease poses a great challenge and the chemical drugs or medicines are not enough to cope up with the mental state of the sufferer.

Researchers have brought awareness and better understanding about various aspects of illness. Like Rosemary Chapman refuses to use the word, 'patient,' right from the beginning in her thesis on *Discursive Analysis of Cancer Narratives*, instead of the word patient she uses the word Person with Cancer (PWC) throughout her exploration on cancer narratives. Due to the conscious efforts by researchers, today people's perspective has changed and they look at the problem in an objective manner. Similarly, besides medical research, for resolving the problem of cancer, the faculty of humanities across the world need to investigate the problem through different perspectives. This should be done for upholding the dignity of life of PWC's.

Linguistic barriers and the deconstruction of language of cancer are recent areas of interest for scholars. The word Cancer has its origins in Greece. It was around 5th century BC that this term first came into use. Hippocrates called it, 'carcinoma and carcinoma to describe certain forms of tumors'(Huijbrechts 1). It came to be known as Cancer, 'because of the resemblance of the long, finger-like spreading projections from a cancer, shaped like a crab' (Huijbrechts 1). An uncontrolled spreading of cancer cells from all directions gave it the name after crab or cancer. In most of the cancer narratives and research works cancer is called as an enemy that needs to be defeated. Some of the psychosocial scientists like David J Hauser and Norbert Schwarz object to the use of military metaphors for describing cancer. Oncologist Dr. Edward C Halper raises an objection in his research paper titled, *Military Metaphors and the Consequences of the Language of Cancer*. He finds it odd to use the words like war, battling against cancer, survivor on the lines of Holocaust survivors, enemy, wage a war against cancer, hideous enemy for cancer etc.

Psycholinguists deconstruct the language in terms of its referential nature. It is very well known that the meaning of a word is arbitrary in nature. As Chomsky states, 'language is merely an abstract idealized system of categories and rules' (Chomsky 4). Words also carry social meaning. Words are loaded with cultural meaning also. How AIDS is perceived in certain cultures is different from how fever, cough, TB or any other dis-ease is perceived in the same cultures. The word menstruation scientifically means simply a monthly cycle while the same word is considered a taboo in some particular cultures. Similarly there are many cultural connotations of the word cancer. Even the PWC is expected to behave in a certain manner.

Cancer narratives basically talk about lived experiences and come up with the new meaning of existence. The characters' struggle against cancer helps them overcome the existential nature of themselves. The core narrative of existing cancer narratives most often begins with anxiety, desperation, loss of control and the disruption in daily routine of life. Unwelcoming bodily changes, cutting-off of breast, baldness due to chemotherapy, emotional turmoil, expensive medical treatment, relations with friends, their attitude, draining of finances, hospital environment forms the nucleus of cancer narratives. How do women handle baldness due to the impact of cancer? How they undergo chemotherapy and deal with loss of their beautiful locks acts as an eye opener for the scholars of literature (read life).

Some of the cancer narratives deal with facing the challenge of baldness. Edith Buenen's, *Nowhere Hair* is a moving account of a child's dilemma about the loss of her mother's hair. She is so innocent that she thinks her mother's hair must have been kept somewhere in the house. When she is unable to find it in any corner of the house she gets frustrated. Despite cancer the mother performs all her motherly duties. *Mirror Makeover* is an honest and starkly frank account of Regina E. Savage's innovative ways of dealing with the loss of her blonde locks. She makes the readers realize that, 'their self should not be defined by their looks rather their inner self is more beautiful and true' (Savage 1).

Catherine Lord also breaks gender signifiers like long hair through her confessional work, *The Summer of Her Baldness: A Cancer Improvisation*. Delese Wear observes, Lord refuses to wear a prosthesis because it feels like a lie more than

merely a cost. During the process of her chemo sessions she was left with no eyebrows, no eyelashes. She regrets that when it rains the water doesn't stay on her face because without any hair the water runs down straight into her eyes. She deals with the societal response about her bald head courageously.

As per the foci of the study, the first text that is taken for study is by John Green. Green is an American writer. He was born on 24th August 1977. The *The Fault in Our Stars* was listed as number one best seller by New York Times in 2012. It was also adapted as a film by same name and it was immensely liked by the public. Other popular novels by Green are *Looking for Alaska*, *Paper Towns* and *Turtles all the Way Down*. In the meanwhile he got a chance to work in a hospital for children suffering from cancer. While serving in the hospital he was so much influenced by their life that he resolved to write about their suffering. His novel *The Fault in our Stars* is inspired by the life of children suffering from cancer that he used to observe while working there as a chaplain. His books mostly surround around the lives of teenagers. He also won Michel L. Printz Award for his work in 2006 and later in 2009 also. His book *Paper Town* was awarded the Edgar award for Best Young Adult Novel. His recent novel *Turtles all the Way Down* was released in 2017 and again it was listed as the best seller by New York Times. His second novel *An Abundance of Katherines* (2006) was also well received. In fact his works are now popularly categorized as Green lit because of its themes, setting, crushes and tragic but mature endings. He is also a YouTube content creator as well as a Vlogger. He has also written fictional works in collaboration with other writers as well.

The second text that has been explored is written by Nicholas Sparks. He is also an American writer. Whether it is fictional narrative or non-fictional narrative on cancer it is the American authors who have taken the lead in giving voices to the cancer sufferers. They had been sensitive to the lives of people who are at the threshold of life and death. Nicholas Charles Sparks was born in Nebraska in America on 31st December 1965. He has published twenty novels and two non-fictional books. Due to the popularity of his novels they were adapted into films and the films also did multi-billion dollar business. At one point of time in his life he was bored to the bones when his mother suggested to him that instead of reading he should now write. That dialogue became a turning point in his life. In 1993 he wrote the novel *The Notebook* in 1996, he was sponsored by Theresa and this novel

became the New York Times best seller in the same year. Before this huge success he had also co-authored a book entitled *Wokini: A Lakota Journey to Happiness and Self Understanding*, it was about spirituality. After the success of *The Notebook* he never looked back. With each published novel he reached the ladders of so-called material success. Not only this, he got offers for film adaptation of his subsequent novels also. The text that has been selected for present study is *A Walk to Remember*, it is inspired by the life of his younger sister Miss Danielle Dana Sparks. The character Jamie Sullvian is largely based on her life. Danielle Sparks died of brain tumor at the age of 33. She loved a guy and he married her despite knowing about her condition before her death.

The third text for study is *Before I Die* by Jenny Downham. The book was shortlisted for the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize in 2007. In 2008 it won the Branford Boase Award. In 2010 she published her second novel titled *You Against Me*. This novel explores family relations, empathy, love and the dilemma of making choices. Her third novel was *Unbecoming* and it was published in 2015. The narrative explores the life of women belonging to three generations and their lives. Her last novel was published in 2019 by the title, *Furious Thing* it was shortlisted for Costa Book Awards. Her novels are considered to be carrying weighty themes but she believes that she writes about difficult conditions in order to live the best of times within the stipulated time whether the end time is known to you or not. She doesn't write novels for teaching morality but in a way it comes out to be educational in nature.

Another text that is based on the story of a twenty nine year old woman suffering from Cancer is written by Elizabeth Hein. Her novel *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower* is based on the life of Lara Blaine who is diagnosed with cancer. Elizabeth Hein was born in Madrid, Spain but later she settled with her parents in Massachusetts. Presently she lives in Carolina with her husband and children. Her stories are mainly women centric and their struggle against a hostile society that has different parameters for judging this gender. Her novels also depict the strong bond among women and how they help out each other in times of crisis. Her second novel *Overlook* is also a narrative of a strong woman. Subsequently her third novel *Escape Plan* is also about strong sisterhood and an attempt to disavow terrible marriages. Her novels are about the psychological struggles of women. They come out as

winner rather than loser even in odd circumstances. The writer's objective can be deciphered through different approaches. Every text is woven around certain recurring images and these forms help in deciphering the underlying meaning in the text. Not enough research has been done on language and literature on narratives of cancer, especially fictional narratives.

In John Green's novel *The Fault in Our Stars*, Hazel Grace, Augustus Waters, and Isaac fight. The passage in which Cassius reminds Brutus about the importance of individual work as well as the role played by our stars or our fate served as the source of Green's book's title. The story's characters discover, however, that cancer is not their fault, that they cannot be held responsible for it, and that it is only brought on by the aberrant proliferation of particular cells, which will progressively consume their organs over time. As a result, the story's meaning is disproved. Even the outcome of the carcinomas is unknown, whether they stop or restart. Augustus Waters, a tall, good-looking young man of seventeen, lost the lower leg to cancer and uses a prosthetic limb to help him walk. They both connect at a cancer support group, which gives those affected emotional and psychological assistance as they struggle about the uncertainty of their life, and they don't want to leave any voids or cause the other to feel like they have lost their beloved. As a result, they started falling for each other right away. They acknowledge that things in the world don't work like magic machines that grant desires.

The second text *A Walk to Remember* is another interesting text in which largely it is the cancer patient Jamie Sullivan, a girl who always carries the Bible in her hand changes, the life of the protagonist Landon. Again this a tragic and romantic love story of teenagers by Nicholas Sparks and it reveals how the characters metamorphose into mature beings in the face of loss, death and dying. Landon is shown as a reckless guy and Jamie is shown as a studious, religious and always a charitable person. She either looks after her widowed father or helps the children at the local orphanage. Everybody in the school admires Jammie but no boy wants to take her on a date. In fact most of the boys find her very boring and they are sure that she will join some nunnery after completing her studies. Later on such circumstances develop in the narrative that Landon has to take Jammie on a date and not only this he has to take part in a drama for Christmas also. It is then he comes to know about the shy and mysterious Jammie closely. The more he knows her, the more he is attracted

towards her. The revelation of cancer devastates Landon but he still decides to marry her.

The third text again is a story of a teenage girl named Tessa. She is only sixteen and she suffers from Leukemia. She accepts that she is going to die thus she prepares a wish list. It involves some weird experiences that are common among teenagers in the west. Before dying she wants to live the life of a typical rebellious teenager. During the course of her wish fulfilling drive she come to the terms with reality and a new understanding of the self. Almost all the narratives astonishingly carry the act of writing a plan for one's own funeral, the place of funeral, the place for burial and even eulogies also.

The fourth text *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower* is an interesting but sad journey of two women who happen to become friends in their fight against cancer. Lara Blaine and Jane become friends when they visit a hospital for a routine examination. Lara is a single woman; she looks like any other healthy woman of twenty nine years of age. But she comes to know that she suffers from cervix cancer. Since she has a job and an imposing boss, she cannot reveal her condition in her office because she will be fired from the job. Lara's condition makes her realize that she can't take the world head on. She'll have to make compromises and reconcile her past relations with her mother, father, friends and relatives.

The fifth text is *A Rather Unusual Romance*, it is rather unusual because a woman who is divorced and has to look after her children all alone along with battling with cancer is rather unusual to fall in love. While visiting the hospital for treatment she encounters Alan who is suffering from cancer too. Both of them become a great support to each other. The question of recurrence of cancer cells hovers around them constantly till the day when they decide that they need to live their lives a day at a time and not to worry about the future.

Liminality and its Theoretical Implication

The most remarkable work that is done in the field of Liminality is by Victor Turner (1920-1984). He was born in Scotland, he lived there for a few years and later on went to England for higher studies. Turner was the first one who freed the

concept of liminality from its anthropological implications as he suggested that the liminal could take place at various moments and in various situations in the (post)modern world. He referred to the concept of liminality to the fluid nature of modern context of modern societies and its way of life. He described that the altering structure of the middle stage in the 'rites of passage' that creates disequilibrium in the normality of life leading to suspended emotional variations in the state of mind of a person in the process of transition. Turner transpires as it is a state where, 'the past has lost its grip and the future has not yet taken definite shape' (133). And this situation of neither here nor there gives rise to a state of limbo where the transition takes place. Turner elucidates the change in the behavioral patterns of a person while interacting with this in-between institution in his work, *The Uses and Meanings of Liminality* (2009).

Arnold Van Gennep, 'one of the most under-rated social scientists-ever' (3), introduced the concept of 'liminality' to describe threefold process of transitivity in the context of rites in small-scale societies. A distinguished German born French ethnographer and folklorist, Gennep is best known for his studies of the rites of passage of various cultures. Due to his incredible language skills (he could speak eighteen different languages), he started his career as a diplomat. With the purpose of personal research, Gennep left this job and started teaching ethnology at the University of Neuchâtel in Switzerland. He taught there from 1912 to 1915. After being expelled from the University for his Criticism of Swiss pro-German politics during World War 1, he started writing articles and periodic reports. As Gennep's basic interest was in ethnology and folklore, he began the intensive study of French folklore in 1920. But his study of totemism in early societies brought him into conflict with the views of his contemporary Emile Durkheim that ran into a debate over totemism, taboo, and the classification of narratives. Another reason for their dispute was that Van Gennep was a fierce critic of Durkheim. In spite of this he published numerous books and articles covering various topics in the area of ethnography and folklore and lectured in different universities around the world.

Van Gennep's main contribution is of 'rites of passage' highlighted in *The Rites of Passage* (1960) first published in French as *Les rites de passage* in 1909. He coined 'Rites of passage' to describe rituals of life and 'ceremonial sequence', in this passage that accompanies the way from one 'world' to another. He divided these

sequences into rites de separation, rites de marge and rites d'agre'gation (Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* vii). Van Gennep conceptualized the term 'liminal' which means 'threshold' (1960). He employed 'Liminality' to describe the events that accompany shifts in social status. It describes the experience of an in-between position, limbo or suspension, between twostates, places, or things.

In his work Gennep provided both the theoretical and practical example of liminality in the process of seasonal transformations and changes in individual lifestyle. According to him rite of passage is a necessary feature of any type of transition and it represents the dichotomy which is present between the 'fixed' and 'transitory' structures (11). He calls these as pre-liminal, liminal and post- liminal phases. In the first phase of separation known as the pre-liminal phase an individual detaches himself from the fixed social or cultural structure. In this process he breaks the previous practices and routines. The liminal phase or 'limbo' is a phase where his identity becomes fluid and obscure and he is on the threshold of encounter with a new culture. Here the passenger is temporarily stripped of group privileges and attributes. Third phase of incorporation is the post liminal phase where the passenger assumes a new identity consummated by the rituals of new culture or re-emerges into the same social structure with enhanced status or functions.

Transition, transformation and the state in- between form the core of liminality. In narratives, especially those narratives where the characters have to face threats to their lives, they experience a transformation from their original condition both physically and mentally. Acute illnesses, like cancer, takes the characters to the edge of death and how they go through the different phases of separation to margins to reunification in terms of their state of mind is extremely important to study and it could be of great help in bringing out a deep understanding of cancer narratives.

Scope of Research

The concept of Liminality has its origin in anthropology and is applied to other disciplines as well to understand the state of mind of the characters undergoing various liminal positions in life. It will give an insight about the pain, anxiety and fear that they have to experience. How the cancer sufferers behave during the Liminal phase shall be studied in the selected five texts? Since the fictional cancer narratives have not been studied through the lens of liminality, the present study shall add new knowledge to the existing body of research where each text emerges as a teacher. Fictional stories on cancer are educative in nature. Writing, studying and researching cancer narratives is about respecting the fight of real life individuals who are facing cancer and honoring their courage for coming out of their shells during the time of crisis.

Cancer is a social problem also. Each study on cancer narratives breaks the stigma around this problem. It gives voice to persons affected by cancer. This will be a small step towards that. Research on cancer narratives offers a greater outreach of the text to the general public thereby increasing awareness about the coping mechanisms of Cancer: be it emotional, or for fundraising, mainstream treatments, therapies for calming down the patients agony etc. Largely, research on cancer narratives are done in America and Europe is next in number of researches. However in India, research on these narratives is at a nascent stage. So it is imperative to do research in this area.

According to the reports of National Cancer Registry Program, India 2022, 'there are 14,61,427 reported cases of cancer. Nearly 80,000 new cases of cancer are reported every year in India' (Krishnan 1). This is an alarming rate. Sushmi Dey of Times of India has stated that Cancer cases are on the rise by over 300% a year in our country (TOI, Nov3, 2019). Can any country afford to lose such a large number of precious lives? The present study shall add to the existing body of literature on cancer stories. Literature is a space that gives a platform to share experiences. Cancer narratives share real life experiences which

are beneficial for the readers, health care providers, doctors, families, and friends of affected persons. Breaking the myths around cancer is also necessary. As per policy matters, narratives offer a glimpse to how the cancer sufferers have to actually fight many other battles along with cancer like hospital environment, doctor's indifference, lack of communication between the doctor and the patient, heavy bills, lack of palliative care etc. the research outcome shall also come up with suggestions for better health care providing policies.

Various research studies on cancer narratives have added new dimension to the body of research in this area like it is interesting to examine the authorial voice and the personal experiences and motivations of authors who have written fictional cancer novels. Understanding their backgrounds and motivations sheds light on why they chose to tackle this topic and how their personal experiences have influenced their narratives. Similarly surveys and responses conducted for finding out reader response interviews with readers has helped in gauging their emotional and cognitive responses to fictional cancer novels. The analysis of reader feedback provides valuable data on the novels' effectiveness in achieving their intended impact. Likewise, the exploration of the narrative techniques employed in fictional cancer novels, such as unreliable narration, shifting perspectives, or non-linear storytelling has given an interesting insight.

Linguistic and cultural analysis also helps in investigating how cancer is represented and discussed linguistically in fictional narratives across different cultures and languages. The cross-cultural analysis highlights variations in terminology and cultural nuances. Intersectional and cross cultural studies has brought out how the inter play of society and culture impacts a cancer sufferer. The studies have also shown race, gender, sexuality, and other aspects of identity intersect with the experience of cancer and its representation. Literature on cancer has impacted the medical education in the West. Many researchers are exploring how fictional cancer novels contribute to the intersection of literature, medicine, and ethics, and their role in shaping healthcare practices and policies. Researches on fictional cancer novels and their adaptation into other media forms, such as

films, television series, or stage productions are also in vogue. the studies are ongoing on finding the influence of these adaptations on public perception and awareness of cancer-related issues. Focus also laid on the narratives that highlight the experiences of cancer survivors. Researches in the portrayal of life after cancer treatment and the issues of resilience, post-traumatic growth, and survivor identity in fictional narratives is also important for bringing an attitudinal change. While portraying a real life threatening disease the responsibility of the author increases because they need to portray the medical condition accurately. One of the author under study, Elizabeth Hein has added an epilogue to justify the deliberate attempt to not mention the details of surgical treatments of cervical cancer because it might horrify the readers and the sufferers although she herself had cervical cancer at one point of time in her life. So the authors have to shoulder a great deal of responsibility for accurately representing medical and emotional aspects of cancer. So wide angle of researches on cancer narratives provides a solid foundation for an in-depth and comprehensive exploration. The researches on multifaceted aspects of fictional cancer novels and their societal implications are conspicuous and holds lot of importance in the present context where health and well-being is now taking a prime position.

Illness narratives are more relevant in the post-pandemic era because along with mysterious diseases comes a great fear of that disease. In chronic and unknown kinds of illnesses besides medicine, how a person responds to that disease also matters. Lethal diseases not only bring discomfort to the body but it also brings mental stress, fear, hopelessness and trauma. The study of Illness narratives have brought valuable changes in the policies related to palliative care. In the West, the hospital ambience, wall color, paintings on the hospital wall etc are also taken care of so that the cancer sufferer at least gets some sort of relief from the grief and anxiety due to cancer.

Research studies on cancer novels, although distinct from scientific cancer research, also plays a crucial role in formulating better health policies by governments, although indirectly. Cancer novels portray the emotional and

personal aspects of living with cancer. By depicting the struggles, triumphs, and challenges faced by cancer patients and their families, these novels raise awareness and foster empathy in the general population. Governments can leverage this increased awareness to support public health campaigns and policies aimed at cancer prevention and early detection. Cancer narratives humanize the issue and drive home the importance of health policies related to cancer. Many cancer novels are written by cancer survivors and individuals deeply affected by the disease. These authors become advocates for cancer research and patient support. Their novels serve as powerful tools to mobilize fundraising efforts for cancer research and support services.

Governments work in partnership with these advocates and organizations to allocate resources and funding to cancer-related initiatives more effectively. Research studies on cancer narratives provide insights into the human experience of cancer, shedding light on the emotional, psychological, and social dimensions of the disease. These narratives influence policymakers by highlighting gaps in healthcare services, psychosocial support and financial assistance for cancer patients. Governments can use these narratives to inform and shape policies that address the holistic needs of cancer patients, beyond just medical treatment. Cancer novels also become part of the cultural fabric, sparking discussions and influencing societal attitudes toward cancer. Governments can tap into this cultural impact by using these narratives to promote health literacy and encourage individuals to seek regular screenings and adopt healthier lifestyles. This can indirectly reduce the burden of cancer on healthcare systems.

Bestselling cancer novels attract substantial attention and revenue. Some authors choose to donate a portion of their proceeds to cancer research organizations. Like John Green and Nicholas Sparks have done after their novels and the movies based on their novels earned huge sum of money. Governments can recognize and incentivize such philanthropic efforts by offering tax incentives or grants to authors who contribute to cancer research. This can bolster research funding. While cancer novels may not directly provide scientific insights or data,

they have the potential to shape the socio-cultural landscape surrounding cancer. Governments can harness the power of these narratives to support and reinforce their health policies related to cancer prevention, treatment, patient support, and research funding. By working in collaboration with authors, advocates, and organizations in the literary world, governments can create a more comprehensive and empathetic approach to addressing the challenges of cancer within their populations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Health is an important issue which cannot be left to the doctors alone. Healing of the body and mind is now emerging as an important field. Commendable work has been done in the field of exploring Cancer Narratives with an objective of providing better care for patients (read PWC) and it has helped in formulating friendly policies for quality human life. It has also motivated people to constitute better support groups. Cancer as a disease is the domain of the medical field but as stated earlier also, health is an important issue and it cannot be left to the doctors alone. Over the year's researchers have shown that only drugs, surgical and chemical therapies are not enough for dealing with this problem. Healing is an art and only technology is not sufficient to deal with the human side of an individual problem. Thus social scientists, doctors and many scholars with missionary attitude came forward and produced remarkable researches in this field.

Stammers, Trevor (2013) lays emphasis on the importance of studying Green's novel because he believes that his 30 years of clinical research is equivalent to reading *The Fault in Our Stars*. He establishes the fact that the approach of humanities is deeper than the objective study of science in the case of understanding human beings' dilemma under life threatening circumstances. The withdrawal, the hovering of death, the inadequacies of medical professionals acts as a lesson for the healthcare providers according to Trevor Stammers.

Astria, Nathania & Dono Sunardi (2016) The researchers reveal through their study the role of self-defense mechanisms in coping with Cancer as adopted by Hazel Grace in Green's novel. In their study they apply the 14 self-defense mechanism as given by Berger in 2004. It is a systematic study of Hazel's behavior. The fourteen self defense mechanisms that are explored are: selective perception, selective memory, denial, avoidance, displacement, projection, regression, ambivalence, fixation, identification, rationalization, reaction formation, repression and suppression.

Deeb, Gehan M.A. (2016) The author studied the novel from the point of view of limited time and how that limited time affects the characters of the novel *The Fault in Our Stars*. He applied Social Exchange Theory to study the novel. According to the theory the rewards, costs, outcomes and comparison level defines our interpersonal relations. In the novel the outcome of Hazel and Augustus' relationship is rewarding and complementing.

Belchar, Imogen (2013) The researcher studies cancer narratives and the novel *The Fault in Our Stars* through the lens of the theory of Abjection as proposed by Julia Kristeva. In her work *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1980) she says that, 'abjection is a state of being cast off and separated from norms and rules especially on a scale of society and mortality' (Harrington 1). Imogen finds out that the sick bodies in the novels under study understand the abjection of the bodies. She comes out with the conclusion that the sick bodies become symbolic of death and illness.

Fithroni, Nurhuda (2017) The researcher has analyzed the novel by applying the social exchange theory as proposed by J W Thibaut and H H Kelley. The scholar explores the concept of interpersonal relationship in the development of Hazel Grace and Augustus Waters in *The Fault in Our Stars*.

Islia, S. M (2017) The research has been done on the novel *A Walk to Remember* in terms of the behavior, perception and cognition of the character Landon Carter. How he is affected by the illness of his beloved Jammie Sullivan is well explored in this research work. Jammie's untimely death due to cancer brings a great change in

Landon's persona.

Klaiqi, Arbresha (2017) The researcher has studied the evolution of stylistics the novels of Nicholas Sparks. The study is based on the theory of stylistics as given by Crystal and Davy. All the novels have been studied from the linguistics perspective.

Spanich, Ryan The researcher has studied the novel from the theoretical perspective of Victor Shklovsky & Wolfgang Iser. This study has been done from the point of view of American Romantic Literature.

Winslow, Michelle. (2005) It is a comprehensive study on Cancer stories done by Michelle Winslow, Jane Seymour and David Clerk from University of Sheffield, UK. This study explored the historical journey of Cancer narratives. According to the study, the first personal account of Cancer narrative was published in 1945. Their research was based on an eclectic approach. They considered those stories which were written in first person narrative. The time scale chosen was from 1945 to 2003. They selected sixty seven published Cancer narratives. According to the study, the publication of Cancer narratives increased in the 1960's. In 1990's the publication started appearing on the internet and by 2000 the publication of Cancer narratives increased manifolds. The study also considered individual voices as well as biographical and socio-cultural dimensions of the texts. The study also dealt with the exploration of the objective of the patients or writers behind writing about Cancer. It was found that it was done due to an upsurge of desire to write about it. It was also done to provide an indirect extended support for others who may be going through the same pain. Some patients (PWC's) wrote with the purpose of breaking the stigma around it. Besides, writing also offered them that therapeutic effect normally the medicines lack.

Narrative also assures the author that his/her pain will be remembered. So it makes them claim immortality like other art forms does to artists. At least through narratives silent pain is given a voice through printed medium, these days even digital medium is used through blogs. The study reveals that many patient-authors claimed that

the biomedical sciences should not generalize the patients' experience because Cancer does not only affect the body but the entire individual: men, women, children, old, young have to face multiple other problems other than the body only.

Cancer occupies personal space. How can this disease be explained to a child inflicted with Cancer? How can one explain why the child is going through the painful procedure? Why is the child unable to go to school like the other normal children? Cancer gives more psychological pain to the parents of the children with cancer. The study explored the narrative in, '*Cancer in Young Adults: Through Parents Eyes*'. It is a collection of narratives from the experience of parents who lost their child due to Cancer. After the publication of this book, the parents felt that they had given some kind of tribute to their child through writing about them (Griyner A.). The outcome of the study revealed that initially the pain narratives had no impact in the medical circle but with the growing number of pain narratives, the physicians had to accept the 'concept of total pain'(29). Not only they accepted the patient's fear, anxiety but also accepted the physical, cultural, emotional and spiritual dimensions of painful experience. The rise in public cancer narratives has given rise to more patient autonomy in the whole process of cancer treatment.

Chapman, Rosemary (2010) It is one of the earliest research works in which the researcher conducted the Conversational interview and analyzed it under discourse analysis. The scholar interviewed 17 people with Cancer and analyzed them on the basis of oral narrativity. Initially it was a topic that was attached with stigma and taboo in the society. Rosemary claims that the narrative themes pertaining to diagnosis, treatment, doctors and the fighting spirit of the persons with cancer (PWC) should be studied from diverse angles so that as a civilized society we can develop a sensible support system for PWC. Rosemary is the first scholar to reject the use of the word patient, she prefers to PWC. The study suggests that an increased awareness of the psychological problems and communicative difficulties people with cancer write about in their accounts can add to the better understanding of what and how people with cancer deal with these additional problems in their day to day life. It is a comprehensive study about the behavior; expected behavior of PWC's by the society and by the doctors and the kind of

language used during the discourse that is used while dealing with PWC's. The study is a critique of cancer discourse.

Juth, Vanessa (2016) Vanessa has focused on adolescent Cancer patients. She found out that the stage of life also matters a lot when a person is afflicted with Cancer. Young boys and girls have hundreds of dreams and aspirations. This is the time when they are at cross- road of identity formation. According to Vanessa Juth, an adolescent's illness experience is different from a person who is at a mature stage of life. This is also a time when a young adolescent prepares for his/her future, his career, new relationships etc. Sudden disruption in their day to day life creates big emotional upheaval in their lives. It's a good thing that researchers have shown that they have better 'survival rates up to 80%' (235). But the sudden appearance of this disease causes serious developmental issues. Their social activities are affected. Since they have to face natural transitions of life like puberty, it becomes difficult for them to cope with the changes. Then academics, physical growth and sexual relationships also get affected. Gender also differentiates the painful experiences that a male and female adolescent go through. Male adolescent patients have concerns about their sexual life while female adolescents worry about their body image. Thus the study reveals that social ecology or intra and interpersonal contacts affect the life of an adolescent Cancer patient. The study raises awareness and demand for specialized adolescent cancer care.

Huijbrechts, Olga (2016) Olga has studied the cancer narratives from an untouched area that is the metaphorical analysis of illness that too with gender perspective. She argues that cancer being an uncontrollable outgrowth of bad cells is looked upon as an enemy that the doctors are still fighting with. The menace of cancer has not been resolved completely like some other diseases, TB, Polio, Diphtheria, Cholera etc. At one point of time these diseases were also considered dangerous because of lack of sure shot cure. Olga comes out with the findings that the metaphorical use of the words like War and Journey in a way empowers the patients in their fight against cancer. She has used Metaphor Indication Procedure and Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The result of the study reveal that the use of metaphor can be empowering and the sex of the patient also matters in the course of illness. The

experiences are different according to the gender of the person. Olga has analyzed 45 metaphors that were used in cancer narratives. She had studied ten narratives of male and 10 narratives of female cancer patients. This study acts as an eye opener.

Dohan, Daniel, et.al (2016)The study considers that besides medical evidence policy makers should consider the interpretative studies on Cancer narratives. The researchers also promote integration of qualitative research methods on narratives and health sciences. They had used ethnographic interviews and observation of a hundred patients with advanced stage of cancer. The researchers are also trying to develop integrated quantitative and qualitative tools for further studies. They have named the tool as ethnographic array. They recommended the purpose of making future health policy decisions. The study also recommends the application of different standards of qualitative analysis on single case, exploratory studies and for multi case comparative studies. Health policy makers also require rich data for funding research on health.

Begley, Amanda (2019) This was an exploratory study done with the objective of exploring Literary Cancer stories in order to understand the experience of patients. The sample was taken from four patients with an advanced stage of brain cancer and people who were crucial in their health care. The validity of the cancer patient's stories was discussed with 70 different participants, in a workshop. The outcome of the research was that the accountability of the stories can be observed on the six parameters, the language, and the time, the context of the life, identity, emotional state and rigor. The researchers recommended comparative study of different points of views. They also recommended that healthcare providers should consider these studies for designing new systems.

Major Researches after 2019

Yang, Yan et al. (2020) In a research study on 'The experience of patients with cancer on narrative practice: A systematic review and meta-synthesis' the team studied the relation between narrative practice and psychological concerns. It was an attempt to study the impact of narrativity on cancer patients. The study was based on nine databases out of which six were English databases and three Chinese databases available up to 2018.

They found out that narration helps in bridging the gap between the patient and the clinician, besides it had healing effect and helped in forming social bonding. Narrative practice helps in self reflection and self realization. Overall the conclusion of the study was that narrative practice helps in humanizing palliative care in clinical settings.

Raul, Murillo et al. (2021) The team of researchers found out that Covid-19 pandemic has affected the research in cancer in Colombia. They have explored the effect of the pandemic on funding, conduct and outcome of researches in cancer studies. Their study is based on researches done on the databases and documents provided by their national government. They observed that the funds were diverted to studies in prevention of Covid 19. Similarly the government also reduced the budget for cancer research.

Research Gap

On the basis of the above research review it is evident that the select fictional cancer narratives by John Green, Nicholas Sparks, Jenny Downham, Elizabeth Hein and Stevie Turner have not been studied through the perspective of liminality. The above-mentioned thesis, dissertation, research articles and papers are based on different theories but none of the study has been conducted based on the theory of liminality. Cancer narratives have been largely studied through psychological, sociological or linguistic perspectives. Most of the studies are available on real life stories or case studies.

Thus it was found that the application of Victor Turner's Theory of Liminality has not been applied on the select texts of Cancer narratives by John Green, Nicholas Sparks, Jenny Downham, Elizabeth and Stevie Turner. The liminal or transitional phase that is faced by cancer affected characters in the select novels has not been studied so far. Thus the present study is novel, innovative and relevant from a new perspective.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the present research are as follows:-

- To trace the historical roots of the theoretical perspectives
- To analyze and apply Victor Turner's theory of Liminality
- To study the history of illness narratives
- To explore the state of bewilderment and situational complexities of the major characters and of literary discourse

Proposed Methodology

The current research work has been studied through qualitative method. The most suitable methodology for the present study of the cancer narratives was found to be content analysis of the selected texts. The selected cancer narratives have been thoroughly studied keeping the objectives in mind. The texts have been analyzed, interpreted and evaluated by applying the concept of liminality given by Victor Turner. The three main phases of Liminality have been traced in the novels. Besides, the major concepts like Liminal, liminoid, limivoid, threshold, anti-structure, communitas, and Liminal hotspots are also traced in the selected texts. For structural framework MLA 9th Edition Handbook has been observed.

CHAPTER SCHEME/ DESIGN OF RESEARCH

Chapter I: Making of the Writers: Life Span and Contributions

Chapter II: Liminality: Historical Roots and Theoretical Framework

Chapter III: Life Expectancies and Revelations: A Close Analysis of the Selected Novels.

Chapter IV: Bewilderment and Liminality: An Exposition of the Indecisive Self

Chapter V: Beyond the Threshold: Transformation of the Inner Self

Conclusion

Bibliography

CHAPTER I

MAKING OF THE WRITERS: LIFE SPAN AND CONTRIBUTIONS

All the five writers selected for the study are world renowned writers. As introduced earlier, the five writers are John Green, Nicholas Sparks, Jenny Downham, Elizabeth Hein and Stevie Turner. The cancer narratives that depict the life of cancer sufferers are *The Fault in Our Stars* (John Green), *A Walk to Remember* (Nicholas Sparks), *Before I Die* (Jenny Downham) and *A Rather Unusual Romance* (Stevie Turner). The common feature among all of them is that all of them have portrayed the life of cancer patients very realistically. Hence, the cancer narratives produced by them are selected for the present study.

All the selected novels based on cancer offer diverse angles of cancer suffering as the texts reveal the suffering of different age groups. In the first novel mentioned above, the characters caught the disease when they just stepped into teenage while in the second novel the protagonist is a high school girl, in the third novel the protagonist becomes a rebellious teenager whereas the fourth novel portrays the struggle of a twenty nine year old single woman and the fifth novel shows how the two cancer sufferers aged forty two and fifty years, deal with it. All the novels are highly meaningful and educative.

All the five authors have empowered the readers with their vibrant portrayal of characters from different walks of life. The texts are full of emotional depth, introspective narration and have the ability to attract the attention of the readers. The shared space that the texts offer among the varied readers, takes birth in the sacred spaces of mind of the author, which in turn is the images, experiences and the reflections that the author receives from his surroundings. The other texts are also equally important to understand the chain of thought, the writing style, the choice of words, the selection of characters and the settings chosen by the authors. It enhances better understanding of both the author and the selected texts. It also helps in finding out the differences and similarities among the five writers.

John Green

John Green is one of the most popular author. His novel *The Fault in Our Stars* broke many records of popularity. *The Fault in Our Stars* was adapted into Hindi movie titled *Dil Bechara*. John Green has become so popular that his genre of work is called Greenlit. His actual name is John Michael Green. He was born on 24th August 1977 in Indianapolis, United States of America. His parents are Sydney Green and Mike Green. He also spent his childhood in other states of America viz. Michigan, Birmingham, Alabama and Orlando. For schooling, he was sent to different schools like Glenridge Middle School and Lake Highland Preparatory School. For graduation he went to Indian Springs School in Alabama. He completed his formal studies in 1995. Later on his interest arose in higher studies and successfully completed a degree in English and Religious Studies. His school, childhood experiences, his classmates and his rivals of school days do appear intermittently in his novels.

His popular novels are, *Looking for Alaska* (2005), *An Abundance of Katherine* (2006), *Let it Snow: Three Holiday Romances* (Co-Authored in 2008), *Paper Towns* (2008), *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* (Co-authored with David Levithan (2010), *The Fault in Our Stars* (2012), *Turtles All the Way Down*(2017). His first novel *Looking for Alaska* won the Michael L. Printz award. It encouraged him a lot. Not only this, the novel was adjudged as one of the best books for teenagers by the American Library Association.

His fourth novel *The Fault in Our Stars* is immensely popular. This novel was listed as number one best seller by New York Times in 2012. It was also adapted as a film by the same name and it was immensely liked by the public. Time Magazine gave him place in the list of 100 Most Influential People in the world. After completion of studies, he wanted to become a priest but when he worked in a hospital for children for a brief period and when he observed their life closely, he changed his decision. His novel *The Fault in our Stars* is inspired by the life children suffering from cancer that he used to observe while working there as a chaplain. His novels are mostly focused on the lives of American teenagers. Green's book *Paper Town* was awarded the Edgar award for Best Young Adult Novel. His recent novel *Turtles all the Way Down* was released in 2017 and again it was listed as the best seller by New York Times. His second

novel *An Abundance of Katherines* (2006) was also well received. His works are popularly categorized as Green lit because of its themes, setting, crushes and tragic but mature endings.

Besides novels he has also written short stories, *The Approximate Cost of loving Caroline* (2006), *The Great American Morp* (2007), *Freak the Geek* (2009), *Reasons* (2011), *Double on Call and Other Short Stories* (2012). He also ventured into writing experimental novels, like *Thisisnottom*(2009), it's a novel that is meant to be deciphered through riddles. In 2010 also he came up with a different concept of story titled as *Zombicorns*. It was released online for the readers of Creative Commons. Since the zombie novella became a super hit idea he produced its sequel titled *The War for Bank Island* (2012). This time again the novella was not released in the traditional mode in fact it was sent to people through email.

Michael Howeller calls him the voice of the teenagers, he says, 'I think John hears the voices of teenagers. He acknowledges the intelligence and vulnerability that stem from those beautiful years when we are, for the first time, discovering the world and ourselves outside of our familial stories. But he doesn't just listen to young adults. He treats every human he meets as their own planet, rather than simply one of his moons' (Howeller 1). Green looks at the common masses with love, curiosity, a lot of compassion, dignity and enthusiasm. His compassion and exploration of the mind of the youth has made him immensely popular among the youth. He is an iconoclast for the American youth. The rage for John Green is such that whenever he goes for a book launch he is thronged by thousands of youth. The young teenagers almost scream the way they do to a football giant or a BTS like singers. Teenagers are almost smitten by him. Critics are also astonished at his immense success and the craze for his books.

Similarly, it is also equally surprising for the critics that *The Fault in Our Stars* is a novel about the life of two teenagers afflicted by a lethal disease, yet it was able to generate a hysterical popularity of Green among the youth. The story is not about sex yet

it sells and the ending is also tragic and not very heroic but the response is incomparable. So it is not non-sense romance but a philosophical romance that attracts the young readers across the globe. The lead characters are also not so romantic looking. Hazel always carries a nose tube for oxygen supply while Augustus Waters has one artificial leg. Normally when a movie is made on the basis of a novel, the public largely gets smitten by the actors but in John Green's case it was John for whom the public was crazy. He is designated as, 'the teen whisperer' (1) by Margret Talbot.

If Green has earned bouquets he has his share of brickbats also because some of the serious literature lovers are not that much happy with the concoction that is offered by the authors like Green and Nicholas Sparks. Aja Romano rigidly wants to keep both the writers into the Young Adult Fiction category. She says, 'Green has earned his accolades and awards. He's worked tirelessly to gain a following and fan base. But the fact that we as a reading and book culture—hell I'd even go further to say those who are casual readers—continue to uphold him as some Savior of YA and the success toward which to aspire is amazingly problematic. Because it follows the same problematic gender norms that have plagued us since forever. The cis-gendered white male is the standard for best' (Romano 2). It is true to a great extent because largely his fan following is that of teenaged females who are more inclined to emotional literature. To a great extent the cultural influence that his novels have created has also forced other new authors to divert towards the Young Adult fiction genre.

Green is not only into writing but also, he is a tech savvy YouTube enthusiast. He believes in making the best use of technology. Hence, he started blogging through Vlog brothers in 2007. The idea sparked from the incident when John Green and his brother Hank Green decided to exchange their ideas through video blogs rather than through written text blogs. They followed it for about a year. This project was so successful that by the end of the year they found that they had developed a huge fan base. They released all the videos on YouTube Channel and it further broadened their fan base. Realizing the demand for their video blogs they continued it. This experiment also motivated them to launch new online projects, like Vid Con and Crash Course Channels.

It looks that whatever Green does it results in a huge fan following. His works whether online or offline have given him a cult-like status. The 'Crash Course channel' was meant for educating young students. Initially it started with a few courses but as the popularity rose they kept on adding new courses. As it reached the pinnacle of its popularity they had to create a separate channel for kids, named as Crash Course Kids. Realizing the importance of the rising online video community, the Green brothers made the best use of Vid Con by bringing together the scattered online video community, at one common platform. Owing to his popularity and cult like status he opened a project for reaching out to YouTube users named as P4A i.e., Project For Awesome. It's a project primarily meant for charity purposes. As a true creative genius, Green also became the face of YouTube for interesting videos on one theme or concept at a time. This also became popular among youngsters.

Sensing the power of online media John Green also introduced Podcast, a weekly online series in which the Green brothers listened to the problems of the audience and gave away advice. Adding another feather to his cap Green also launched *The Anthropocene Review* in the year 2015, again a podcast program meant for bringing awareness about the unnecessary intervention of human beings into the natural ecosystem. Besides all this, his love for books compelled him to launch Life's Library Book Club on Discord. Discord is a new software developed in America. It is in a way a modified alternative to WhatsApp. In this platform, the specified book club selects a book every six weeks and then a threadbare discussion goes on about that book.

John Green's novels are categorized as Young Adult Fiction. Most of his narratives surround teenagers at the threshold of adulthood. This transition often encompasses a tragic twist in the story and the tragic twist often brings a mature understanding of life. Like in his first novel, *Looking for Alaska*, a teen romantic fiction, the protagonist Miles Halter lives a life free of any care. He believes, 'Teenagers think they are invincible' (*Looking for Alaska* 262). After meeting Alaska, a young girl, he feels his life will be spent in happily ever after mode but suddenly the tragic death of Alaska leaves him devastated. After going through depression, due to the loss of his beloved, he tries to overcome his grief by acknowledging the fact that, 'We are all

going Alaska the girl, and Alaska the place, because nothing can last, not even the earth itself' (LFA 233). This philosophical understanding in teenagers also offers; education for life for teen readers as well. The theme of momentary nature of life resonates in all his novels. In this novel also, Miles consoles himself, 'Someday no one will remember that she ever existed, I wrote in my notebook, and then or that I did'(LFA 233). The protagonist Miles, here is attending a Religion Class. It is pertinent to note that John Green has also done his Majors in English and Religion Studies. The setting for his first novel is inspired by his schooling days in Indian Springs School, Alabama. Green bagged an award from Michel L Printz for his first novel.

His second novel, *An Abundance of Katherines* (2006) is equally much sought after. It is again a teen love story with an educative ending. Colin Singleton is a seventeen year old young protagonist and he has dated nineteen girls so far. Being good at Mathematics, he has named all his girlfriends as Katherines like Katherine I, Katherine II, Katherine III etc. the last one dumped him. He is in search of the Miss Right or the right Katherine. He goes on a road trip and lands into the house of Lyford's. He meets Lindsey and falls in love with her. During dating Lindsey, he shares all of the nineteen affairs he had with the nineteen Katherines. He likes Lindsey a lot but being a Math prodigy, he tries to calculate the probability of his lasting love for Lindsey, with the help of a graph. His calculation reveals that his relationship will last only for four more days. But finally it does not happen. In fact Lindsey is clever enough to break his illusion of being a great prodigy. She tells him, 'I don't think you can ever fill the empty space with the thing you lost'(An Abundance of Katherines 199). After a series of events, reality strikes and he come face to face with the practical world. This book was also adapted into a film.

In 2008, Green published his third novel *Paper Towns*. Its' again a teenage love story in which Quentin Q Jacobsen goes in search of his childhood love Miss Margo Roth Spiegelman. He is able to find her but soon she goes missing. She leaves some signs for Quentin so that she could be located. After many adventures and misadventures, Quentin is able to locate her. But to his utter shock she is not ready to go with him. She had left the signs or messages so that the people left should know that she is alive. She

never wanted to go back. Neither has she had any real feelings for Quentin. The myth of being a knight and rescuing his lady love after crossing so many hurdles, breaks very harshly upon Quentin. He realizes that all the imaginations that he had for Margo was nothing but a waste of time and emotions. He realizes that he realized it very late and only after rediscovering her real face, he tells himself, 'Yes, I can see her almost perfectly in this cracked darkness' (*Paper Towns* 305). His illusion about his love for her breaks completely.

The fourth novel, *The Fault in Our Stars* is the foci of the present research. This novel became the New York Times Bestseller in 2012. It brought worldwide recognition to the author. Though it was published in 2012, the author is still reaping the fruits of its popularity. The success story of the author that began with the book hitting the stand is still continuing. Millions of copies of this novel has been sold so far. It was made into a Hollywood film by the same title. The budget of the film was \$12million whereas the film earned over \$307 million. It was recently made into Bollywood film, by the title *Dil Bechara*. The moment its trailer was released, it became the most liked video on YouTube. According to the BARC & Neilson Report, it became the most viewed film on smart phones in the year 2020. Since, the novel is one of the most effective and influential narrative on cancer, it was selected for the present research. The story is well-crafted, tragic but presented as an acerbic comedy of life of two teenagers afflicted with cancer. How they cope with a condition that has not cropped up because of their own fault is brilliantly explored by the author. Out of all the novels published by Green, it remains at number one position.

John Green also co-authored a book with Maureen Johnson and Lauren Myracle. It was titled as *Let it Snow: Three Holiday Romances* (2008). It was basically a book of three interconnected short stories. It was also adapted into a film by the same title. The story leaves a pragmatic message that, 'you should never give up a happy middle in the hopes of a happy ending because there is no such thing as a happy ending' (*Let It Snow* 209). It was also adapted into a film for Netflix. This book became very popular among children.

Another attempt at co-authoring was done with David Leviathan. Green and David wrote the novel *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* and published it in 2010. It was based on LGBT issue from the teenager's point of view. The novel is an engrossing existential story of teenagers caught between making choices. It is full of humor, sarcasm, pain and nuances of friendship during high school days. John Green's success owes to his explicit understanding of the psyche of teenagers and adults. He lectures them without letting them know that he is doing so. He first exploits all the possible fun-loving strategies of teenagers and then with some justifiable twist he subtly pushes them to reality as well as towards maturity.

Thus, he serves both the purposes i.e. education with entertainment; harsh reality but with light humor. The story revolves around the life of two teenagers by the same name, Will Grayson. The difference between both the Wills is that one is gay and the other Will is straight. Will Grayson, the gay writes his name in small cases i.e. will Grayson, it is because he is anxious about his sexual orientation. The struggle for attainment of normalization ends with the understanding, 'I nod to the other will Grayson, up on stage. He nods to me. We have something between us, him and me. But the truth? Everybody has it. That's our curse and our blessing. That's our trial and our error and our *it*' (Will Grayson Will Grayson 308).

In 2017, he came up with yet another engrossing and brilliant novel titled, *Turtles All The Way Down*. Like other novels it is also a Young Adult Novel. The narrative is semi- autobiographical as it is the only novel where John Green tells the readers about the mental illness problems that he faced in his childhood. He reveals his experiences through the protagonist Aza Holmes, a sixteen-year-old high school girl. She suffers from anxiety and obsessive - compulsive disorder or OCD. John Green himself confessed that, 'While the story is fictional, it is also quite personal'(Penguin). Aza is a bright young girl but she develops a fear about the callus that has appeared on her finger. She suffers from the anxiety of being attacked by the microbes and pathogens hidden in that callus. As a compulsion she keeps on draining out the microbes from the callous, intermittently.

Mychal Turner and Daisy Ramirez are her best pals. The friends are interested for a reward of \$100000 that is announced for finding an absconder. They are caught by policemen in their attempt to do so. The officer Davis tries to dissuade them and gives them \$100000 on his own. As a result, Aza falls in love with Davis. Owing to her mental disorder she is unable to develop a normal relationship with him. Finally, they depart with self-discovery, maturity and wisdom.

The Anthropocene Reviewed is an eye-opening collection of essays that exposes the self-centered behavior of human beings towards the ecosystem. It was first released on podcast and it is slated to be published in May 2021. The way humans have interfered with the natural environment, the disturbances that have been created by him/her are brought forth through narrative form. It was well received by online readers. It was released through a podcast and it is non-fictional in nature. It is shown in episodes and in each episode Green reviews the stories and incidents that influenced his views about nature. He talks about human creativity, the useless artificial products that are not required, the importance of flora and fauna, the diet that is important and the status of comets also. After the release of four episodes and its huge popularity Green decided to turn it into a book

The Great American Morp is a short-story by John Green and it is published in a collection titled as *21 Proms*, it is authored along with David Leviathan and others. It is also focused on teens and their fantasies. Morp is a backward formation of the word prom. In American teen culture proms play an important role. It is basically a ballroom dancing party organized for final year school students. It's a rage amongst the teenagers in America. They take this kind of program or party very seriously. It has caught the life and imagination of the American teenagers.

John Green has fanned the desire of teenagers through these stories. Prom is a short version of promenade dance. In such events prom kings and prom queens are also selected. Boys normally wear black tuxedos and girls wear formal gowns with corsages on their wrists. Corsages are gifted by the Date of the girl. It is considered a big event by American teens. Thus, the write ups of John Green reveal the very nerve of American culture, he knows and expresses the ins and outs of American culture very

convincingly. The authors who have collaborated in writing with Green are David Levithan, E. Lockhart, Libba Bray, Ned Vizzini and Holly Black. 21 prom stories raise the curiosity of the readers. The common issues that are raised in these stories are based on the fears of teenagers, like, what if they do not get their own date but have to borrow the date of their best friend? or like What if it doesn't turn out to be the best night of their life? Or some group of goons spoils the prom night? Some of the funniest things that catch the attention of teenagers in America is well explored in these stories, like, what if some miscreants belonging to an underground society of students come and hijack the entire night?

What if your date turns out to be more of a frog than a prince? The stories are suggestive in nature as well as educative also. The stories motivate them to face any kind of odd situation. It makes them realize that it is not a matter of life and death if they do not go to a prom night. Or if they are fat girls and can't fit into fancy gowns the sky will not fall down. So the stories make them feel comfortable with the basic realities of life. Besides writing, Green also ventured into producing films. In 2013, he produced videos for *Mental Floss*, *Paper Towns* (2015) and *Looking for Alaska* in 2019. He is also involved in the production of Vlogbrothers; Crash Course, *The Fault in Our Stars* and *My Brother, My Brother and Me*. Green's popularity has grown leaps and bounds since the release of his first book. He received the Edgar Allan Poe Award in 2009 and the Corine Literature Prize in 2010 for *Paper Towns*. In 2013 he bagged the Children's Choice Book Awards for *The Fault in Our Stars*, in the same year he won the Los Angeles Times Book Prize and in 2014 he won MTVU Fandom award. His impact on society is so powerful that the bloggers have started calling it the John Green effect. The critics of Young Adult Fiction, like A.J. Jacob, has branded his works as Greenlit. Now this term is used for the genre of fiction that revolves around the adventures and misadventures of a teenager in contemporary western society. Besides, these two cities namely Indianapolis and Orange County celebrated July 14 and July 17 as John Green Day, respectively.

Like all other popular writers John Green is also not immune to criticism. Mary Cramb calls his female teenage protagonists 'the manic pixie dream girl' (Cramb 1). In

fact, this new found term is now popular as MPDG. The common feature of Green's MPDG is that they are, 'quirky, damaged, self-destructive, creative, flirty and (of course) gorgeous' (Cramb 1). He is also criticized for romanticizing illness. He is also criticized for making his teenage characters philosophical. Kate Lechtenberg says that after reading *Turtles All the Way Down*, 'I ended the book thinking about John Green and not about Aza Holmes, his main characters' (Lechtenberg 2). The main objection of the critics is with the prominent presence of John Green in a John Green's book. It is one of the greatest, serious flaws in his work.

John Green's novels brought twilight in the field of Young Adult Literature after the publication of *The Fault in Our Stars*. He became a trend setter in YA literature but he also earned brickbats when his novels came to be branded as sick lit and tragedy porn. Margaret Talbot calls him, 'the teen whisperer,' a writer who is a trendsetter; a man who has developed a, 'subculture among the internet users.' One more term that has become very popular because of John Green is, 'nerdfighter.' Who are these nerdfighters? They are the rebellious but harmless online community of a new subculture that promotes harmony, positivity and their purpose is to weed out mediocrity and negativity. So John Green has his own share of appreciation and criticism but the needle of judgment is more towards appreciation and lesser towards criticism.

Nicholas Sparks

The second text for exploration is by Nicholas Sparks. He is also an American writer. Whether it is fictional narrative or non-fictional narrative on cancer it is the American authors who have taken the lead in giving voices to the cancer sufferers. They have been sensitive to the lives of people who are at the threshold of life and death. Nicholas Charles Sparks was born in Nebraska in America on 31st December 1965. His birthplace is in the small-town Omaha in Nebraska. He was born to Patrick Michael Sparks and Jill Emma Marie Sparks. He follows Roman Catholicism. He studied in different schools namely in Minnesota, California and Nebraska.

Sparks was good in sports also but he chose business finance for higher studies. Nicholas had never thought of writing until his mother told him to write, instead of

reading so voraciously. When he was in his last teen years he wrote a novel, *The Passing* but he didn't publish. Then he penned down his second novel *The Royal Murders* and again he didn't have the confidence of publishing it. In the meanwhile, he did many jobs here and there. Then he met Billy Mills and co-authored a non-fiction book, *Wokini: A Lakota Journey to Happiness and Self Understanding*, it was about spirituality. Minor success of this book brought some hope in his life.

In 1993 he wrote the novel *The Notebook*. He sent it to the literary agent's office. It was then detected by Theresa Park a very prominent and powerful agent of authors. She found it in the corner of her office. She read the manuscript and approached Sparks for its sponsorship. Actually in America publishing is done in a professional manner hence literary agents play a very important role in making the right script reach the right publisher. The big publishing houses also depend on literary agents because the book has already been screened and its potential success has already been judged by experts. So, literary agents hold a very important place in the publishing industry. As Theresa had already seen the freshness and the spark in this novel, she recommended it for publication and it tasted immense success after its publication. Since then, Sparks has never looked back. In 1996, the selected novel became the New York Times top most seller.

After this, with each published novel he reached the ladders of so-called material success. Not only this, he got offers for film adaptation of his subsequent novels also. Notable among his novels are *Message in a Bottle* published in 1999, *A Walk to Remember*, selected for this study was published in 2002, *The Notebook* came in 2004. The other popular novels were published consecutively like *Nights in Rodanthe* in 2008, *The Last Song* in 2009, *Dear John* in 2010, *The Last Song* in 2010, *The Lucky One*(2012), *Safe Haven*(2013) *The Best of Me*(2014) *The Longest Ride*(2015) *The Choice* (2016), *Two by Two*(2016), *Every Breath*(2018), *The Return*(2020). Besides these novels he has published, *The Rescue* (2000), *A Bend in the River* (2001), *The Guardian* (2003), *The Wedding* (2003), *Three Weeks with my Brother* (2004), *True Believer* (2005), *At First Sight* (2005) and *See Me* (2015). About eleven novels have the distinction of New York Times Best sellers. Only two non-fictional books are published by him .

Due to the popularity of his novels, they were adapted into films and the films also did multi-billion-dollar business.

The text that has been selected for present study is *A Walk to Remember*, it is inspired by the life of his younger sister Miss Danielle Dana Sparks. The character Jamie Sullivan is largely based on her life. Danielle Sparks died of brain tumor at the age of 33. She loved a guy and he married her despite knowing about her condition before her death. Nicholas Sparks has the ability to portray the innate feelings and tenderness with lot of effeminacy which is usually not common in male writers. His stories are slow moving but evolving in nature. *A Walk to Remember* is an emotional story of two youngsters Landon and the mysterious Jamie. A girl who always carries a bible in her hand. It's only in the latter half of the narrative, Jamie reveals that she is suffering from leukemia. When it is revealed to Landon, he gets a big jolt. He is shocked to see that, 'Jamie was seventeen, a child on the verge of womanhood, dying and still very alive at the same time. I was afraid, more afraid than I'd ever been not only for her but for me as well' (Sparks 140). Sparks has been able to craft the emotions, reactions and trepidations caused by cancer. Due to his impressive narration of teenager's life, critics also call him the precursor of Young Adult fiction.

Sparks first successful novel, *The Notebook* (1996) is based on a story of Noah and Allie. Due to their class difference Allie is not allowed to have any concern with Noah, especially Allie's mother is against the match. They are separated, Noah tries to connect with Allie by writing letters to her everyday but unfortunately all the letters reach Allie's mother and she always destroys them. Noah gets frustrated because he gets no reply even after writing each letter for 365 days. Later on, Allie becomes a trained nurse and starts dating a lawyer. She decides to marry him because she is unaware that Noah still loves her and is building a house as per her wishes that she had disclosed to him once upon a time. On the day of her wedding Allie sees an advertisement in the newspaper, it was about a house on sale. She is shocked to see the details of the house. She postpones her marriage and locates Noah. After several twists and trials finally Noah and Allie are reunited. When the narrative begins, at that time it is shown that both of them are old now and Allie suffers from dementia. Noah takes good care of her and ultimately both of them

die clasping hand in hand. The novel was adapted into a film and it did record breaking business.

The Wedding is a kind of novel that reminds old men about re-romancing with their wives. The story is about a couple who wish to celebrate their thirty years of marriage and companionship. The main characters of the story are Noah and Allie, Jane and Wilson. It is a sequel to *The Notebook*. Jane and Wilson are daughter and son in law of Noah and Allie. Some problems crop up in their lives and they decide to relive the best moments of their lives.

Message in a Bottle (1998), is also a popular novel and it was inspired by his parents' life. The protagonist is Theresa Osborne, a young dreamy woman in search of her true love. One fine day while jogging on a beach, she finds a bottle, to her surprise it had a letter. The letter is written by Garrett to his beloved Catherine. She reads the letter and finds that the person loves this lady and misses her very much. She is intrigued by the letter and feels attracted to the person who has written the intense letter. After many attempts, she meets the person and their frequent meetings lead to a love affair but as their relationship grows she finds that it is difficult to erase the influence of Catherine from Garrett's persona. Time and again Garrett drowns into grief over Catherine. Theresa feels frustrated, moreover one day Garrett finds the letters written by him in Theresa's closet. He immediately feels offended and cheated as a result both of them had to part their ways. After a lot of anguish, heartaches and misery they are reunited by Garrett's father Jeb.

The Rescue (2000) novel by Sparks also became very popular. It was based on his son's life, Ryan. The story depicts the life of a waitress Denise Holton and her struggles. She has to look after her four-year-old son Kyle Holton who is suffering from severe learning disabilities. In her journey Mitch Johnson and Melissa offer her great help. It is a moving tale of a mother's dotting love for her child. In 2001 Sparks came up with his fifth novel, *A Bend in the Road*. Most of the novels written by Sparks are inspired by the close relations around him. This novel is inspired by the life of his real life brother-in-law, Mr. Bob. The story is built around Miles Ryan, a deputy sheriff, Missy Ryan, who dies in an accident, their son, Jonah, and Sarah Andrews, a school

teacher who later on falls in love with Miles Ryan. Brian is the brother of Sarah Andrews. After many eventful plots it is revealed that Brian was the one who was responsible for the accidental death of Missy Ryan but he honestly confesses that it was done by mistake.

A Bend in the Road was published in 2001. It is a novel about the mysteries of life. How sometimes we are thrown into a situation of which consequences we do not know of. In this novel the protagonist Miles Ryan loses his wife Missy in a car accident. He feels shattered after her death so much so that he is unable to love any other woman in his life. Miles is in search of her killer. He works as a deputy in the North Carolina town. After some years he met Sarah Andrews, a school teacher. She is divorced and heart-broken. They happen to meet each other in Miles's son's school. Love develops and both of them start spending time together. Both of them are unaware of the shocking secret that is about to shatter their lives once more. When they are completely in love with each other Sarah comes to know about his obsession with the killer driver. To her shock it was her own brother who had accidentally killed her. For a long time, she remains in a dilemma about how to deliver that bad news because she knows that it will come as a shock to him and it may even ruin her married life but finally, she does and bears the wrath of Miles. But after a lot of contemplation and fighting with Sarah's brother he finally accepts that it was not deliberate on his part. For the sake of his son's happiness, he accepts this new revelation about his new family. He finally forgives him and asks him to promise to make amends for the great mistake that he has done by ruining a family twice. Spark's next novel is *The Guardian* published in 2003. It's a romance thriller. The story is written in the typical style Spark is known for. The protagonist Julie Barenson is a widow and she also has a Great Dane (a species of dog, here named as Singer). The dog proves to be of great help to Julie in dealing with her loneliness, after the loss of her husband. After a few years Julie decides to look for a partner. She has few good friends in Mike and Richards but she is unable to make up her mind. Somehow some confusion arises and Mike is killed. For the first time, Sparks allows violence to enter his narrative. After this the story picks up and the plain narrative turns into an action packed suspense thriller with a lot of police drama. In the same year Sparks published another novel *The Wedding*, it is a story that moves from where his first novel *The Notebook* ended. The

novel inspires a couple to refresh their romance after thirty years of their life.

Night in the Roadanthe(2002) is also a romantic story of Adrienne Willis. She is divorced and she falls in love with a divorced man named Paul Flanner. Planner is a surgeon by profession. Both of them are single parents, while Adrienne has three children, whereas Paul is a father of a son. It is a typical Sparkian romantic novel with lots of passion for love. The story is set in Sparks favorite location, North Carolina.

The story runs in flashback. Adrienne tells her daughter Amanda about her own past and how she had met a surgeon named Paul Flanner. She had met him in an inn called Roadanthe. Paul Flanner who was fifty-four years then had gone to the inn to escape the bitter realities of his familial life. The two met and had fallen in love instantly. Actually, both were like broken souls so they were able to connect with each other. The one week's time that they spent together was the best of their lives. After a week they went back to face the world but their romance continued through letters. Later on, after some years Paul died. Amanda is quite shocked at this revelation that her mother had hidden her secret love from the family. She tries to locate the last letter. It was written by Paul's son Dr Mark. The letter shows the humane side of Adrienne. In the last letter he thanked Adrienne for making Paul a kind hearted person.

Since, Sparks is fascinated by places near the coast line of the USA, so the majority of the location of his novels is North Carolina. In this novel some of the incidents are inspired by his own life but largely the story is fictional. Since Sparks' novels are also about sacrifice, forgiveness and compromise, his characters also follow the same principles and give priority to their family and children. This novel was also adapted into a movie and was liked by the public.

The novel *True Believer* (2005) is also set in North Carolina. This time the hero is a successful media person. He is a typical New Yorker, tall, handsome and smart. He is the dream hero, Mr. Jeremy Marsh, is a staunch supporter of Science and he always promotes scientific aptitude in Americans through his profession. He thinks that those who believe in the supernatural and the miracles without scientific basis are harming the society and such thinking is basically backward thinking which the world

can no longer afford. The story takes a twist when one fine day, while he was appearing on a TV Show, he receives a letter about some mysterious events happening in Boone Creek, a small town in North Carolina. He goes to investigate the incident and comes across a lady named Lexie Darnell. He likes her at first sight. She is a sweet natured beautiful girl. He is almost head over heels for her because she is irresistibly charming. As he gets to know her, he finds out that she is a firm believer in the supernatural power of God. She believes in miracles also. So here arises the difficult choice in the life of highly skeptic Jeremy Marsh about choosing a life partner who believes in the supernatural.

At First Sight (2005) is an emotional story of a couple, Jeremy and Lexie. It is a sequel of his previous novel *True Believer*. Sparks had written such a lengthy epilogue that the editors suggested that he publish it separately as a full-fledged novel. Sparks is an emotional story teller. This novel also deals with love, misunderstandings in love, trust-mistrust and making up. Jeremy loves Lexie and Lexie becomes pregnant before marriage. Both of them move to a new place to hide the pregnancy before marriage. Lexie keeps on getting emails from ex-fiends that raises doubt in Jeremy. They often fight with each other over these issues, both of them love each other dearly but most often such circumstances create doubt, mistrust and uncertainty in their relations. Finally, it is proved that Lexie is innocent and the child belongs to Jeremy only. However, by that time Lexie dies after a few days of child birth. Jeremy vows not to marry again and looks after the child all alone.

Similarly, *Dear John* (2006) is an adaptation of three famous French plays, *Marius*, *Fanny* and *Cesar* written by Marcel Pagnol. This story also deals with an illness called Asperger's Syndrome. The narrative is woven around the unsuccessful love affair of John and Savannah. The novel was successful and was adapted into a film. *The Choice* (2007) is a gripping story of the life of Travis Parker. He is a happy go lucky man. He falls in love with Gabby Holland. Again, it is an intense love story that tests noble virtues like patience, endurance and sacrifice. Gabby suffers from an accident and goes into a coma. The doctors declare that she is unlikely to recover from her unconscious state. Travis Parker makes a choice of keeping her in his own care. He looks after the bed-

ridden unconscious women with a lot of patience. Luckily, she regains her conscious state after three months and they marry and live happily ever after. A strong sense of morality runs underneath all the stories created by Nicholas Sparks.

The Lucky One (2008), as the name suggests, the story revolves around luck, fate and destiny. The story revolves around Logan, Beth, Keith, and Ben. Logan finds a picture of a woman on a beach. He keeps it and on the same day he wins poker matches. Later on, he has to go to the gulf country to fight a war for America. There he faces many dangerous situations but luckily, he survives. He comes to believe that the lady in the picture is her lucky charm. On coming back to America, he locates the woman. He comes to know that her name is Beth and she is separated from her husband and has a son also. He wants to marry her. After several misunderstandings they unite but as fate would have it Beth and Keith die and Logan survives.

The Last Song (2009) is another captivating narrative about love, separation, broken families, pain, friendship and cancer. It's again a teenager's journey towards self-discovery. Kim and Steve are Veronica's parents. They have divorced each other. So Veronica and her brothers are sent to their dad, Steve. There she meets Will, a popular volleyball player, and as is expected they fall in love with each other. Later on, Veronica comes to know that her father has developed cancer. She goes back to look after him. A local church pastor Harries also joins in to give her moral support. Thus, this narrative also reveals Sparks' innate belief in the power of God and his catholic roots.

Safe Haven (2010) is a mysterious novel full of action, chasing and drama but it is also a story of true love, sacrifice and care. Erin is a young absconding wife of a police officer. Her husband Kevin is an abusive alcoholic husband that's why she runs away from home to save her life. She can't even complain to the police because he holds a very good image in his office and nobody would believe her side of the story. She changes her identity and goes to a new place. She finds a very good friend in Joe, a woman who works in a restaurant. She gives her a job and helps her to find a love mate, Mr. Alex. She encourages her to start a new life. Alex is a widower with two small children. Erin loves the kids and finds happiness in Alex's company.

The narrative moves on smoothly until Kevin finds out about the whereabouts of Erin and attacks her. He sets the house on fire thinking that it might kill Kattie and Alex. But fortunately, Alex was not at home but Kattie and the kids were inside. Kattie tries hard to rescue the children. While Kevin is waiting for the news of the death of Kattie, Alex comes back and hunts down Kevin. Like a hero he wants to take revenge for his new found love. While a great fight ensues between Kevin and Alex and finally Kevin is shot dead. A new twist also appears when Kattie comes to know that Joe was actually the spirit of Alex's dead wife and her spirit had deliberately united Kattie with Alex so that both of them could become soul mates and look after two little children. The novel has all the elements of a fantasy novel.

The Best of Me (2011) is an engaging novel of commitment, true love and sacrifice. The novel became so popular that it was translated into forty languages. It's a story of a law-abiding Dawson Cole but his entire family is of criminal bent of mind. Dawson is a peace-loving harmless guy but due to his family's behavior he leaves the town. He even leaves his girlfriend Amanda. He spends his next twenty years with Tuck Hosteler in a nearby town. Tuck treats him like his own son. Dawson moves back to his own town after twenty years and by this time Amanda is married and has two grown up children but she is unhappy in her marriage. As destiny would have it Dawson's cousins keep on bothering him besides Amanda also wishes to spend her time with Dawson. Amanda is rebuked for her behavior by her mother because she doesn't expect a married woman to have any relation with her ex-lover. After a lot of eventful twists and turns, Dawson finally lays down his life for a good cause and even after dying his heart is donated to Amanda's son so that his life could be saved. The narrative ends with the message of the highest form of sacrifice by a Samaritan, named Dawson.

The Longest Ride (2013) is a different romantic story as the protagonist of this novel is a ninety one year old Ira Levinson. He is a widower but he believes his wife always moves around him reminding him of the beautiful times they have spent together. The entire story revolves around an art school, The Black Mountain College, which was a famous modern art school in America. Both Ira and his wife Ruth had met in this college and they keep on remembering about the paintings they had bought

together. The story also talks about some of the famous painters belonging to the American modern art age. The novel was also adapted into a film.

See Me (2015) is again a romantic novel without many thrilling events. It is a story of two young teenagers brought up in different family environments. Colin grows up in a loveless family and develops delinquent habits and has anger issues as well. Many times his behavior leads him to the police station because of this his parents abandon him. Colin is wandering here and there with a lot of bruises and suddenly he happens to meet Maria who is being stalked by someone. Colin offers to help her. Maria is a lawyer, she is a person full of warmth and she has been brought up in a very caring family. Both of them fall in love with each other. Maria becomes a great support for Colin. The narrative is full of action, drama and a lot of mystery.

Every Breath (2018) is also a best seller, the story shows a conflict between destiny and love. The protagonist is Hope Anderson, a nurse who goes on a trip to her family's cottage at Sunset Beach in North Carolina. She is in a relationship with a surgeon but she is not sure about him. She crosses her path with a stranger Tru Walls, a forty two year old man. He was raised in Zimbabwe. He comes from a broken family. Both of them fall in love with each other after their chance meeting at a beach. Everything goes well until Hope Anderson comes to know that she is suffering from a degenerative disease ALS. The extraordinary thing about this novel is that the story is inspired from Kindered Spirit, a letter box where people leave their love letters for anyone to read. The mailbox is actually placed in North Carolina. Sparks happens to read the love letters of some Tru Walls. The letters inspired him to develop a romantic story.

The Return (2020) This is a typical Sparkian novel because it has elements of love, romance and mystery sewn together with the thread of narrative. The protagonist is Trevor Benson. He works in Afghanistan but after an accident he comes back to his home town in North Carolina. He feels homesick and also realizes that he needs to do something for his family. His grandfather was killed in mysterious circumstances. He is now desperate to find out the truth. In his journey, Trevor meets the young Deputy Sheriff Natalie Masterson. They develop a special bond between them but Trevor could sense that Natalie is holding something back. She is not completely ready to open up

with him. He could see that she is not ready to share everything about herself. Her mystery keeps on bothering him. There is one more mysterious character in the novel, Miss Callie and through her Trevor keeps on trying to find out the killer of his grandfather. In the end he comes up with some bitter realities about his grandfather and others around him. Finally he has to accept the truth and forgive everyone to move on with his own life.

Two by Two (2016) Again a bestselling novel by Sparks. It was also in the New York's Bestselling list of books in 2016. The story is about love, emotional bonding and sacrifice. The story is set in the location, Charlotte. Russell Green is the young successful advertising executive. He is only thirty two and he has achieved everything which a young man is normally supposed to like: having a successful career, a beautiful wife and a lovely six-year old daughter. But certain circumstances turn everything upside down. His life comes to a complete halt. He loses his job, his wife abandons him and now he has to look after his daughter all alone. He realizes how he had taken all the valuable things in his life for granted. As a single father, he realizes the true realities of life and moves ahead with a new and mature understanding of life.

The Wish is a beautiful novel about teenage love that haunts a person throughout his or her life. The legacy of first love is cherished by an individual. The protagonist is a sweet girl Maggie Dawes who is barely sixteen. She is sent to Ocracoke in North Carolina to live with her aunt. Initially she is unable to adjust in the new environment. After sometime she meets Bryce Trickett. He is of her age, he is handsome and intelligent. He has taken admission in West Point Academy and he is passionate about photography. The story is set in the year 2016 and by 2019 Maggie becomes a famous professional travel photographer. With fame her life becomes hectic also. She keeps on traveling from New York to different unexplored regions of the world. Unfortunately, she is diagnosed with a serious medical complication and because of that she has to keep a medical assistant. She gets closer to him over a period of time and during Christmas she tells him about a Christmas a few years ago that had changed the course of her life.

As a novelist, Sparks is well known for intense stories, loads of love, undying commitment, selfless love and exemplary care of each other. The narratives bear dollops

of feelings, a deep sense of morality and duty towards one's loved ones. The moment his novel hits the stands, the filmmakers look ready to grab it for adaptation into a screenplay. Nicholas Sparks has a huge fan base. His novels have inspired many authors including John Green. His novels have been a source of inspiration for the writers as many of them have taken the titles of their own novels from his stories. Sparks foundation has raised more than \$10 million dollars for different charitable programs, scholarships and projects for the welfare of the people. Nicholas Spark's novels have the distinction of staying at the number one spot for bestseller for the whole year.

Jenny Downham

The third text that is selected for thorough study is *Before I Die* by Jenny Downham. Jenny Downham is a British citizen. She was born in 1964. Before becoming an author she worked as an actress. She has published four novels. Her first novel *Before I Die* became a huge success and it was immediately adopted into a film by the title, *Now is Good*, in 2012. The book was shortlisted for Guardian Children's Fiction Prize in 2007. In 2008, it won the Branford Boase Award. In 2010, she published her second novel titled, *You Against Me*. This novel explores family relations, empathy, love and the dilemma of making choices. Her third novel was *Unbecoming* and it was published in 2015. The narrative explores the life of women belonging to three generations and their lives. Her last novel was published in 2019 by the title, *Furious Thing*; it was shortlisted for Costa Book Awards.

Her second novel, *You against Me*, is a touching narrative full of love, mystery and chaos that teenage phase brings in a person's life. The story revolves around Mikey, a young teenager who wants to be a chef but he finds no support in his home. His father is nowhere to be seen and his mother is a careless alcoholic. Being a duty bound guy he looks after everyone in the house, especially his young sisters, Holly and Karyn. Unfortunately Karyn is raped at a party. Being an elder brother Mikey wants to take revenge for this wrong doing. But the circumstances lead him to fall in love with the criminal's sister.

Mike falls in love with Ellie despite knowing the fact that she is the rapist's sister.

The plot is a little complex but Mike and Ellie's chemistry holds the reader's attention through and through. Keith Gray calls it, 'a sharp edged love story,' it exposes the consequences of broken homes for growing children. The novel also raises the, 'moral ambiguities,' associated with date rape, 'How we should view date rape? Who exactly is capable of rape?' Because later in the story it is revealed that Karyn had herself approached Tom for love making and later she herself turned hostile and felt bad about it. Emily Bazelon compares the story with Romeo and Juliet because here also, 'a crime forces a choice between youthful passion and family loyalty'(Downham 4). Emily calls it a story with, 'tumultuous conclusion and the choice between new love and old allegiances' (Downham 7).

Jenny Downham's next novel *Unbecoming* is an honest family drama, a narrative that runs through three generations of the same family. The three women who form the web of the story are Katie, Caroline and Mary. The family secrets are revealed in a dramatic fashion that too intermittently. Mary is the grandmother of Katie. She suffers from Alzheimer's but she is capable of making good decisions. She appears in the story after her long mysterious absence. After initial bitterness, a sweet caring relationship develops between the granny and the granddaughter. Katie draws beautiful reminders on colorful chits and pastes them on the wall so that it reminds her grandmother in times of forgetfulness due to bouts of Alzheimer. Overall, the story is full of mystery, caregiving, the past and the present.

Before I Die is the most successful novel by the author. It was first published in 2007. It is a mere coincidence that the title of this novel is inspired by Nicholas Sparks' book, *A Walk to Remember*, one among the five important cancer narratives selected for present study. Jenny's cancer narrative is also highly educative in nature. It is an eye-opener about the importance of time and space that is given to physical bodies on this planet and how it is taken for granted in absence of true knowledge. The narrative is woven around a sixteen year old teenager Tessa Scott. One fine day she is diagnosed with blood cancer and the doctors also declare that she doesn't have much time left with. Initially, she is devastated but then one fine morning she decides to make a wish-list. This wish-list includes some risky behavior like doing drugs apart from other common fun

loving activities. Many wishes also includes breaking of law also. She accomplishes her task with the help of her friend Zoey. Tessa's parents are divorced and it is her father only who takes great care of her. She feels lucky to have a loving family around. Her relatives and friends extend all their support; it is one of the important aspects that eases the life of a cancer patient. Tessa's brother Call Scott, her friend Zoey, her lover Adam and her mother try to give the best of her life's time. As soon as the novel became popular, it was adapted into a film *Now is Good* and it also became immensely popular.

Furious Things is a recent novel published in 2019. It is again the story of a teenager named Lexi. She is short tempered and wild. But deep down, she is caring and protective about her mother. When her mother falls in love with John and wishes to marry him; Lexis becomes possessive. It is difficult for her to accept John as her second father. She always feels intimidated by his presence although she tries her best to be nice to her mother's choice. Her efforts normally go in vain because her worries about her family's protection always overpowers. She is worried about her mother and her sibling Iris. Her attempts to adjust to the new found situation always fails. Lexis's ideal happy family doesn't necessarily include a step-father but just to keep her mother in good humor, she accepts John in the family. Later, all her fears turn into reality when John shows his true colors.

The narrative is highly important because many teenagers in the west are important because many teenagers in the west face similar problems. It is pertinent that broken families, divorce and remarriage of parents is a norm in the western culture and young children are the worst sufferers of such conditions. Teenagers are able to identify themselves with this narrative. The novel is a sensitive portrayal of a complex and chaotic phase i.e. teenage. The way Lexi tries to manage her anger and her family is well explored by the author. Jenny Downham's novels are considered to be carrying weighty themes but she believes that she writes about difficult conditions in order to live the best of times within the stipulated time whether the end time is known to you or not. She doesn't write novels for teaching morality but in a way it comes out to be educative in nature. In 2008, *Before I Die* became the Lancashire Children's Book of the Year, it was also nominated for the 2008 Carnegie Medal and the 2008 Booktrust Teenage

Prize, and won the 2008 Branford Boase Award. Jenny is also accused of morally corrupting the youngsters by promoting the use of substance in her novels.

Elizabeth Hein

Another text that is based on the story of a twenty nine year old woman suffering from Cancer is written by Elizabeth Hein. Her novel *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower* is based on the life of Lara Blaine who is diagnosed with cancer. Elizabeth Hein was born in Madrid, Spain but later she settled with her parents in Massachusetts. Presently she lives in Carolina with her husband and children. Her stories are mainly women centric and their struggle against a hostile society that has different parameters for judging this gender. Her novels also depict the strong bond among women and how they help out each other in times of crisis. Her second novel *Overlook* is also a narrative of a strong woman. Subsequently her third novel *Escape Plan* is also about strong sisterhood and an attempt to disavow terrible marriages. Her novels are about the psychological struggles of women. They come out as winners rather than losers even in odd circumstances.

Elizabeth Hein has also co-authored an interesting book titled, *How I Found the Right Path: A Compilation of Letters* (2014) that gives an idea to the young writer's keen on publishing their books. It is an interesting book in which several other published authors have contributed letters that are mainly written to their own past selves. It is a unique collection that has a compilation of letters by the people who have now become authors. The book is full of letters that carry a lot of wisdom along with wit. Hein has also contributed short stories in *The Seven Story House* published in 2016. The book is edited by Simon Easton and it is also based on a unique theme i.e. abandoned houses. The stories are based on secluded, forgotten but damaged abandoned houses. How the broken windows, the outgrown shrubs all around and the damaged walls instigate the interest of onlookers is explored in the stories. The once beautiful and full of din of life mansions are now forsaken. Such mysterious houses form the focus of all the stories in this book.

Elizabeth Hein's maiden novel *Overlook* was published in 2013. It's a comic family drama based on small town Magnuson and its scandals. It's a beautiful place like

that of the 70's of North Carolina, when life was slow, simple but thriving. The ladies, the maids and the mistress form an integral part of the story. The place is full of life with all the urban glitches like the golf club, swimming clubs, tennis courts, cyclists, blooming teenagers, family parties, doting wives and cheating husbands. Kitty Haskell and Seth, VP represents the couple of the seventies, the time when wives used to defend their husbands even when they knew they were cheating on them. This was before the advent of militant feminism. They did their best to keep everyone in good humor in their family. This suburban middle class family novel presents the essentials of American middle class life of the seventies that had beautiful homes, disciplined school systems and happy neighbors. The negative side of this life was adultery, gossiping and minor disputes. Inter-racial marriages were no less than a crime in those days.

Hein's second novel, *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower* (2016) is more mature than the first one. It is an honest portrayal of a young woman diagnosed with cervical cancer. The protagonist is Lara Blaine, a twenty nine year old single woman who is cynically devoted to her work at her work place but at the same time she is alien to her co-workers. She is lonely, disciplined and overall comfortable with her single status. But her world falls apart when she is blatantly told by her doctor that she is suffering from cancer. Her plain life story takes a tragic turn when this fatal news is disclosed. Her ego doesn't allow her to surrender before the challenging circumstances. She tries her best to keep her job unaffected by her cancer. But cancer is a disease that shatters everything. It shatters the very identity a person carries himself with.

Escape Plan (2016) As the title of the novel suggests, it is the narrative of an oppressed wife who wants to get rid of her husband. The protagonist is Kitty Haskell, a devoted, loving and caring wife but when she comes to know about her husband's dishonesty she is broken to the core. Time and again he tells a lie, cheats on her and is completely an immoral character. When she is finally fed up with him, she kills him in a fit of rage. Having done a crime out of anger she turns to her sister, Rose and her confidante Stacia Tate Curran to escape from being indicted for the crime. Her pals try to cover up the murder and spread a rumor that he drowned accidentally and perhaps it was his mistress who planned his murder. The main problem was that Kitty's husband's

death created many financial disasters for her. Not only this young girl appears and claims that she is also the heiress of this family. She resembles Kitty's children so it is likely that she is the product of her husband's waywardness. As the situation becomes more complicated Kitty finds it difficult to escape from being caught for the murder.

Her friend and her sister had tried their best to convince her that whatever she did was right. After all, a man who resorts to constant infidelities deserved this treatment only. Stacia was a partial witness to the crime, had she not seen what followed the blood smeared Seth's body, she would have continued to believe that her friend is a sweet docile wife who is only worried about making sweet cupcakes to keep her family happy. When Stacy saw the drowning boat and the cold demeanor of her friend, she thought it's better not to report the crime. The novel offers an opportunity to study and explore the psychology of a devoted but neglected wife.

Stevie Turner

The next important author selected for the study is Stevie Turner. Her novel *An Unusual Romance* is an interesting cancer narrative. Stevie is a popular British author. She attempted her first writing in 1969. She is settled in the East of England. She lives with her family of two sons and four grand-children. Her novels range from family drama to suspense thrillers to scientific fiction to young-adult fiction. Her novels are also women oriented and sometimes they deal with suspenseful and paranormal behavior of characters as well. Stevie is a widely published author. Her novels are translated into German, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian. She has published a collection of short stories titled, *A House without Windows* (2014) besides short stories she has also written some of the best-selling novels like *The Donor* (2014), *The Noise Effect* (2015), and *Revenge* (2015), *For the Sake of a Child* (2015), *No Sex Please. I'm Menopausal* (2015). Her novel, *A Rather Unusual Romance* (2014), and *The Pilate Class* (2018) are quite popular.

Stevie has written ten novels, six short novellas and eighteen short stories. She won the New Apple Book Award in the year 2014. In 2015 she also won the reader's

favorite gold award. She got this award for her novel, *A House Without Windows*. She also won an award in 2017 in the international film festival. She is known for realistic women's fiction. Her novels are mainly about the life of women in the contemporary society like, *A Marriage of Convenience*, *Finding David*, *Barren*, *Examining Kitchen Cupboards*, *Mind Games*, *The Daughter-in-Law Syndrome*, *Partners in Time*, *Repent at Leisure*, *For the Sake of a Child*, *Lily: A Short Story*, *Revenge* and *A House without Windows*. Her fiction is about family narratives, lives of women tinged with dark humor.

House without Windows is an interesting but gloomy horror novel that tells the readers about the struggle of a young lady doctor Dr. Beth Nichols who is kidnapped by one of her former patients Edwin Evans. She is held captive in a basement for about nine years. When she was kidnapped at that time she was pregnant. She gives birth to the baby without anybody's help. Her ordeal is never ending. The torturer keeps the bulb on for twenty four hours. Beth only keeps on imagining that her fiancée Liam must be searching for her and he would definitely rescue her. This hope keeps her alive. In the meanwhile Beth raises her daughter in the same tiny room without windows. After a few years of rape and torture she gives birth to Edwin's son also that too in the same condition.

The story is actually based on a real incident that had happened in London (Lambeth incident). So, when finally, after nine years Beth and her two children are rescued, the entire media covers their ordeal and the world is left shocked. Unfortunately, by that time Liam had settled in Canada with his new family, thinking that Beth must have been murdered by someone. Liam is in a dilemma whether he should go back to Beth, who obviously needs him more and his first daughter Amy. Edwin is sent to a mental asylum. The story is full of horror and can make the reader cringe with the turning of every page. It makes one get a chill down the spine because the majority of the events are actually true.

Finding David: A Paranormal Short Story is a popular story full of horror, mystery and suspense. It is an interesting story of a mother who lost her son recently. She is drawn to a clairvoyant who tells her that she has a message for her from the spirit of her dead son David. Actually, Karen is the protagonist and when the story begins, she is shown to be married to Mick Curtis, her second husband. Karen suffers from heart

break because she lost her minor son David, recently. He is shown missing, she didn't even find his dead body. So, when she happens to meet a clairvoyant, she gets curious to know about her missing son. The clairvoyant claims that she can make her talk with her dead son's spirit and know what had happened to him. Karen moves on to the journey to find David. As the story unfolds, the needle of suspicion moves towards her second husband, Mick, and ultimately it is proved that he was responsible for David's death. The story begins on a happy note but with a heartbreaking ending.

Barren (2020) is a typical family narrative of two sisters, Esme Jones and Eden Reece. Esme lives a happy life with her husband and twin sons. Her elder sister, Eden suffers from some complications hence she can't become a mother. Esme offers to become a surrogate mother; Eden and her husband Billy feel grateful to her. However, when Esme gets pregnant and finds out that she has a baby girl, she grows selfish and forgets her promise. How self-centered behavior can ruin the peace, love and happiness among the siblings is well explored in the novel.

Mind Games (2017) was selected for A New Apple Book Award in 2017. The story revolves around a happy couple Francis Andrews and her husband Martin. The problems crop up in their marriage when Martin becomes addicted to watching porn. This leads to constant fights between the couple and it even leads on the verge of divorce. Before separating they give themselves a last chance by meeting a Marriage Counselor, Rhona. As they meet her she suggests they go on a holiday away from home immediately. Their journey unfolds their separate personalities. Mind games help the readers to understand how addictions can ruin a happy relationship.

A Marriage of Convenience is a narrative about an ambitious rock star, Gerrie Hermann. Gerrie wants to become a popular singer. He hails from a rich South African family. He is young, dreamy and highly motivated. He meets a young girl Sophie Woods who is not ambitious and simple. As luck would have it both of them fall in love with each other. Two contrasting personalities come together normally and it ends up into disaster.

Examining Kitchen Cupboards is about a daring young College Examination

Admin, Jill Hayes, she is honest and she discovers many malpractices that are undergoing in the college. But to her surprise everyone in the administration tries to silence her by one way or the other. During one of the entrance examination processes she discovers that the questions that are asked in the entrance exams are far too easy for the students. To her surprise, she finds that it was being done deliberately at the cost of a good education system and government funding. She is against the idea of playing with the future of students. As the mystery unfolds she finds that it involves corporate greed and an international racket.

The Daughter-in-Law Syndrome, is a typical family narrative full of bitter-sweet episodes between the mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law. But sometimes the minor quarrels leads to the verge of disintegration. It's been twenty eight years now that Arla is married to Ric and now she feels that it's been enough on her part that she has tolerated her mother-in-law and Ric's attitude more than enough. Just to give one more chance to saving their marriage, both of them go to marriage counselor Toni Beecher. The counseling helps but it has come at a time when she is herself soon going to be a mother-in-law and she realizes after so many years that it was her attitude that created so much problem. The psychological struggle of the members of this small family makes it an interesting read. The characters are simple, realistic and believable. Women can easily relate to the story.

The Donor tells us the dilemma of Clare who loves aspiring singer Ross Tyler. Both of them are madly in love but unfortunately Clare's sister comes in between their relationships and steals away her love. To add to her woes, Ross later on becomes a popular singer, Clare lives with a lot of bitterness whereas Ross lives happily in France with his wife. As karma would have it, after thirty years, a tragedy strikes and Ross goes back to Clare for forgiveness. Initially Clare thinks of taking revenge but as the story unfolds she tries to let go and leave her past behind.

The Pilate Class is a humorous novel about women of different ages and their dilemma. Roger, Judy, Neville, Edie, Roz, Alice and Petra represent the multifaceted persona of the contemporary women. Their trials, tribulations and their struggles to achieve that impossible perfection that human beings vouch for. Roger is a fanatic

bodybuilder, while Judy is an always exhausted mother of four children, Neville is searching for some women and Julian's motive to regain her youth, Edie is saddened because she is approaching the eighth decade of her life. Roz is a maniac fitness freak and Alice is the gloomy overweight woman. All these ladies end up meeting Petra, the Pilate instructor. The novel is outrageously funny but realistic to the core. Actually Pilate is a new kind of exercise and it is quite popular among young women. 'Pilates is a form of low-impact exercise that aims to strengthen muscles while improving postural alignment and flexibility. Pilate's moves tend to target the core, although the exercises work other areas of your body as well' (Hildreth 1). Thus, she is an author that is interested in exploring the woes of contemporary women.

The common thread that is prevalent among the five authors selected for this study is that all of them have produced powerful cancer narratives. The narratives selected for the current study became so popular that they were adapted into films and as films they grossed multi billion dollars. Particularly the novel, *The Fault in Our Stars*, *A Walk to Remember* and *Before I Die*. Another common feature among them is that they have understood pain, suffering and illness in a different manner. The young teenagers that are shown in the first three novels develop their own understanding of life, identity and the value of time left with them. Cancer helps the protagonist to understand the concept of physical body, mental faculty and life force as whole.

CHAPTER II

LIMINALITY: HISTORICAL ROOTS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The term, Liminality is primarily drawn from the field of Anthropology. The word is a proper noun and it indicates the transitional period or phase of a rite of passage. It is a phase during which the person going through transition lacks his/her previous social status or rank. The participant remains obedient and humble. Usually in cultural practices the person also follows other norms like dress code, food and lives in the designated living space as well. Liminality was first used in terms of cultural practices by Arnold Van Gennep. He did extensive research to explore the in-between condition of human beings during rituals. The word liminality has been derived from the term liminal which has its roots in the Latin word, 'limen,' means threshold or boundary, it also means a corridor between two places. Gennep wrote the seminal book *Rites de Passage* which was later translated into English as *The Ritual Process* by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L Caffee. The publication of the book generated lot of research on the basis of the tenets given by Gennep in this book.

The theory of Liminality has now transcended its origins in anthropology to become a foundational framework across various fields of study. Liminality refers to the transitional phase between two distinct states or stages in a process. The theory has found applications in anthropology, sociology, psychology, literature, religious studies and offers profound insights into human experiences and societal phenomena. The multifaceted contributions of the theory of liminality across different disciplines like Anthropology is focused on the unveiling of cultural rites and rituals. In anthropology, the concept of liminality is deeply intertwined with rites of passage, rituals marking transitions in individuals' social statuses or roles within a community.

Van Gennep's seminal work, *Rites of Passage*, laid the foundation for understanding of the rituals as comprising three stages: separation, liminality, and incorporation. The liminal phase, characterized by ambiguity, marginality and a sense of communitas, gives anthropologists valuable insights into the symbolic and cultural meanings underlying these rites. The purpose of the study was to understand the rituals,

‘in their entirety and in the social setting in which they were found’ (*Kimball Young: The Measurement of Personal and Social States*). Through ethnographic studies, anthropologists have explored how liminality manifests in diverse cultural contexts, from initiation ceremonies to religious rituals, shedding light on the universal aspects of human experience while acknowledging cultural variations. In sociology, the theory of liminality serves as a lens for examining processes of social change, identity formation, and collective behavior. Sociologists such as Victor Turner expanded upon van Gennep's framework, emphasizing the liminal phase's potential for subverting existing social structures and fostering innovation. Turner introduced the concept of anti-structure, highlighting how liminality can give rise to temporary states of egalitarianism and solidarity, challenging established hierarchies.

Through studies of social movements, festivals, and other collective phenomena, sociologists analyze how liminality disrupts conventional norms and facilitates the renegotiation of social boundaries, ultimately contributing to broader societal transformations. In psychology, the concept of liminality finds resonance in theories of personal development, transformation and healing. Nichole Hochner calls Gennep's methods as, ‘*methode des sequences* as it emerges from a dialogue between the social sciences and biology on the one hand with cosmology on the other’ (“On Social Rhythm: A Renewed Assessment of Van Gennep's Rites of Passage N”). Hochner also studied, ‘the enigmas of social life and the dynamics within the framework of understanding of metabolism and regenerative processes’ (“On Social Rhythm: A Renewed Assessment of Van Gennep's Rites of Passage N”).

Psychologists explore liminal experiences as pivotal moments of psychological transition and self-discovery. Liminality compels individuals to confront existential questions and traverse through existential angst and dilemma. Psychologists view rites of passage, life transitions and therapeutic processes as opportunities for individuals to traverse liminal spaces, confront their shadows, and integrate new aspects of the self. By embracing the liminal as a catalyst for personal growth and transformation, psychologists offer clients therapeutic frameworks .

In the field of literature and the arts, the concept of liminality inspires creative explorations of ambiguity, transformation, and liminal spaces. Writers, artists, and filmmakers depict liminal experiences as moments of rupture and possibility, where characters undergo profound inner journeys and societal upheavals. Themes of liminality permeate literary genres such as bildungsroman (coming-of-age narratives), dystopian fiction, and magical realism, that invites readers to reflect on the liminal nature of human existence. Similarly, in visual arts, performances, and multimedia installations, artists evoke liminality through symbols, metaphors, and immersive experiences, inviting audiences to embrace uncertainty and embrace the transformative potential of liminal spaces.

In religious studies, liminality holds significance in understanding rituals, mystical experiences, and spiritual transformation. Scholars of religion examine how religious rituals, such as pilgrimages, ceremonies, and rites of passage, embody liminal structures and symbols, facilitating participants' encounters with the sacred. Liminality is also central to mystical traditions, where seekers undergo spiritual journeys marked by ambiguity, paradox, and transcendence of ordinary reality. By studying religious texts, myths, and practices, scholars explore how liminality serves as a gateway to divine revelation, inner purification, and union with the divine, shaping believers' understanding of the sacred and their place within the cosmos.

So the theory of liminality transcends disciplinary boundaries and offers a rich conceptual framework for understanding transitions, transformations, and the dynamics of change across diverse fields of study. From anthropology to psychology, literature to religious studies, scholars and practitioners alike draw upon liminality to illuminate the complex interplay between structure and anti-structure, order and chaos, in human experience and society. As humans continue to navigate the thresholds of existence, the theory of liminality serves as a beacon of insight, inviting people to embrace ambiguity, navigate transitions, and cultivate resilience in the liminal spaces of existence.

Arnold van Gennep, the French anthropologist, was born on April 23, 1873, in Ludwigsburg, Germany, and he passed away on May 7, 1957, in Bourg-la-Reine, France. He came from a background of scholars and diplomats, which influenced his interest in

cultural studies and anthropology. Van Gennep's work was influenced by his predecessors in anthropology, including Émile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, and Franz Boas. He published *Rites of Passage* in 1909. He identified three main stages in these rites viz. separation, transition (or liminality) and incorporation. This framework has been widely adopted in the study of rituals and ceremonies across cultures. Liminality refers to the intermediate or transitional stage during a rite of passage when individuals are , betwixt and between, their previous and future social statuses. It is characterized by ambiguity, uncertainty, and the breakdown of social norms. Gennep emphasized the importance of understanding social structure and its relationship to rituals and ceremonies. He argued that rites of passage serve to reinforce social cohesion, mark significant life transitions, and maintain social order.

Gennep conducted extensive fieldwork and comparative analysis to develop his theories on rites of passage and liminality. His research involved studying various cultures and societies around the world, including indigenous communities in Africa, Asia and Oceania. He employed a combination of ethnographic observation, participant observation and extensive interviews to collect data on rituals and ceremonies. He moved from village to village to record his observations. His groundbreaking work, *The Rites of Passage*, established van Gennep as a pioneer in the study of rituals and ceremonies. He analyzed rituals from diverse cultures and identified the universal pattern of rites of passage.

Van Gennep's threefold classification of rites—separation, transition, and incorporation—provided a framework for understanding the symbolic significance of rituals in marking life transitions. Likewise in *Tabou et Totémisme à Madagascar* (Taboo and Totemism in Madagascar) (1910), Gennep explored the concepts of taboo and totemism within the cultural context of Madagascar. He examined how these beliefs and practices shape social organization and identity. Gennep studied the folklore and customs of his native France in *Le Folklore france*. He documented various folk traditions, rituals, and festivals, highlighting their significance in French culture.

In the book *Manuel de folklore français contemporain* (Handbook of Contemporary French Folklore) (1937), Gennep provided a comprehensive overview of

contemporary folk customs and traditions in France. He roamed around in the far off villages of France to closely observe the customs. He published his works profusely as compared to other anthropologists of his times. Similarly, *Form and Meaning of Ritual: Analysis of Myths and Rituals of the Eastern Mandelans* (1960) which was published posthumously, presents his analysis of the myths and rituals of the Eastern Mandelans. It is an analysis of the myths and rituals of the Eastern Mandelans, an indigenous group in Indonesia. He explored the symbolic meanings embedded in their rituals and their role in social organization. Gennep's work has had a lasting impact on the fields of anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies. His concepts of rites of passage and liminality continue to be foundational in understanding the significance of rituals and ceremonies in diverse cultural contexts. Rosemary Zumwalt calls him, 'the leader in the field of French folklore and ethnology' (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/676404>).

Post-modern scholars have built upon his ideas by applying them to contemporary issues such as migration, globalization, and identity formation. Gennep's contributions to the study of liminality and rites of passage represent a landmark in the field of anthropology. Through his research, writings, and theoretical frameworks, he provided valuable insights into the cultural significance of rituals and ceremonies across different societies. His work continues to act as a foundation for the post-modern scholars to explore the complex relationship between ritual, symbolism, and social structure in human societies.

The major tenets of Arnold van Gennep's theory of liminality includes the detailed analysis of the complexities of, betwixt and between state. How it affects the initiands previous status and their new status. The middle phase is characterized by ambiguity, uncertainty, and a suspension of the normal social order. It serves as a period of transformation and involves rituals or ceremonies to facilitate the passage from one social or cultural state to another. The other tenets that are of high relevance are the passage of rituals. A ritual or ceremony that marks and facilitates the transition of an individual or group from one social status or condition to another. He also coined the term *Communitas* which describes the sense of solidarity, equality, and togetherness experienced by individuals during the liminal phase of a rite of passage. *Communitas*

emerges when individuals are stripped of their usual social roles and hierarchies, leading to a sense of shared experience and identity.

Another important tenet is the formation of Anti-structure. He observed that during the liminal phase, social structures and hierarchies are temporarily suspended or inverted. This state of "anti-structure" allows for the renegotiation of social norms and the potential for transformative change. It also offers Structural Functionality. Van Gennep argued that rites of passage serve important social functions by facilitating transitions, maintaining social cohesion, and reinforcing cultural values and norms. These rituals help individuals navigate life transitions and contribute to the stability and continuity of society. The most important tenet was the Tripartite Structure. Van Gennep identified the three main stages of separation, liminality, and incorporation as a common structure found in many rites of passage across different cultures and societies. This tripartite framework provides a conceptual model for understanding the dynamics of ritualized transitions. So, Van Gennep's work laid the foundation for the study of rites of passage and their significance in shaping individual and collective identity, social structure, and cultural practices.

In his book *Rites of Passage*, Gennep extensively explored various rites including the various rituals performed in tribal communities of India and Hindu ceremonies like Janeyu ceremony, *annaprashna*, marriage ceremony etc. besides all the studies based on major life changing stages. Van Gennep discussed initiation rituals such as puberty ceremonies, tribal initiations, and religious rites of passage. For example, he examined the rituals performed by Australian Aboriginal tribes during the transition from adolescence to adulthood, which often involve tests of strength, endurance and spiritual significance. Marriage customs and ceremonies from different cultures are also explored, highlighting the symbolic significance of rituals such as betrothal, exchange of vows, community food, dancing and celebrations and the consummation of marriage. He gave new insights about how these rituals mark the transition from being single to being married and the incorporation of individuals into new social roles and responsibilities. Before his studies these ceremonies were considered by academia as something primitive, useless and unscientific.

Van Gennep analyzed funeral rites and mourning customs across cultures, focusing on how societies acknowledge and cope with death and the transition of the deceased from the realm of the living to the afterlife. He examined rituals such as funeral processions, burial rites and mourning periods and how important is their role in facilitating the grieving process and maintaining social cohesion. Even after death rituals like monthly, quarterly and annual ceremonies after death is reported through deep observation. Like in Hindus even grand ceremonies are held after four years of death, known as *chaubarsi* meaning after four years. He examined how these rituals often involve symbolic actions, prayers, and communal participation, serving to strengthen religious beliefs, foster community bonds, and mark important life transitions. He extensively, illustrated how rites of passage are woven into the fabric of human culture and society, providing structure and meaning to key life events and transitions. His analysis sheds light on the universality of ritualized practices and their significance in shaping individual and collective ideas

Gennep's theoretical framework on Liminality was further explored by various critics. Based on their studies, Vizedom and Caffee, in their work "Cross Cultural Study of Rites of Passage," also provided examples of rites of passage from various cultural contexts. They explored concepts like vision quests practiced by indigenous people in North America, such as the Lakota Sioux and Apache tribes. During a vision quest, young individuals undergo a period of isolation in nature, seeking spiritual guidance and a vision that will guide them in their adult life. Likewise, circumcision rituals practiced by different cultures, including the Jewish brit milah and the Islamic khitana ceremonies. These rituals mark the transition from childhood to adulthood for boys and it accompanies social celebrations and has religious significance. They also examined coming-of-age ceremonies from around the world, such as the Maasai warrior initiation in East Africa or the Apache Sunrise Dance in North America. These ceremonies signify the transition from adolescence to adulthood and involves tests of strength, endurance, and spiritual growth.

Elaborate wedding customs and marriage rites were also observed in diverse cultural settings through the lens of liminality. The examples include Hindu wedding

ceremonies with elaborate rituals and traditions symbolizing the union of two individuals and their families, as well as traditional African wedding ceremonies with rituals representing the joining of communities. They also explored funeral customs and mourning rituals from different cultures, highlighting the diverse ways in which societies honor and commemorate the deceased. They included examples from different tribes like the elaborate funeral rites of the Balinese people, which involve cremation ceremonies and rituals to guide the soul to the afterlife. These examples from Vizedom and Caffee's cross-cultural study demonstrate the wide range of rites of passage found across various societies and their importance in marking significant life transitions and events. Van Gennep's book laid out the framework for understanding rites of passage, including the stages of separation, liminality, and incorporation. Vizedom and Caffee utilized this framework as a theoretical basis for their own study. In their cross-cultural study, Vizedom and Caffee, examined various rites of passage from different cultural contexts, drawing parallels and identifying differences across societies. Overall, Vizedom and Caffee's study builds upon Gennep's theoretical framework and contributes to the broader field of ritual studies by offering cross-cultural insights into the universality and diversity of rites of passage. The greatest tribute to the neglected scholar of high repute was given by Victor Turner. When he came across, *Rites of Passage* and other works by Gennep, Turner was surprised that such an important work became the victim of scholarly circles of the sociologists like Emile Durkheim and others. Gennep was victimized and utterly neglected by the academia of his times. It was Turner who did justice to Gennep's important findings.

Victor Turner was a prominent anthropologist of the 1960's era. Turner's contributions to the study of liminality have had a profound impact on various disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, psychology, and religious studies. He published extensively on the tri-partite structure given by Gennep. His books on liminality further established liminality as a prominent theory. In his seminal work, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (1967) Turner examined the ritual practices of the Ndembu people of Zambia. He explored how rituals such as initiation rites, funeral ceremonies, and healing rituals serve in transitioning individuals and communities through liminal phases. Turner introduced the concept of "liminoid," which explores experiences that

imitates liminality but occur outside of traditional ritual contexts, such as festivals or artistic performances. He emphasized the symbolic significance of liminality in restructuring social relationships and reinforcing cultural values.

In the book *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969) Turner explained his concept of liminality presenting a theoretical framework for understanding rituals as transformative processes. He introduced the concept of *communitas*, a state of unstructured solidarity and equality that emerges during liminal phases. Turner argued that rituals disrupt social norms and hierarchies thus allowing for the creation of *communitas* and the renegotiation of social structure. He examined various rituals from different cultures to illustrate his theories, emphasizing the universal human need for ritual and symbolic expression.

In this collection of essays, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (1974), Turner further explored the role of symbols and rituals in shaping social behavior and identity. He introduced the concept of social drama, which referred to conflicts or tensions within a community that are expressed and resolved through symbolic action. Turner analyzed a wide range of social phenomena, including religious movements, political protests, and artistic performances, to demonstrate how symbols and rituals mediate social change and maintain cultural continuity. Similarly in his book, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (1982) he examined the relationship between ritual and performance. He argued that rituals and theatrical performances share common elements, such as role-playing, symbolism, and audience participation. Turner explored how rituals can be seen as a form of "play" that allows individuals to experiment with alternative identities and social roles. He also discusses the transformative power of theatre as a space for exploring and challenging social norms.

The Anthropology of Performance (1986) a collaborative work with Edith Turner, Victor Turner explored the concept of performance across different cultural contexts. Turner emphasized the role of symbolism, embodiment, and audience engagement in shaping the meaning and effectiveness of performances. He proposed that studying performance can provide insights into social dynamics, power relations and cultural values. So it can be analyzed that Turner's work introduced several key concepts that later

on became central to the study of ritual and performance, including liminality, *communitas*, and social drama. These concepts have been influential across multiple disciplines and continue to be relevant in contemporary research.

In terms of Cross-Cultural Studies also Turner's ethnographic research spanned various cultural contexts i.e. right from the Ndembu people of Zambia to Western societies. This comparative approach allowed him to uncover universal patterns in ritual and performance while also highlighting cultural differences in symbolism and practice. Turner drew on insights from inter-disciplinary perspectives also like anthropology, sociology, psychology, and semiotics to develop his theories of ritual and performance. His interdisciplinary approach enriched his analysis and facilitated discourse with scholars from different fields. The modern and post modern scholars continue to build on his theories and methods and they apply them to diverse contexts and exploring new avenues of research.

Victor Turner's exploration of liminality evolved around three stages: separation, liminality, and incorporation. Each stage of liminality offers insight into the physical and mental transformation that occurs in individuals. Turner's seminal works and subsequent scholarly interpretations gave *communitas* a foundational space in the theory of liminality. The first stage of liminality involves the separation of individuals or groups from their ordinary social roles and structures. This separation can occur voluntarily, through initiation rites or pilgrimages, or involuntarily, through societal upheaval or displacement. Turner asserted that separation marks the beginning of a transformative journey, where individuals are temporarily freed from the constraints of their everyday identities and obligations.

During the separation stage, individuals undergo rituals or symbolic actions that demarcate their transition into the liminal phase. These rituals involve physical or symbolic acts of departure, such as leaving one's home or shedding old garments before a ceremony. Turner argues that separation creates a sense of disorientation and vulnerability, as individuals step out of familiar social frameworks and enter an ambiguous and undefined space. The liminal phase is characterized by a state of , betwixt and between, where individuals or groups occupy a marginal or threshold position in

society, for example a first time would be mother during the nine months of pregnancy. Such women are moving from girlhood to womanhood with impending irreversible changes in life. She remains in an in-between state following different rituals of day to day life as compared to the other women around her. The normal rules are temporarily suspended. During this phase she will have a sense of *communitas*, or unstructured solidarity, with other pregnant women who are also in the same liminal state.

Communitas represents a temporary state of equality and shared experience, transcending social hierarchies and divisions. Like during *satsang* of a particular group people feel a sense of belonging towards each other. Turner gave the example of Chaitnya Mahaprabhus *satsang* group which was popular in Bengal in India. Similarly the hippies' group or rock bands also form a unique *communitas*. In modern times, alumni groups, colleagues of same company or diaspora of a country form spontaneous *communitas*. Turner proposed that *communitas* emerges spontaneously during liminality, as individuals come together in their shared liminal condition. This sense of solidarity fosters empathy, cooperation, and a sense of shared space, as individuals navigate the liminal space together.

The final stage of liminality involves the incorporation of individuals or groups back into society, but in a transformed state. Turner identified this stage with reintegration process, where individuals bring back with them new knowledge, insights, and social roles acquired during the liminal phase. Incorporation marks the completion of the ritual journey and the reestablishment of social order and structure. During the incorporation stage, individuals undergo rituals or symbolic actions that signify their return to society. These rituals involve reintegration into their previous social roles or the assumption of new roles within the community. Turner maintained that incorporation is not a return to the status quo but a renegotiation of social identity and relationships based on the experiences of the liminal phase.

The last stage was termed as post-liminal stage. The last stage is characterized by structural inversion. During liminality, social hierarchies, rules, guidelines and norms are temporarily suspended. Such halting of norms allowed for the exploration of alternative social structures and roles. In the post-liminal stage, these alternative configurations may persist or be incorporated into existing social systems that may lead to long-term changes

in social organization and power dynamics. Turner also found that the role of liminality and the post-liminal stage is to foster creativity, innovation, and social change. By disrupting established patterns of thought and behavior, liminality opened up new possibilities for new individual and collective expression. The post-liminal stage represented an opportunity to harness this creative energy and channel it into meaningful action within society.

The post-liminal stage is not always a smooth or linear process. Reintegration into society can be troubled with challenges, as individuals navigate the tensions between their transformed identities and societal expectations. Like the Arya Samaj movements or Brahmo Samaj movements in India or formation of a new community. Moreover, the changes initiated during liminality may encounter resistance from established power structures or cultural norms like it is always difficult to establish a new political party in any country. So, the post-liminal stage represents the culmination of the transformative process initiated during liminality. It is a time of reintegration, reaggregation, and renewal, where individuals or groups bring their liminal experiences back into the social fold. Through ritual, symbolism, and narrative, individuals make sense of their transformations and renegotiate their roles within society. The post-liminal stage is that stage where the seeds planted during liminality take root and flourish in the fertile soil of collective vision.

Apart from the tri-partite structure, Turner distinguished *communitas* into two types, spontaneous *communitas*, that arises organically among individuals in liminal situations, and normative *communitas*, that is structured and sanctioned by society through rituals and collective activities like classmates in a classroom or monks in a monastery. *Communitas* represents a temporary suspension of social hierarchies and divisions, allowing individuals to experience a sense of belonging and shared humanity. However, he also acknowledged the transient nature of *communitas* as it dissipates once individuals reenter the structured social order.

By breaking down the liminal process into distinct stages, Turner provided a framework for understanding how rituals reshape social identity and relationships. Turner's concept of liminality encompasses both temporal and spatial dimensions,

reiterating the liminal state as a transitional period and a marginal space. This holistic perspective allowed for a nuanced analysis of liminal experiences across different cultural contexts. While Turner's theory of liminality has been highly influential, it has also faced critiques and extensions from scholars in various disciplines. Some critics have questioned the universality of Turner's model, arguing that liminality may manifest differently in different cultural and historical contexts. Others have extended Turner's framework to analyze contemporary phenomena such as globalization, digital culture, and social movements. Despite critiques and extensions, Turner's theory continues to inspire research and reflection on the nature of social change, identity formation, and collective belonging. Many of the scholars and researchers in other fields extensively explored the theory of liminality. Prominent among them are studied in detail in the current chapter.

Turner was fortunate in terms of exploring the theory through the help of academic circles as compared to the conditions in which Gennep had to work. In fact he was given scholarship by the then British government to study the rituals of African tribes particularly the Ndembu tribe. He studied the rituals of Ndembu tribe very closely. In his book *The Forest of Symbols* he talks extensively about the rituals associated with witchcraft. He interpreted the symbolism embedded in these rituals. In his book he elucidates, 'It was an astonishing and enriching experience to note the contrast between the relatively simple and monotonous economic and domestic life of these hunters and hoe cultivators and the ordered arrangement and colorful symbolism of their religious life' (*The Forest of Symbols* 2). He also divided rituals into two types, the first one is life crisis and the second one as rituals of affliction. Turner studied the Ndembu rituals very seriously. He didn't consider them as mere external entities but as something that indicated towards some important symbolism. For example, 'if a girl is unable to conceive in Ndembu tribe, she is made to undergo a tree that produces milk like substance and all the women dance around her dance and sing folk songs of fertility. Songs that pray to old spirits to bless the girl with an offspring. The songs are also filled with the theme of the desire of warding off of any evil spirit haunting the girl. They pray to the souls of their ancestors to protect and bless the girl.

Turner interprets this ritual as, 'the milk tree symbolism in the context of girl's puberty ritual, informants tend to stress the harmonizing cohesive aspect of the milk tree symbolism. The child depends on his/her mother for nutrients; similarly, the tribesmen drink from the breasts of tribal custom. Thus, nourishment and learning are equated in the meaning content of the milk tree' (*The Forest of Symbols* 22). A comparative study of rituals associated with the milk suggests, 'the benevolent aspects of domestic and tribal life' (*The Forest of Symbols* 22). The overall interpretation of the symbolic significance that Turner gives is based on the day-to-day human needs for existence like in the case of Ndembu, it is hunting, agriculture, fertility etc.

Emile Durkheim also supports this idea. He says, 'primitive religions hold to reality and express it, one must learn to go underneath the symbol to the reality which it represents and which gives it its meaning. No religions are false, all answer, though in different ways, to the given conditions of human existence' (Durkheim 37). Thus, the rituals that externally appear to be of physical nature have a significant contribution in adding some meaningfulness into the normal life. It is all because of the compulsion of the society to maintain its structure, its organization by promoting collaboration, harmony and sometimes even competition within the group. The shared values that are observed in the tribal groups that Victor Turner observed was, 'comradeship, respect for elders, importance of kinship etc' (Turner 57).

The symbols both ritual and psychic are based on the inner drives of human beings. The inner drives may motivate tribesmen and women to digress from morality or tribes values but those, 'raw energies of conflict are domesticated into the service of social order' (Turner 39). The behavioral expression of the tribal group is channelized in such a way, through rituals that it develops a kind of bonding among them. A natural social order is followed by the tribesmen and the senior feeds the junior or mentors him in different ways. The junior largely follows the senior. Thus the total system depends on certain principles with concealed goals. A whole new complex relationship exists between the rituals and the symbols embedded in it. The interpretation of the symbols are done at three levels by Turner which includes meaning at, 'the level of indigenous interpretation, the operational meaning and the positional meaning' (Turner 50). The first

type of meaning can be gauged from the expert tribesman and layman's interpretation. Whereas the operational meaning can be derived from the actual utility of that particular ritual. The positional meaning is derived from the position of the ritual in the scheme of the whole. Such symbols may have multiple meanings. It is the, 'associational link' (Turner 51) that determines the multiple meanings.

Victor Turner observed the rituals from the liminal point of view. He tried to bring out the socio-cultural properties of the liminal period. If one considers the society as a structure then, 'the period of margin or liminality can be called an inter-structural situation' (Turner 93). He chooses the symbolic themes within the rituals to make the readers understand the inter-structural human beings' (Turner 93). As far as the rituals are concerned almost all the societies carry forward them but in small and well-knit societies we find prominence of rituals. It is so because the smaller well knit societies are more stable and more dependent on the cycles of nature thus the best expression of rituals is found among them. Victor Turner equates the transition period during the rituals as, 'water in the process of being heated to boiling point, or a pupa changing from grub to moth' (Turner 94).

The pioneering anthropologist from America, William Lloyd Warner describes the entire human journey as, 'the movement of a man through his lifetime, from a fixed placental placement within his mother's womb to his death and ultimate fixed point of his tombstone and final containment in his grave as a dead organism punctuated by a number of critical moments of transition which all societies ritualize' (*The Living and the Dead* 303). All these major phases are celebrated in the presence of near and dear ones and the neighbors as well as friends also become a witness to the important events, like birthdays, christening ceremony, wedding, death etc. So all the phases that Lloyd mentions are basically life changing. Turner adds that rituals are not just cultural practices they are transformative in nature however ceremonies can be called as confirmatory in nature. The liminal being can be compared to what T S Eliot describes in one of his poems, 'Caught in the form of limitation, between un-being and being...' (<https://allpoetry.com/Four-Quartets-1:-Burnt-Norton>).

Turner remained open to the different interpretation of rituals but his main

concern was the deepest analysis from the socio-cultural point of view. He also suggested the analysis from the Structuralist angle and cultural anthropological level. The reason being he considered the symbols as 'timeless entities' (Turner 44). While exploring the three states as mentioned by Van Gennep, Turner focuses on the liminal state or the middle state. He calls the individual going through rituals as, 'liminal persona' (Turner 95). The person who goes through the rituals for the first time is called, 'initiate,' or 'neophyte' (Turner 96). The symbolism associated with the liminal persona is complex. Although it is largely based on the major biological changes in an individual, still it has been expressed through structural and cultural practices.

The major symbols basically express the phenomena related to biology of change like metabolism, beginning of secondary sexual characters, decomposition of death or even death. Menstruation and puberty are biological processes but these changes are expressed in the form of rituals. So the circumcision ceremony of boys is equated with menstruation in girls. The neophyte is almost considered as dead during the entire ritual he/she is directed to lie motionless. Sometimes they may be blackened by some color depending on the type of ceremony. the neophytes are symbolically treated as an embryo. Turner says, 'neophytes are neither living nor dead from one aspect and both living and dead from another. Their condition is one of ambiguity and paradox, a confusion of all the customary categories' (Turner 97). This condition also corresponds to Hegel's concept of, 'yea and nay' (97).

Turner designates the nowhere qualities to all the, 'positive structural assertions' (Turner 97). Not only this are the transitional beings also considered unclean and polluted also for that particular period of transition. Since the neophytes belong to neither one status nor to the other so they are basically in a, 'betwixt and between' (Turner 97) situation. Pollution here refers to the state of being ambiguous and contradictory in nature. So under the structured pattern, the de-structuring of the neophyte takes place. For this the elders and the village priests pray to the supernatural powers to grant the new status. Since the neophyte lives in seclusion during the ritual like in some special hut. The Ndembu call it, '*kunkunka*,' in their local language that literally means, seclusion site. Many a times in certain ceremonies they are either masked, disguised in bushes or

concealed in some place.

Since most of the tribes in Ndembu follow certain traits of matrilineal and patrilineal societies the neophytes in such communities are also considered as neither male nor female during the liminal period. They are either sexless or bisexual. Turner tries to find out the roots in Hellenic societies like Plato mentions in his *Symposium* that the early humans were androgynous in nature. The tribes assign sexless state to the neophyte because in a structured society sex distinctions are important and at the instant of transition the conditions pertain to the sexless state of the neophyte. Right that moment the neophyte has no status, property, status, property or rank. They are also equated to snakes and bears, because when these animals are in the state of hibernation they are almost dead but not actually dead. Turner calls it, 'the coincidence of the opposite processes and notions in a single representation characterizes the peculiar unity of the liminal; that which is neither this nor that, and yet is both' (Turner 99).

If the rituals are taking place in the form of groups the other neophytes felt a kind of comradeship with each other because they are going through similar conditions or rituals. This group of liminal beings feels a sense of comradeship and equality among themselves. The elders also treat them equally. For example during the rituals if a mother brings food it is shared by all neophytes equally. The son of the tribe's headman and that of the common tribesman are considered equal in status. The new found comradeship is a consequence of inter- structural liminality and in this condition the neophytes can be just themselves because they are free from any kind of role or responsibilities. The time span of the ritual also gives them time to develop inter personal bonds.

During the rituals, many tribes use figurines and colorful masks to mark the ceremony. If one closely analyses these objects like Turner focuses on certain masks used during circumcision and funeral rites, he says, 'certain natural and cultural features are represented as disproportionately large or small. A head, nose, or phallus, a hoe, bow, or meal mortar are represented as huge or tiny by comparison with other features of their context which retain their normal size'(Turner 103). Its perhaps primarily done due to the primordial method of abstract meaning. Like the Bemba pottery emblem in which a huge figure of a pregnant woman is shown, she is also breastfeeding one baby while she is

carrying three more babies on her back along with the figurine is a riddle that when interpreted says that a mother advises her daughter to avoid intercourse with her husband until she is weaning her first baby that is to keep a gap of at least two to three years between the babies. What the doctors tell the couples now was practiced by Bemba people long ago.

Similarly, as far as the use of grotesque masks are concerned, the tribes didn't distinguish much between animals and humans. Since they lived close to nature they maintained the fluidity between man-animal nature thus the animal figures or exaggerated features of animals appeared in their art. The purpose of such art was not to terrorize the neophytes, it was done to make the neophytes aware of their own culture. Interestingly the masks had the features of both the sexes and humans as well as animals. It was done deliberately to maintain unity between the natural environment and man-made objects.

During liminality the existing order dissolves and the fresh order emerges in the sense that the liminal personae are encouraged to think and adopt the tribe's values and customs and realize their own powers also. They are placed in an environment where they can reflect. Through certain external objects like masks and other forms of instructions the communication of tradition is done in different ways, like, 'the reduction of culture into recognized components or factors, the second is their combination in fantastic or monstrous patterns, and shapes and the third is their recombination in ways that make sense with regard to the new state and status that the neophytes will enter' (Turner 106). Normally the tribe uses the masks of lion or half man- half lion figures so that the lion's head becomes prominent to make the neophytes think about qualities of a lion and adopt them in his character. Perhaps this also answers the mystery behind Greek figures. So liminality is the realm of primitive abstract living. After the process of rituals is over the neophytes return to the community with a renewed energy and are ready to don new roles.

The objects and rites used during the liminal period have social, cultural, mental and emotional connotations. The objects carry archetypal significance also. Not only the neophytes go through such stages even the tribes chief or the king also go through such

processes. Like in the Swazi tribe, during the first fruit festival the king is secluded and painted black in order to observe the waxing and waning of the moon. He is kept in seclusion for the whole night with his first wife only. The whole tribe also experiences a sense of seclusion. Merry making is not allowed. The king sits naked inside the harem on a lion's skin. Men of the tribe keep a watch. The tribesmen do not scratch their skin, they wake up early, and they do not sit here and there. Even the queen mother is also painted black. Both are symbolically under some kind of eclipse.

After a certain period, they are washed with water having special properties. After washing the moon shines again, that is the queen and the king regain their glory. So here also the king is the ruler but still he has to follow the rules, he is not above the tribal law. Not only this some men keep a watch on him. He is naked like a poor man and above all his face is blackened. He has to sit on the earth for a long period so the king is also kept grounded. In this liminal period the king is just like an ordinary common tribesman. Turner calls this, 'mid transition period as the basic building block of a culture'(Turner 110).

Turner's perception towards the threshold experience has generated voluminous research in this area. Turner was a widely traveled man and in his later years he was interested in exploring the universalistic elements of rituals. Initially, he focused on social drama and liminal experience but later on he included literature, films and other forms of spectacle as part of his explorations. Turner's last book *From Ndembu to Broadway* sums up the concept of Liminality because by then he had studied Brazilian Umbanda ritual and he proved that most of the basis of the rituals are of African origin.

In one of his seminal treatises on liminality, *The Anthropology of Performance* (1987) in which he focused on 'not-yetness and unfinishedness' (*The Anthropology of Performance* 7). He considered the performances as a continuous and dynamic process. Ritual is not just a physical entity it is an idea, a concept, yearning and function. In this book Schechner also explores Turner's idea of evolutionary process, formal qualities of rituals, and the experience of a lived reality. He talked about the physical body, the brain and the culture that it experiences. He considered the liminal process as the process that generated the source of culture.

He also reiterated that some rituals are genetically programmed but this idea was challenged by the scientists. He calls the brain a liminal organ. He draws his ideas from neuro-anatomist Paul MacLean who had claimed that there is a reptilian brain inside that controls the movement and a newer limbic brain related to emotions. Turner believed that the genetic brain and the cultural information decide our external behavior. This combination also helps in producing symbiotic co-adaptations between culture types and genotypes of the brain. He goes to the extent of believing that humans are genetically free to determine the process of co-adaptation. So the creative process is a result of new cultural knowledge and co-adaptation.

While analyzing Turner's theory Richard Schechner distinguishes between secret and public liminality. He also talks about the performative genre that is hidden from the masses he calls it, 'isolated liminality' (Turner 26). For Schechner rituals are not that rigid the way Christian anthropologists have defined them. He says all the great genres like, 'carnival, drama, spectacle, possess in common a temporal structure which interdigitates constantly with variable features and allows a place for spontaneous invention and improvisation in the course of any given performance' (*The Anthropology of Performance* 26). Thus liminality is a phase that brings change after making a person go through such changes that cause some turbulence. The exploratory nature of liminality forces change in an individual or a group.

Schechner has equated cultural subjectivity with Gennep's Liminality. He divides the study of rituals into those that were performed to show the performers in order to cause transition like in birth rites from elevation to seniority like in circumcision and marriage rites. Whereas the other rites mark a whole group's passage from one culturally designated season to another season of the natural cycle like the seasons based on the movement of the sun, moon and other planets. In the life crisis rituals the novices are secluded. Public liminality is controlled by public subjunctivity. In such a scenario, normal taboos are abandoned, people are allowed to play with their fantasies, and the low are encouraged and the high are made fun of for light jest only but crime is not allowed neither misbehavior.

Liminality is not a simple phase. Through the liminal phase one can observe the

societies deepest values, the hidden secrets, ancestral narratives, morality, heroic deeds, basic instincts, values and their ability to transcend the baser instincts. Similarly, besides positive things some new things crop up like ambiguity, some follies, satirization of authorities, commentary on public life etc during the course of rituals. So due to verbal, nonverbal and meta-language communication the performers or initiands reach a stage of threshold. The liminal personae experiences and learns the cultural codes of the group to which he or she belongs. 'They are liminal in the sense that they are suspensions of quotidian reality, occupying privileged spaces where people are allowed to think about how they think, about the terms in which they conduct their thinking, or to feel about how they feel in daily life' (*The Anthropology of Performance* 102).

Richard Schechner has studied social drama as, 'a form of plural reflexivity in human social action' (Schechner 106). It involves everything like stage, stagecraft, masks, wall paintings, dance forms, body -paintings also, facial expression, stages, performances, episodes, acts, music, drum beating, other paraphernalia etc. The actors in the midst of a play are also under the liminal phase. He is donning a different role. He may be a number one actor of the country but right now on stage he might be playing the role of a beggar or a mendicant. The stage acts as an isolated platform like a hut or the bushes behind which the liminal personae hides himself for sometimes. Similarly, the actor has to perform within that limited platform of the stage.

Since traditional rituals are on the decline, play has become a more popular kind of public ritual. The play, performance or drama has inherited a ritual framework in many senses because just like the rituals a play also comprises a serious message embedded in the grotesque show. The modern versions are the TV shows and the latest versions are Tik Tok videos. Sticking to the views of the theorists on liminality, a play can be called a, 'free activity' (<https://www.pgpedia.com/h/johan-huizinga>) as termed by Huizinga, a play that is outside ordinary life but yet not so serious an activity. It involves raw emotions, mimicry, use of masks which again can be called as a primitive behavior. So the social structure which actually now is dialectical in nature moves from structure to anti-structure and again back to a renewed transformed structure. From, 'I' to 'we', 'and from we to I is what happens in *communitas*. Just like the liminal nature of a play or

drama the carnival also carries the features of liminality according to Turner.

A carnival is normally a procession of singers and dancers celebrating and parading on roads to celebrate some prominent occasion. Like the famous samba dance carnival of Brazil. In which the parading group is led by a singer and all the group members are dressed in colorful scanty clothes and some also wear wings like that of a butterfly. Special features of this dance are colorful painted lines on the face and lots of long feathers on the head dress. They sing in chorus, gyrate, show a lot of energy along with energetic dance. Colorful eye masks are also prominent during carnivals. It showcases the infantile desires of the adults. During the samba festival the entire streets are thronged by samba dancers and offices are closed. People are in a holiday mood.

Maria Goldwasser calls this type of communitas anti-structure because it shows transitional phase, 'in which differences of pre-carnival status are annulled, with the aim of creating among the participants a relationship of communitas' (*The Anthropology of Performance* 132). Communitas provides a platform for equality. Maria says, 'in communitas we find an inversion of the structured situations of everyday reality marked by routinization and the conferment of structural status. The status system and communitas -or structure and anti-structure which also possess its own systematic character confront one another as two homologous series in opposition' (*The Anthropology of Performance* 132). So, culture, ritual or our performances in day-to-day life is not something that should be observed in isolation. We, as human race, are an embodiment of multitudes. The human brain and the nervous system is a part of the grand evolution process, 'each of us is a microcosm, related in the deepest ways to the whole life-history of that lovely deep blue globe swirled over with the white whorls first photographed by Edwin Aldrin and Neil Armstrong from their primitive space chariot, the work of many brains' (*The Anthropology of Performance* 177).

Researchers have not just stuck to performances but architectural designs are also being studied under liminality, in terms of liminal space studying, 'the communicative ethics of balconies as liminal spaces' (Aronis 1). Liminality also shows the threshold space between two fixed entities. To overcome a threshold of any kind requires a lot of effort and courage. In terms of modern industrial living, the motivation behind crossing

any threshold should be lucrative, for example in jobs the motivation can be promotion, getting high rank or status, hike in salary etc. It motivates the employees to keep on working, to keep on moving. No matter how difficult the new task is people go on moving.

However, since the thresholds are quite difficult to overcome and crossing it may also lead to self-doubt, frustration, disorientation and disillusionment. Moving beyond the fixed mindset and the fixed structure also requires a lot of effort and mobility on the part of the liminal personae. Astrophysicist Jedidah Isler refers to liminality as a genius that is untapped besides a concept that shows that ‘there’s freedom in [the] in-between, freedom to create from the indefiniteness of not-quite-here, not-quite-there, a new self-definition’ (Rachael Abouras 1). States of uncertainty generate creative thinking. Similarly Pamela Weintraub also gives the modern interpretation of liminality in terms of personal growth, ‘the more time we spend in alien realms...the more likely we are to perceive the world in ways we could never otherwise imagine, evoking a perfect backdrop for fevered creative work, learning, and personal growth’ (Rachael Abouras 2).

In fact, all the literary genres are also a product of liminal phase of the poet’s creativity. The poet brings out the best literary product when he is isolated even among the crowds. His/her flight of imagination, a state of transcendence produces those higher thoughts though physically he might be present in a party or inside a railway coach like Philip Larkin, who produced most of his poems while traveling to work by train and while performing his job at the library. Like the *Toad*, *The Whitsun Wedding*, *High Windows*, *Love Again*, and *Church Going*. Michelle Brittan Rosado also shares the same thoughts, ‘poetry for me has been a celebration of the in-between...Poetry has since carried me through uncertainty and knitted together what is broken apart. How merciful that language, land, and water have the ability to carry us when we have left what we know but have not yet arrived at where we are going’ (<https://uwpres.wisc.edu/blog/2018/11/on-poetry-of-place-the-in-between-and-tenderness/>). Thus it is an experience which is universal in nature. Rachel Abouras calls liminality as a universal experience, ‘Liminality, or this powerful sense of in-betweenness, is a feeling that most people have experienced at some point in their lives.

The liminal experience can therefore be described as a universal one — it cuts across all cultures and all stages of life' (Abouras 2).

Turner's greatest contribution is the discovery, exploration and elaboration of Van Gennep's basic concepts of Liminality. The major terms that Turner gave are, spatial liminality, temporal liminality, spontaneous communitas etc. Victor elaborated upon Van Gennep's notion of territorial passage. The territorial passages that are particularly mentioned by him are geographical border lines like rivers, gorges, big rocks, thresholds, portals, doors, gates and even neutral zones between countries. Bjorn Thomassen further classified the spatial dimensions of Liminality such demarcated spaces (e.g. some communities do not enter into the kitchen with shoes or slippers, thresholds, doorway in a house, some line that separates the holy places like temples even the small temples inside the home is sacred and purity of that space is maintained by everyone in the house from the rest of the spaces, specific objects, parts or openings of human body.- Areas, prisons, monasteries, sea ports, zones like continents, countries on maps and political boundaries of countries etc.

Richard Schechner gave fresh insight about the rituals of animals. He compared and contrasted the behavioural pattern of animals and humans during rituals. He proposed that bees dance is genetically programmed and it is not something that is performed on its own. Whereas human beings can improvise or make changes even in rigid classical dance forms. He agreed with Turner's statement regarding the extent of patterns fixed in animals and insects with respect to certain rituals and behavioral patterns. Turner's wife Edith Turner was also equally talented and scholarly in nature. She also added to the volume of knowledge produced by Turner. Since she had travelled with him extensively so she also got the opportunity to explore the nuances of cultural practices of various tribes.

Edith Turner's study on liminality involves examining it as a state of trance. She explores how in various cultures, individuals undergoing liminal experiences, such as during rituals or ceremonies, might enter altered states of consciousness similar to a trance state. These trance-like states can facilitate a deeper connection to spiritual or supernatural realms, leading to insights, transformations, and a sense of communal

identity. Turner's work delves into the intricate relationship between liminality and trance, shedding light on the profound psychological and cultural dimensions of these experiences.

Edith Turner's exploration of the trance state within the context of liminality also adds that during liminal experiences, individuals may enter altered states of consciousness resembling a trance. This trance state is characterized by a departure from ordinary reality, where individuals may experience heightened emotions, altered perceptions, and a strong connection to spiritual or supernatural forces. Turner's research suggests that this trance state within liminality can serve as a catalyst for personal transformation, insight, and a deeper understanding of one's role within a community or society. It's a way of navigating the transitional phase of liminality and harnessing its potential for psychological, social, and spiritual change.

Bjorn Thomassen's book, *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In Between* delves into the concept of liminality and its relevance in the modern world. Thomassen applies the concept of liminality to contemporary society, and asserts that modernity itself is characterized by liminality. Thomassen's key arguments, methodologies, and contributions to understanding of modernity through the lens of liminality is well accepted by critics. In his seminal work, Thomassen begins by elucidating the concept of liminality, drawing from anthropological frameworks developed by Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner. He explains how liminality involves a state of ambiguity, where the old order breaks down, and the new order has not yet fully emerged. This phase is marked by uncertainty, transition, and potential transformation. He also argued that modernity itself embodies liminality. He suggests that the very essence of modernity is characterized by constant flux, rapid change, and the dissolution of traditional boundaries.

He gave examples through different case studies and examples drawn from various cultural, social, and political contexts. He examined phenomena such as migration, globalization, urbanization, and technological advancements to illustrate how liminality manifests in different aspects of contemporary life. By analyzing these real-world examples, Thomassen provided empirical evidence for his theoretical framework.

One key aspect of Thomassen's analysis is the role of agency and resistance within liminal spaces. While individuals may feel disoriented or powerless during periods of transition, he highlights that how they can also seize opportunities for agency and resistance.

Thomassen offered a critique of conventional narratives of progress and development. He challenged the idea that modernity represents a linear trajectory towards improvement and instead emphasized upon its inherent contradictions and complexities. He encouraged readers to question dominant discourses and rethink their understanding of contemporary society. Thomassen's methodology combines theoretical analysis with empirical research, drawing from a range of disciplines including anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, and political theory. He employed a multi-method approach that included qualitative interviews, ethnographic observation, textual analysis, and critical theory. This interdisciplinary approach allowed Thomassen to capture the nuanced dynamics of liminality in modern life.

By reexamining modernity through the lens of liminality, Thomassen made several significant contributions to academic scholarship and social theory. He provided a novel perspective on contemporary society that highlighted its fluidity, complexity, and ambiguity. His analysis has practical implications for understanding and addressing pressing issues such as globalization, migration, inequality and environmental change. He established that modernity is a liminal phenomenon. Overall, Thomassen's book is a rich and nuanced exploration of the complexities of living in-between in the modern world.

Another important research work is by Paul Stenner. His work on liminality explored the concept within the context of social psychology. His analysis digs into the psychological aspects of liminality while examining how individuals navigate these liminal spaces and the implications for identity, agency, and social dynamics. Stenner's work on liminality is based on the idea that human experiences are shaped by the interplay between stability and change as well as continuity and disruption. Drawing on the seminal work of anthropologist Turner, Stenner extended liminal stages to the realm of psychology, emphasizing its relevance for understanding individual and collective processes of transformation.

Central to Stenner's analysis is the notion that liminality involves a suspension of normal social structures and meanings, opening up spaces for reconfiguration and innovation. One of Stenner's key contributions is his conceptualization of liminality as a dynamic process characterized by various tensions and paradoxes. He found that liminal states are characterized by ambiguity, uncertainty and a sense of disorientation, as individuals navigate the boundaries between familiar and unfamiliar, past and future, self and other. The study of cancer narratives also reveals that the cancer sufferers also go through this fluid state of mind. This ambiguity gives rise to both anxiety, depression and chaos.

While liminality involves a temporary loss of conventional roles and identities, Stenner proposed that it also offers opportunities for agency and self-reflection. Through acts of self-expression, experimentation and reflexivity, individuals can assert their agency and actively participate in the process of identity construction and transformation as it also happens in the case of cancer sufferers also. Stenner employed a variety of qualitative and quantitative approaches to study liminality, ranging from interviews and participant observation to surveys and experimental designs. He observed the importance of capturing the subjective experiences of individuals undergoing liminal transitions, while also exploring broader patterns and dynamics at the group or societal level. This interdisciplinary approach allowed Stenner to illuminate the complex interplay between psychological, cultural, and social factors shaping liminal experiences.

One of the central themes in Stenner's analysis is the relationship between liminality and identity. According to him the liminal states challenge traditional notions of identity as stable and fixed, instead highlighting their fluid and contingent nature. In liminal spaces, individuals may experience a sense of "betwixt and between," as they negotiate multiple identities and social roles. This may lead to feelings of ambiguity and ambivalence, as individuals grapple with questions of belonging and self-definition. As it also happens in the case of cancer sufferers studied in detail in the consecutive chapters. The cancer sufferers go through fluid identity formation. Stenner explored how liminality intersects with power dynamics and social inequalities. He highlighted how marginalized

groups may experience liminality in distinct ways, as they navigate the boundaries between inclusion and exclusion, visibility and invisibility.

Stenner's analysis of liminality also sheds light on the role of emotions in shaping liminal experiences. He states that emotions play a central role in mediating individuals' responses to liminal transitions, influencing their perceptions, behaviors, and sense of self. Emotions such as anxiety, excitement, and hope may accompany liminal states, reflecting individuals' ambivalent attitudes towards change and uncertainty. Robbie and Samantha observe that Stenner's book, *'Liminality and Experience'* takes a big canvass, meaningfully encompassing revelry and loneliness, dogs and humans, physical matter and life, consciousness and symbolic communication'(Theory).

Stenner found how emotions are both shaped by and contribute to the construction of liminal meanings, as individuals interpret and make sense of their experiences. Moreover, Stenner's work highlights the spatial and temporal dimensions of liminality, how it unfolds across different scales and contexts. Liminality is not confined to specific moments or locations but can manifest in various forms across individual lifespans, cultural traditions, and historical periods. Stenner's analysis thus underscores the importance of situating liminality within its broader socio-cultural context, acknowledging the diverse ways in which it is experienced and interpreted by different groups and communities. Paul Stenner's work on liminality offers a rich and significant analysis of the complex phenomenon within the field of social psychology. Through his interdisciplinary approach and focus on subjective experiences, Stenner provides valuable insights into the ways in which liminality shapes identity, agency, and social transformation.

Arpad Szokolczai, a prominent sociologist and political theorist, has also made significant contributions to the understanding of liminality within social theory. His work focuses on the complexities of liminality, examining its implications for social change, identity formation and power dynamics. He expanded the concept of liminality beyond traditional ritual contexts to encompass various social phenomena, including political upheavals, cultural transformations and existential experiences. Liminality is not confined to specific rituals but permeates all aspects of social life, manifesting in

moments of uncertainty and flux. One of Szakolczai's central arguments is that liminality serves as a catalyst for social change. For him, the periods of transition disrupt established norms and structures, creating space for new ideas, practices, and power relations to emerge. He gave historical examples such as revolutions and social movements and illustrated how liminal moments destabilize existing social orders and open up possibilities for alternative configurations.

The liminal experiences challenge fixed notions of identity, prompting individuals to renegotiate their sense of self in relation to shifting social contexts. This renegotiation process involves both introspection and interaction, as individuals grapple with questions of belonging, authenticity, and agency. Szakolczai highlighted the fluidity of identity during liminal phases, where boundaries between self and other become blurred, enabling new forms of subjectivity to emerge. He contended that liminal moments unsettle hierarchical structures and disrupt dominant power relations, creating opportunities for marginalized groups to assert their agency and challenge entrenched forms of oppression. He also acknowledged the potential for repressive forces to co-opt liminality for their own ends, reinforcing existing inequalities and suppressing dissent.

Szakolczai's nuanced understanding of power considers both its productive and oppressive dimensions within liminal contexts. Critics have pointed out the need for more empirical research to substantiate his theoretical claims in terms of liminality, society, politics and literature. He is advised to look into other nuances as well and explore the diversity of liminal experiences across different social contexts. Like Brendan Purcell observes about his work on liminality in the book *Novels and the Sociology of the Contemporary*, 'Szakolczai generalizes it to apply to various instances of the massive cultural confusion engendered by a modernity turning its back on the classic philosophical and revelational roots of pre-modern Western society. Many but not all of the authors he's studied experience this as a negative withdrawal or loss of those foundational experiences, while others, such as Diderot, Szakolczai diagnoses as contributing to it' (Purcell).

There's a lot of scope in the analysis of the intersecting factors that shape liminality, including race, gender, and class. There is potential for future research to explore the implications of digital technologies on liminality in contemporary society. The proliferation of online spaces has transformed the ways in which individuals experience transition and negotiate identity, presenting new challenges and opportunities for understanding liminality in the digital age.

Mihai Spariosu was also a prominent scholar known for his work on liminality, particularly in the context of literature and culture. His contributions to the understanding of liminality have been significant and have influenced various fields including literary studies, cultural anthropology, and philosophy. Spariosu's work evolves around the concept of liminality based on his study on Arnold van Gennep's concept of rites of passage, Spariosu elaborates on liminality as a state of ambiguity, uncertainty, and potentiality. He applies the concept of liminality to literary texts, exploring how authors use narrative structures, characters, and symbols to depict liminal spaces and experiences. He analyzed how liminality is portrayed in various genres, from myths and folklore to modern novels and postmodern literature. He explores how liminal experiences challenge conventional categories and boundaries, prompting existential inquiries into the nature of being and becoming.

Spariosu also investigates the temporal and spatial dimensions of liminality, examining how it operates not only in transitional moments but also in liminal spaces such as thresholds, borders, and margins. He explores how these liminal zones challenge conventional notions of time and space, offering opportunities for renewal, creativity, and self-discovery. Spariosu considers the power dynamics inherent in liminal situations, exploring how individuals and groups negotiate agency and resistance within liminal spaces. He examines how marginalized or liminalized communities use liminality as a site of subversion, contestation, and cultural production, challenging dominant social structures and norms.

Spariosu delves into the psychological and existential dimensions of liminality, investigating its impact on individual consciousness and identity formation. His text, *Modernism and Exile: Play, Liminality and the Exilic-Utopian Imagination* explores the

liminal effect on the society in the form of sub-cultures. Sub-culture within a culture acts as a buffer zone. He also studied the dramatization of a play as form liminal space where the audience forgets their own presence and experience the fluidity of emotions because of the powerful performance of actors and the spectacle around them. Spariosu engaged with postmodern thought and its implications for understanding liminality in contemporary culture. He explored how postmodern fragmentation, plurality and indeterminacy contribute to the proliferation of liminal spaces and experiences in literature, art, and everyday life. His analysis reflects a sensitivity to the fluidity and complexity of postmodern identities and realities.

Besides the theoretical and psychological studies, in the field of medical treatment, the theory of liminality offers valuable insights into the design of healing environments and the patient's journey through illness and recovery. Architects and healthcare designers draw upon liminal concepts to create hospital spaces that promote comfort, tranquility, and a sense of transition. By incorporating elements such as natural light, soothing colors and flexible layouts, healthcare facilities aim to mitigate the disorientation and anxiety experienced by patients in liminal states. Similarly, clinicians and therapists recognize the liminal phase of illness as a critical juncture for patients to confront their vulnerabilities, redefine their identities and embark on a journey towards healing. Through integrative approaches that combine medical treatment with psychosocial support, healthcare professionals strive to accompany patients through the liminal spaces of illness, fostering empowerment and holistic well-being.

In architecture, the theory of liminality inspires innovative approaches to designing spaces that facilitate transitions, evoke emotions, and foster a sense of belonging. Architects explore how liminal spaces, such as thresholds, corridors, and transitional zones, can shape human experiences and perceptions of the built environment. By manipulating light, materials, and spatial sequences, designers create architectural interventions that invite occupants to pause, reflect, and navigate the liminal thresholds of everyday life. From immersive installations to interactive environments, architects experiment with sensory stimuli and spatial arrangements to evoke feelings of ambiguity, wonder, and transformation. Through collaborative processes that engage users in co-

creating their environments, architects aspire to design spaces that resonate with the diverse narratives and identities of their occupants, transcending physical boundaries to cultivate moments of connection and meaning.

In the study of boundaries, liminality serves as a conceptual tool for understanding the fluidity and complexity of borders, both physical and metaphorical. Geographers, political scientists, and cultural theorists analyze how liminal spaces, such as borderlands, diasporic communities, and transitional zones, shape identities, power dynamics, and social interactions. By examining border rituals, migration patterns, and hybrid cultural practices, scholars explore how liminality challenges rigid notions of belonging and citizenship, inviting individuals to navigate multiple layers of identity and affiliation. In environmental studies, the theory of liminality provides a framework for understanding ecological transitions, resilience, and adaptation in the face of environmental change. Ecologists and conservationists explore how ecosystems navigate liminal states, such as shifting climate patterns, habitat fragmentation, and ecological disturbances. By studying ecological thresholds, the points at which ecosystems undergo rapid transformations or collapse, researchers identify indicators of resilience and vulnerability in natural systems. Moreover, indigenous knowledge systems often incorporate liminal concepts to inform sustainable resource management practices and promote harmonious relationships between humans and nature. Through interdisciplinary approaches that integrate scientific research with indigenous wisdom, environmental scholars seek to foster adaptive responses to environmental challenges, nurturing the resilience of ecosystems and communities in liminal landscapes.

In information technology, the theory of liminality informs the study of digital transformations, virtual communities, and cybernetic spaces. Computer scientists, sociologists, and media theorists explore how digital technologies create liminal experiences, blurring the boundaries between physical and virtual realities. Virtual reality environments, social media platforms, and online gaming communities serve as liminal spaces where individuals experiment with identity, engage in social interactions, and explore new forms of expression. Moreover, the rise of artificial intelligence and machine learning introduces new dimensions of liminality, as algorithms navigate ambiguous data

landscapes and generate emergent behaviors. In law and governance, the theory of liminality informs discussions of transitional justice, legal reform, and societal transformations in post-conflict contexts. Legal scholars, human rights activists, and policymakers explore how transitional societies navigate liminal spaces marked by historical trauma, political instability, and social upheaval. Transitional justice mechanisms, such as truth commissions, reparations programs, and institutional reforms, serve as liminal processes through which societies reckon with past injustices and envision a more just and inclusive future. Moreover, legal pluralism and hybrid justice systems introduce complexities of liminality, as multiple legal orders intersect and coexist within transitional contexts.

In education, the theory of liminality informs pedagogical approaches, learning experiences, and educational spaces designed to foster transformative learning and personal growth. Educators, curriculum designers, and experiential learning specialists explore how liminal experiences, such as study abroad programs, service-learning projects, and interdisciplinary courses, can catalyze students' intellectual curiosity, empathy and critical reflection. By creating liminal spaces within educational settings, such as outdoor classrooms, maker spaces and community-based learning initiatives, educators invite students to engage in immersive, hands-on experiences that challenge their assumptions, expand their perspectives, and cultivate their agency as learners and global citizens.

So the tenets of the theory of liminality as proposed by Genep and established by Turner resonates across diverse fields of inquiry thus illuminating the complex dynamics of transition, transformation, and adaptation in human experience and society. From environmental studies to information technology, law to education, scholars and practitioners draw upon liminal concepts to explore new frontiers of understanding and intervention, going through the thresholds of existence with creativity, empathy, and resilience.

Paul Stenner and David Kaposi came out with their analysis of liminality posed by Covid-19 in their research paper titled, *Virus ante portas: the Covid-19 pandemic as a liminal hotspot* (<https://diecisiete.org/actualidad/virus-ante-portas-the-covid-19-pandemic-as-a-liminal-hotspot>). In this paper they begin with Queen Elizabeth II's address to the nation during the first major wave of the pandemic. They named the lockdown period as the period of suspension of normality. They emphasize on the Queen's assurance and hope that the lockdown period will end and we as a human race will overcome this new challenge. After the lockdown we, all the humans will surely meet again. They look at the event as the period of suspended life. 'Here the event is simply positioned in-between a stable past (A) and a stable future (B)' (Stenner and Kaposi <https://diecisiete.org/actualidad/virus-ante-portas-the-covid-19-pandemic-as-a-liminal-hotspot>). They look at it as a mere disruption in the continued narrative of life on earth. Thus they like the confidence and leadership quality of Queen Elizabeth through her message. But Stenner and Kaposi raise a question about what if we do not meet again because there are many whom we didn't meet again. But this liminal period had the power of transforming the life of millions of people because it had the power of threatening the now, the present moment.

So to maintain dignity during the transitional period is important. They look at it in a different way. They observe, 'to create our future it is essential to engage with what happens in the transitional chasm itself: the unsettling force of this in-between, the suspension of the norms that hitherto has constituted us. To this end we propose to recognize the worldwide pandemic and subsequent lockdown as a liminal event' (Stenner and Kaposi, <https://diecisiete.org/actualidad/virus-ante-portas-the-covid-19-pandemic-as-a-liminal-hotspot>). So this disruption should be taken seriously so that when normality is retained the approach towards life should be different. Re-order and re-configuring is required.

Everybody had the hope that normalcy will return because liminal condition is not permanent, this is how any disruption is looked at. But one need not neglect the reformational role of the liminal phase and its impact on the psychological and sociological aspect. So during the liminal phase people eagerly waited for the post liminal and many

people now have different future plans because they claim that the future belongs to them. So the life of the self is important within the ambit of the society and for enjoying the best that is offered by life and the community in which a human being lives requires time to enjoy it and what Covid threatens is whether we have time enough left with us or not. The incessant wait for the vaccine was nothing but the conformity that after two doses we are ensuring the buying of that time. This reminds of Marvel's poem, 'if we had but time enough' (Marvel <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44688/to-his-coy-mistress>).

Mead also talks about two important things concerned with liminality: 'the present and the emergent event' (Stenner & Kaposi <https://diecisiete.org/actualidad/virus-ante-portas-the-covid-19-pandemic-as-a-liminal-hotspot>). The emergence of Covid suddenly from nowhere disrupted the continuity of life narrative and brought us to the present by making us sit quietly in our four walls. By making everyone come face to face with the present reality, by forcing everyone to cancel our flights, reservations, programs, appointments, wedding ceremonies etc. It brought human species closer to the pre-set reality. It was a stage of in-between and betwixt, a stage of new adjustment. It required everyone to sit quietly and motionless like the neophytes during a ritual while watching the beating of drums around. So present day men and women sat quietly in their homes while watching the gory drama of death across the world through news channels. So the witnesses dangled between the physically quiet world at home and experiencing a whirlpool inside the mind because of the increasing death rates day by day.

Stenner and Kaposi draw a comparison between the views of Genep and Mead in the sense that both of them saw that humans are influenced by the social practices around them. That is why everybody witnessed different responses of different societies and countries in the same situation. It is because, 'any notable change in praxis, status or position demands a correlative change of self-construct which must in turn be recognized by others' (<https://diecisiete.org/actualidad/virus-ante-portas-the-covid-19-pandemic-as-a-liminal-hotspot>). So Covid experience was not normal, it was highly unusual because one's family could not even give a decent burial to its loved one. It was a shocking experience; it was beyond the comprehension of the patients as well as the doctors at one

point of time.

So, the ambivalent situation and the ambiguity of the condition is termed as a liminal experience by the researchers. They call lockdown as a response to increase immunity by restricting travel and closing down all institutions except essential services. Greco and Stenner call such situation as, ‘liminal hotspot,’ (<https://diecisiete.org/actualidad/virus-ante-portas-the-covid-19-pandemic-as-a-liminal-hotspot>) because when there is no surety of what is going to happen next and some unfamiliar conditions keep on appearing and the society keeps on adjusting to new norms like frequent use of sanitizer, use of masks despite breathing problems, so these are not familiar transformations. So, people negotiated and adjusted to the new norms, directives and advisories by the government and the doctors.

It is comprehended as before the new world order is accepted, ‘that a tumultuous phase must be negotiated—a liminal hotspot which includes a new salience to paradox and a panic ridden paralysis or polarization, but also the possibility of a pattern shift towards a new present’ (<https://diecisiete.org/actualidad/virus-ante-portas-the-covid-19-pandemic-as-a-liminal-hotspot>). Neither here nor there condition is also well explained by these critics with respect to home becoming office and home becoming a school and the employees feeling neither completely at home nor completely at the office.

Uncertainty also accompanies paradoxes because if the situations are not compatible with each other than not knowing about the end of some situation becomes unbearable also hence it results in depression in many cases. Too much radical uncertainty also leads to liminal affectivity. While the idea of sitting at home might have excited many individuals, pay cuts, indiscipline at home and no refreshing outlet also brought additional problems. Thus, the critics observe this situation as an ambivalent hotspot and liminal hotspot.

The adventures experiences severely affect the physical makeup and mental faculties of human beings yet there are numerous games like the matador game of Spain, wrestling by WWF, boxing, bungee jumping paragliding etc. Human nature is such that it wants thrill hence these days places like Wonderla and other water sports and rides filled

with thrill are popular. People want to experience adrenalin rush that also gives them liminal experience like skydiving from helicopter and then wait for the parachute to open, the secret behind these activities is to experience the suspended reality. Victor Turner applied this experience to artistic expression also like the theatre performances.

Thomassen was critical about Victor Turner's idea of applying the liminoid situation in artistic and recreational activities because he wanted to limit it to change in status only. Although he is open to the idea of exploring other situations through the lens of liminality. He has identified several types of liminality that involve groups, individuals and a variety of societies and even zones and countries. He also looks at the possibility of looking at the trickster in a drama as a liminal being. Not only this he considers, 'the seventeenth century as a liminal period from which early modernity emerged' (Thomassen 9). Through the thoughts of Descartes and Hobbes, he calls the period as the total collapse of the existing order and an emergence of a new political and social order. He calls this period as 'the liminal period'(Thomassen 10).

Thomassen emphasizes more on the modern games that provide excitement and adrenaline rush especially jumping into void from a high platform. He also focuses on political revolutions and proposes to study it from Victor Turner's theory of liminality because he looks at the, 'political revolutions are seen as clear-cut liminal situations in large scale settings and resemble rituals, especially as they appropriate public squares as their ritual stage' (Thomassen 11). The underlying thought that runs through Thomassen's work is that we should reconsider the period of transition as liminal phases so as to strike a balance between experience and thought and thereby come up with a new understanding of living as individuals and co-existing as groups.

Siegfried Kracauer has tried to explain liminality as an ambiguous state. When a person is thrown into a liminal condition at the threshold, he /she considers himself in a liminal space -an unknown space. This is the space where transition takes place. Downey, Kinane and Parker have termed it as a space that carries a lot of, 'potentiality,' because the environment that is created by the liminal phase brings about such a condition that promotes transformation. Though it happens in an abstract manner hence it cannot be seen by the eyes. It can be experienced by the liminal personae. Suzzane calls it, 'an

intangible space, an active space,' moreover a threshold can be called as a threshold only when it is transgressed' (Suzzane 455).

One may ask that the old traditions and rituals do not exist the way they used to be performed in the 19th century. The trends that were followed in the decades of 1970's and 1980's. But after the digital revolution one can observe liminality in terms of the ever emerging new digital community. The researchers like Downey, Kinane and Parker answer this query that the human race is going through, 'a potentially cataclysmic or profoundly exciting change, in which our relationships to space and place are being fundamentally reordered and re conceived, in ways that often increase rather than reduce the experience of liminality' (Suzzane 455). The new liminal space is the digital space that exists between millions of people.

Liminality is not just an abstract entity. It has also been applied to borderlands. Genep had also studied them under territorial passage and mentioned them in detail in *Rites de Passage*. Victor Turner also felt as a liminal being when he was traveling from London to America. A border is something that is infinite but when it is etched upon a map then it gets a serious new meaning to the extent that crossing the border may cause war between nations.

Jessica Elbert Decker and Dylon Winchok observe in their seminal work on borders titled as *Borderlands and Liminal Subjects: Transgressing the Limits in Philosophy and Literature* (2017) that in nature we don't find borders, 'but where human beings impose them, they are imposed with a purpose'(Decker &Winchok 1). So, it is more than a physical limit. It divides people into, 'us,' and 'them,' borders are drawn purposefully to maintain structure of power. Borders may also distinguish between races, class, gender or between two opposite conditions. Border gives meaning to concrete geography. Those who inhabit the borderlands are the real witness to actual cultures which are looked upon as an object. Politics may be restricted to this side of the border and to that side of the border but culture is fluid, it doesn't care about 'paper thin imagery'(Decker & Winchok 3) of a border. Even normal acts of crossing a few steps across that border line can escalate tension between nations which are otherwise in the absence of border may be called as normal acts. So in reality, 'borderlands are not fixed

in place, but rather exist as the unstable space between places'(Decker & Winchok 7).

How people can study physical borders? Victor Turner provides ample scope in this area in his work *The Ritual Process*. In this text he makes us understand that the bordered physical space, the in-between and the marginal space in which initiands or a neophyte resides in order to enter into a new social status. The society is culturally capable of going beyond its limits to resolve its issues. In the current circumstances, Gloria Anzaldua, studies the problem of liminal location in terms of US-Mexico borders. She talks about the place in Chicano which she says, 'is a permanently liminal location of silence and obscurity for the racially prohibited and forbidden within both the USA and Mexico'(<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chicano>). So it is very disturbing to see that Chicano is excluded from Mexico, Indian and Anglo culture although it belongs to all the three. So they are in a state of neither here, nor there, they are actually in- between.

Giving a positive color to this liminal state, Anzaldua says that her identity is, 'both between and among what I want is an accounting with all three cultures- white, Mexican and Indian. She locates within liminality a space, state, process of agency for the marginal through its inherent inclusivity rather than the automatic exclusion of the other'(<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chicano>). So, a borderland identity carries multiple identities of this place as well as that place that is across the paper thin geopolitical border. It defeats the objectives of a monoculture and the practices of exclusion that is a result of isolated in-groups.

So the third space also needs to be contemplated rather than just taking everything into consideration under the binaries. So acknowledgement of cultural hybridity is must in the present global context. It is not that the present theoretical considerations are contemplating about the third space, in fact Plato has also talked about *Khora* (space) in his work *Timaecus*. He suggests, 'the division between sensible and intelligible depends upon a third kind (<https://iep.utm.edu/kant-transcendental-idealism/>) he names it *Khora*, 'this ambiguous Borderland space is the medium that allows for transmission between the sensible and the intelligible realm' (<https://iep.utm.edu/kant-transcendental-idealism/>). Jacques Derrida interprets the *khora* effect in a different manner. He says, ' the *Khora* appears to be neither this nor that at times both this and that but this alternative between

the logic of exclusion and that of participation' (<https://grattoncourses.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/khora-from-on-the-name.pdf>).

Within binaries is also an invisible third space. Plato searches for the third space to bridge the gap between the concrete world and the invisible divine world. While, Aristotle wants to find the in-between between matter and form. The philosophers of phenomenology call it chiasm.

One can trace the concept of in-between in the historical evolution of Western Philosophy. In the pre-Socratic era, the Greek philosopher, Parmenides of Elea, produced a poem that contains the first kind of logical argument. In his poem, he refers to 'the third way' (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/parmenides/>). Parmenides says that, 'human beings know nothing between what is and what is not,' so they keep on moving between this path only. Philosophical liminal interpretation of Borderlands is also done by Fillippo Menozzi. His research is based on the voices of the poets that have entered Italy as immigrants. In his essay, '*On Being a Border: Reading Across Literature and Philosophy*,' he witnesses the immigrant experience when they were held up in the Mediterranean Island of Hamedusa. They felt neither inside nor outside of Italy' (<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Filippo-Menozzi>).

Interestingly, new studies have also come up in terms of hybrid children due to the marriages between the white man and the black woman and the white woman and black man. The mixed breed is called the mulatto. Mulatto characters are also characterized as liminal characters. Irina Negera describes the condition of the children of a black man and a white woman as the characters of the in-between space because they are hybrids they can't call themselves as Americans or Africans. They face a lot of problems due to their in-between status. Legally they carry the identity of their father. A number of studies are being done on the liminal dilemma of the hybrid children of different races.

In language also it is found that due to the fluidity of language one can sometimes know how much one has understood or misunderstood something. When it comes to translation from one language to another it is found that there are many constraints in transfer of meaning. In global literature also meaning needs to be fluid.

Yeung advocates, 'to think the global with literature which demands that a reader/thinker adjust the framework from one which is predicated on a working definition of globalization. Yeung also contends that, 'one whose mode of speculative reason – the idea of a globe both with and without the conceptual reality of globalization – was at once prior to this and also remains prevalent today' (Yeung 1). She calls it a kind of provocation. If one casts spatial problems into non-spatial problems then it gives rise to spatial thinking such experiments give rise to new type of literacy, diagrams, mandala patterns, dream-time landscapes, measures of close and distant relatives and of high and low social groups, and much more. Just as maps stand in abstract spatial relation to real spatial terrain, 'so spatial relations can give us symbolic 'maps' to other domains [... in] the extended symbolic world that human beings' (https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9781137478276_4).

Andrea Oppo discusses the issue of liminality in terms of bordering between Philosophy and literature. In her famous treatise, 'Alice's Parallel Series: Carroll, Deleuze, and the Stuttering Sense of the World,' she says, 'nevertheless, in the history of philosophy the aesthetic experience has always been allowed somewhere on the threshold of rationality, with its paradoxical perspective of being simultaneously both the object and the source of knowledge'(Decker & Winchok 217). Poets of the romantic era tried to bridge this gap to some extent. Later in the era of linguistic interpretation the meaning of both philosophy and literature texts came under one lens that is ontological meaning. The gap between the objective and the subjective understanding of the world can lead to, 'a mid-zone of language that forces philosophy up to a point of rupture- a point at which the concept is something that, literally, does not make sense'(Decker & Winchok 220) so one can call it the anti-structure.

Liminality has been applied to biracial studies also. Extensive research has been done to understand the biracial phenomena among the children of people from different races like offspring of an Asian and an African descent. Frantz Fanon has extensively explored the concept of mulato in his seminal work *Black Skin White Masks*. Angella Enders explores the issue in her MA Dissertation titled, 'Finding Wholeness: Understanding Liminality Through My Experience as a Biracial Woman.' She is a biracial woman because her mother was from Japan and her father was an African settled

in America. She says, ‘ I have felt the tension of being neither fully Asian nor Caucasian; however the difference between Van Gennep’s and Turner’s concept and my experience as a liminal being is that I do not feel that I am in transition from one stage to another, instead, my identity is in a constant liminal state’(Enders 9).

Thus, the study of liminality also helps in understanding the issues of biracial identity which are growing ever faster as the world is now becoming a smaller place and the interaction among different races is ever more evident. Angella Enders associates liminality with the identity of a biracial woman. She even claims that liminality has, ‘healing aspect’ (Enders 10) also it helps in understanding the complex human psyche and what wholeness means for a liminal person. Liminal personae suffer from constant ambiguity. They slip into a state of being nowhere. Such liminal beings feel like they are going through an unknown ‘tunnel’ (Turner 41) that may or may not have an opening. Till they reach the other end they suffer from anxiety, ambiguity and dubiety.

The theory of Liminality has been generously applied to diverse areas like Gender Studies, Behavioral studies of Intersex population, understanding the state of being in love and Folklore studies is already a foundational ground of Liminality because of the preliminary studies done by Gennep. Jung has called the state of being a woman is a state of, ‘Woman-in-between: acted on from within by goddess archetypes and from without by cultural stereotypes’ (Jung 4) similarly men who do not fit into the established masculine roles are also characterized as, ‘as quiet boys who fit no existing category’ (Jung 14).

Davidson did an extensive study on the boys who were at the receiving end of the society due to their non-conformity to the established gender roles and norms and were more like on the, ‘fringes of societal norms’ (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3149/jms.1401.13?journalCode=mena>). Samuel Marc Davidson brought this important study on the life of, ‘the quiet boys’(<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3149/jms.1401.13?journalCode=mena>) titled as, *Exploring Socio-cultural Borderlands: Journeying, Navigating and Embodying a Queer Identity*.

Love is also studied as liminal phenomena especially love outside marriage that is

still considered as an anti-structure of the structured society. Love triangle is identified with the state of liminality because it offers an escape from harsh realities of life. A common pattern that is observed in secret love affairs is that the lovers secretly meet in those places which may not be visited by family and friends. Even while meeting in a restaurant or far off place in the wild nature, the secret lovers remain vigilant that they should not be detected or seen by familiar faces. For the sake of that momentary but transient pleasure they come together to share common passionate feelings despite all the risks that are involved. Thomas Moore observes that sometimes married couples take such risks because they want it to be, 'an effort to renew their life together, try to recover from the liminality of illicit lovers' (Enders 14).

The study of Fairy Tales also reveals that fairies are nothing but liminal creatures that neither completely belong to earth nor to the other land but still they are famous and believable characters in children literature and magical fiction also. These fictional characters with special powers reflect the suppressed desires of human beings of correcting all wrongs with a magical wand. Since fairies can, 'waver between two worlds' (Henderson & Cown 39) they are being considered as liminal creatures. Modern day Rave Parties by teenagers and Gay Parties are also studied under the purview of liminality. Such groups are formed as, 'a temporary alternate community' (Robin Sylvan <https://www.everand.com/book/686422504/Traces-of-the-Spirit-The-Religious-dimensions-of-Popular-Music>). What do these groups offer? Rave parties and gay parties are also usually organized in far off secret places like farm houses, underground spaces, warehouses. The party goers carrying banned drugs have to cross many police checkpoints and they have to go back through the same police checkpoints late at night that too without being caught. They also follow certain ritualistic patterns like flashy different dresses, tattoos, piercing at odd places on the body, going to washrooms to sniff drugs, loud music, disco lights, DJ's role as the initiator of the party. Sylvan claims that, 'through the use of location, decorations, intention, themes and conscious attention to ritual, the rave creates a container to hold the liminal space for an initiation to take place' (<https://www.everand.com/book/686422504/Traces-of-the-Spirit-The-Religious-Dimensions-of-Popular-Music>).

So such associations are formed away from the society and alternate means of

pleasure is vouched for but it is not done individually, it also requires a group going through the same sentiments, ideologies and set of issues. So, the temporal and spatial aspect of Rave Parties and Gay Party Culture in the West has also been studied through the lens of liminality. In the novel *Before I Die*, Tessa Scott joins a rave party along with her friend Zoey to get high and stay in a trans state but soon she realizes the emptiness of her attempt to satisfy her ego through the popular American cultural belief system. Neil Gaiman who has closely studied American society and written biographies of popular celebrities terms American Pop Culture as, 'liminal fantasy'(Enders 17). He also calls America as the Museum of Popular Culture. His novel *American Gods* became very popular due to his keen understanding of the liminal space that the reader wants. TV audiences and book readers look for an escape through what is trending.

Gaiman has extensively shown through his text *American Gods*, the modes through which society changes through popular culture so the public has to accept that even popular culture changes with society. Like, there was a time when people used to smoke a cigarette a lot. Smoking as a fashion statement was popularized by Hollywood, Bollywood and Tele-Serials. Slowly and gradually it became an accepted norm so much so that whenever the guest visited some host, before offering tea, cigarettes were offered in most of the household drawing rooms. Cigarette ash trays were decorative items in the drawing rooms of most of the homes. It was a part of American Pop Culture that later on caught the fantasies of Asian homes as well way back in from the 1970's, up to 1990's.

Psychological studies have also taken cues from the theory of liminality. Jung's idea of individuation process is synchronous with the idea of liminality. The process of individuation begins like the process of the pre-liminal phase of an initiand. Jungian state of liminality is termed as, 'the muddle' (<https://journalpsyche.org/jungian-model-psyche/>) Jung described the muddle as living, 'in the realm of betwixt-and-between, a transformative space that is elicited whenever an old psychosocial adaptation has outlived its usefulness and must be transcended' (<https://journalpsyche.org/jungian-model-psyche/>).

The boundary of psyche also demands crossing over for substantial change in one's persona. The transcendence from personal self-image and the archetypal self helps in expanding and deepening the human inner sphere which had become rigid due to

boundaries created by ego during this process the detachment of with self image breaks down slowly and gradually and an individual is able to develop a sense of *communitas* with other humans because of the communion of the archetypal self. Thus Turner's *communitas* is somewhat similar to the expansion of humans ability to adapt to shared experience especially where there is sharing of spiritual ideas, belongingness, coming closer due to similar experience of pain or trauma. Besides the course of journey from Pre-liminal to Liminal to Post- Liminal brings about an inner transformation that happens only due to expansion and deepening of the inner psyche.

Ken Wilber also studied about the boundaries in terms of self and not the self. In his best selling text *No Boundaries* he explains explicitly about the notion of the self. A person describes himself or herself as I am this and not that. Humans identify themselves as they have come to know through the lens of their social surroundings. He says, 'the most common boundary line that individuals draw up or accept as valid is that of the skin boundary surrounding the total organism. This seems to be a universally accepted self and not self boundary line'(Wilber 5). This feature appears in cancer narratives because as soon as the disease is revealed the attention is drawn to the internal and the external world divided by the skin. So one of the most important accepted boundaries is the skin boundary.

As a human grows older he or she forgets this boundary due to the pressures of the external world. Children are more conscious of their skin boundary. They are fascinated by bodily functions. Little babies even enjoy sucking their toes. But as they grow older and become a thinking being they mostly start living in their heads. Wilber states that a human being feels that, 'he lives in his head, as if he were a miniature person in his skull giving directions and commands to his body, which may or may not obey' (Wilber 6). The text chosen for study are strewn with scenes where the cancer sufferer looks at his own absent body with a new perspective.

The spectrum of consciousness expands only in such conditions where a person gets a severe jolt due to some traumatic experience like an accident, sudden loss of some special person, or some tragic altering event. In which the sufferer re-examines himself and not the self around him/her. Wilber proposes that when the boundaries are crossed due to some transcendence a human being develops as, 'one harmonious whole'

(Wilber 8). The remapping, rezoning and redrawing of these boundaries helps in the emergence of the new self. Genep's theory of liminality was largely based on the study of the tribal and the agrarian society. The primitive societies were more in sync and harmony with nature. Hence their rituals were largely stable, cyclical, natural and repetitive in nature.

Transition, transformation and the state in-between form the core of liminality. In narratives, especially those narratives where the characters have to face threats to their lives, they experience a transformation from their original condition both physically and mentally. Acute illnesses, like cancer, takes the characters to the edge of death and how they go through the different phases of separation to margins to reunification in terms of their state of mind is extremely important to study. The theory of Liminality as projected by Victor Turner and elaborated upon by other theorists is of great help in bringing out a deep understanding of cancer narratives.

Folk narratives have also been studied through the theory of liminality and it has taken on new dimensions because such narratives depict protagonists undergoing transformative journeys or encountering liminal spaces, such as thresholds, crossroads, and enchanted forests. These narratives not only entertain but also serve as vehicles for conveying cultural knowledge, moral lessons and societal norms. For example, fairy tales like "Little Red Riding Hood" or "Cinderella" explore themes of innocence, agency and resilience within liminal settings, where characters go through trials and tribulations to evolve as new individuals. Seasonal festivities and calendar rituals provide avenue for exploring liminality in folklore. Celebrations like harvest festivals, solstice celebrations and carnival traditions like in Brazil involve temporary inversions of social hierarchies, role reversals and communal revelry. Such liminal moments contribute towards better social cohesion and foster a sense of collective *communitas* through shared experiences of liminality.

Similarly mythological stories also full of liminal motifs, where gods, heroes, and supernatural beings traverse liminal spaces, such as the underworld, heavens, or limbo realms, to undergo trials, face demons, seek wisdom, or negotiate with cosmic forces. Some of the stark examples are *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The mythic journeys symbolize the

human quest for meaning, transcendence, and transformation, reflecting the universal experience of navigating through liminal thresholds in life. Folklore studies through the lens of liminality offer insights into cultural hybridity, fusion and the dynamics of cultural change. As societies encounter external influences or undergo periods of transition, folklore serves as a dynamic reservoir of cultural resilience, adaptation and innovation. Folkloric motifs may undergo processes of acculturation, reinterpretation, with the passage of time, leading to the emergence of new hybrid forms of folklore that reflect the complex interplay of diverse cultural influences. So it can be concluded that the theory of liminality provides an interesting framework for studying folklore, offering insights into the transformative power of rituals, narratives, and symbols within human culture. Studies in folkloric traditions through liminality has contributed into a deeper understanding of the dynamics of cultural identity, social change and collective imagination embedded within the rich tapestry of folk traditions.

Higher education has also been studied through the lens of liminality because it is a period that witnesses the transition from adolescence to adulthood, marked by the college or university experience. Research in this area explores how students sail through the liminal space between dependence and independence, adolescence and adulthood, as they wrestle with newfound responsibilities, academic challenges, and social expectations. Studies have shown that this transition can be both exhilarating and intimidating, as students confront academic pressures, peer relationships, and existential questions about their future paths. Besides, the physical and social environments of higher education institutions serve as liminal spaces where students undergo significant personal and intellectual transformations. Campus life, with its diverse array of academic disciplines, extracurricular activities and social networks, provides fertile ground for exploration, experimentation, and self-discovery.

Campus rituals impact the overall personality of a student. Rituals like orientation programs, commencement ceremonies, and fraternity initiations facilitates the transition to college life and fosters a sense of belonging and identity formation among students. The classroom itself can be viewed as a liminal space where students engage in

intellectual inquiry, critical reflection, and knowledge acquisition. Pedagogical approaches that embrace experiential learning, collaborative inquiry, and interdisciplinary perspectives encourage students to challenge conventional boundaries and question established norms. Research in this area explores how transformative learning experiences within the classroom can empower students to develop critical thinking skills, cultivate empathy and social consciousness, and become active agents of change in their communities. The teenager who goes away from parents and stays in a university or reputed institution comes back home as a changed personality after a few years. The teenager follows the journey of separation, liminality and re-aggregation as a transformed individual after four or five years of study.

Liminality has helped in understanding gender fluidity especially in androgynous people. Transgender or androgynous people feel the in-betweenness phase. The ambiguity of their gender makes them experience suspension of accepted social structures. Applying this theory to the exploration of androgyny illuminates the liminal spaces where traditional binary conceptions of gender are challenged, renegotiated and transcended. Androgyny, derived from the Greek words andro (man) and gyné (woman), refers to the combination of masculine and feminine characteristics within an individual's identity, appearance and behavior.

In many cultures, androgyny has been celebrated in myth, art, and religious symbolism, representing a synthesis of opposites, a balance of yin and yang, or a merging of masculine and feminine energies. Liminality makes people understand the nuances of being androgynous. Research through liminality explores how individuals who embody androgynous characteristics manoeuvre social expectations, cultural stereotypes and personal identity formation within diverse contexts. Studies have shown that androgynous individuals may experience both privilege and prejudice, as they negotiate complex intersections of gender, sexuality, race, class, and other intersecting identities.

The portrayal of androgyny in literature, art, fashion, and popular culture serves as a liminal space where alternative forms of gender expression and identity are celebrated, subverted, or contested. Gender-bending characters in literature, such as Orlando in Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando: A Biography*, challenge conventional notions

of gender roles and sexual orientation, blurring the boundaries between masculine and feminine identities across time and space. Similarly, androgynous figures in art, like Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* or Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, embody a sense of transcendent beauty and harmony that transcends fixed gender categories. The emergence of queer theory and transgender studies within academic discourse has further expanded the theoretical framework for understanding androgyny as a liminal phenomenon. Scholars explore how androgyny intersects with concepts of gender performativity, embodiment, and queerness, challenging notions of identity and destabilizing the hegemony of binary gender norms.

Eventually, the theory of Liminality has added a lot of new dimensions to the volume of researches in other disciplines. Academia is also paying attention towards the importance of the transformative, in – between liminal stage and how it impacts an individual and the community. Another important contribution of liminality is that it has made the readers realize that society is not a thing it is rather always in a process with successive phases and so is the individual. In the desire to exist in ecstasy men and women are engaged in discovering new ideas, modes and methods of achieving that state. The constant changes that the society observes are always in a state of fluidity.

The immense popularity of Social media can also be given to the fact that human beings desire getting validation from others. It is observed that men and women are more interested in meeting virtual friends rather than meeting the same people face to face. Whether such behavior comes under structurally inferior *communitas* or superior *communitas* is immaterial to virtual *communitas*. Human need and desire to seek some refuge from structured society compels them to pass through rituals of various kinds. This evolutionary process continues and will continue because humans are always in a state of liminality. Turner emphasizes the fact that the tribal ritual processes were far better than the modern day corporate *communitas* because their rituals were based on a structure capable of bringing harmony and social order within the *communitas*. It was in sync with nature, cyclical changes and the movement of the planets thus keeping the social order in sync with the natural order of the cosmos.

Cancer narratives embody liminal experience for several reasons because as soon as cancer is diagnosed the person feels shocked and denies that it can't happen to him/her.

So, diagnosis marks a significant threshold in the character's life. The selected cancer narratives also offer a new vista of study through the lens of liminality. It disrupts the normalcy of their day to day life. It leads to a sense of disorientation and uncertainty about the future. The liminal phase involves a period of shock, disbelief, and adjustment as the sufferer comes to terms with the implications of their diagnosis. During medical treatment and visits to the hospital the sufferers experience physical and emotional challenges, including severe pain, side effects and fear of recurrence. It feels like a state of limbo, where individuals are suspended between sickness, health, endurance and recovery.

The theoretical aspects related to identity is also conspicuous in cancer narratives. Cancer attacks the constructed identity, the concept of self goes through paradigm shift. The sufferers experience changes in physical appearance, abilities, and roles within their existing sociocultural scenario. This process of identity renegotiation reflects the liminal experience, as individuals navigate the shifting boundaries of who they are and who they are becoming in the context of their fatal illness. The biggest challenge that they face is confronting mortality.

Existential reflection begins during the liminal journey, it is also a phase of self-discovery and transformation. In Turner's framework, the liminal phase is followed by a process of reintegration or incorporation into a new state of being. In case of cancer survivors, this involves transitioning from active treatment to survivorship or palliative care. The sufferer tries to integrate their experience into their ongoing life narrative, evolving a new sense of identity and purpose beyond the illness. By applying the theory of liminality to cancer narratives, researchers and healthcare professionals have gained a deeper understanding of the psycho-social challenges faced by patients and survivors. This angle of study brings out the importance of providing holistic support that addresses not only the medical aspects of cancer care but also the emotional, psychological, existential and identity-related dimensions of the illness experience. Cancer as a liminal journey empowers the characters under study as individuals that try to find meaning on their own.

Liminality emphasizes the agency of individuals in navigating transitional phases of their lives. With the help of liminality, the researchers can recognize and validate the

agency of patients and survivors in shaping their own illness experiences, coping strategies and post-traumatic phenomenon. Cancer as a liminal experience can inform clinical practice by highlighting the importance of providing patient-centered care that addresses not only physical symptoms but also emotional, existential, and identity-related needs. Healthcare professionals can tailor interventions and support services to better meet the diverse needs of individuals undergoing cancer treatment and survivorship.

Liminal experiences in case of cancer condition has the potential to offer strength and facilitate personal growth. The theory also helps researchers to identify factors that contribute to coping mechanisms and post-traumatic growth, thus affecting the quality of life while being alive. The theory of liminality underscores the role of storytelling in making sense of transformative experiences. By examining cancer narratives, researchers can explore how individuals construct and negotiate meaning in the face of illness, mortality, and existential uncertainty. This insight can inform narrative-based interventions that empower patients and survivors to reclaim agency and authorship over their own life. The study of cancer narratives with the help of the theory of liminality enriches the readers and researchers understanding of the illness experience, relevance of the available time and space and the means to enhance the quality of life through the post-liminal or reintegration phase after facing the threshold of adversity.

CHAPTER III

LIFE EXPECTANCIES AND REVELATIONS: A CLOSE ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED NOVELS

The chapter focuses on the analytical aspect of the novels. But before that one needs to understand certain basic important factors of life viz., what is life expectancy? What are the several interpretations of the word, revelations? How does cancer affect life expectancy? What is its impact on one's attitude towards life? How does it affect the constructed identity? How does a person react at the threshold of life and death? What are the liminal conditions that the characters of cancer narratives have to face? How does it impact families? The term Life expectancy can be bifurcated into two words, *life* and *expectancy* for elaborate understanding under the selected context.

The word *life* has been studied from various stand points. Philosophy, science, religion, humanities, literature and other disciplines of human thought define life in a different manner. The study of the select cancer narratives offer a new dimension of life which otherwise is not available in other circumstances. If one borrows the definition from life sciences then the standard accepted definition is, 'the condition that distinguishes animals and plants from inorganic matter, including the capacity for growth, reproduction, functional activity and continual change preceding death'(Webster Dictionary 1). Life is commonly understood as something that makes people realize that they are existing, living, surviving; they are alive, growing day by day and degrading after a certain point of time.

The antonym of life is death and the revelation of cancer condition immediately brings a person at the threshold of life and death. It is a condition where a person is caught between the dichotomy of life and death because so far the medical field has not claimed that cancer has been conquered. Of all the possible definitions and explanations, almost; one comes across all such concepts in the select cancer narratives. The most common word life denotes is something that is alive, that breathes, that reproduces that is something different from the inorganic matter like the stone. It is something which is

subjected to some sort of change with the passage of time. It is commonly accepted as the time period between the birth and death of a human being.

Normally, in statistical terms life or life expectancy is, 'the estimate of the average number of additional years that a person of a given age can expect to live' (Bezy 1). This is just a hypothetical assumption because life expectancy also varies according to age, race, gender and geographical measures besides a few other parameters. Statisticians and demographers formulate the life expectancy on the basis of a life table. The exact estimate of life expectancy is found out on the basis of the population census and death data of a particular community. Good health and life without any disability are also the key indicators of life expectancy. According to K G Manton, 'the average number of years a person in a population could expect to live after age x . It is the life table parameter most commonly used to compare the survival experience of populations. The age most often selected to make comparisons is 0.0 (i.e., birth), although, for many substantive and policy analyses, other ages such as 65+ and 85+ are more relevant and may be used'(Manton 1). It is a well known fact that once a human is born, he/she has that natural instinct of saving his/her own life.

Many scientists have studied and formulated the average life expectancy of nations. David J Naimark says, 'It is certainly a misconception to view gains in life expectancy as increments of time tacked onto the end of a fixed life span' (Naimark 18). Interestingly, the multi-billion dollar insurance industry calls it as actuarial age. They already calculate the average age of the person according to the average age of that nation. Although the average age around the globe has increased in the past hundred years. The major key indicators that are used to calculate life expectancy are Gender, Lifestyle, Current Health status, Family history besides other minor factors. A person's height, weight, use of alcohol, tobacco also determines life expectancy. Diet choices, economic status, also determine the probability of a person's survival.

Birth is always accompanied by death. Every human being is born with the same dichotomy. But in the so called normal conditions especially when a person is disease free one forgets that one day one has to die. In the daily humdrum of life the mind is so preoccupied that no one expects death in the next moment. In fact all the future plans are

built on the basis of forgetfulness about death. The general notion is that (death) will not happen to me. In a way it's good also otherwise human beings may not even move an inch and instead wait incessantly for death. All the dreams, future plans and long list of wishes are devised in the absence of the thought of death.

PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE

The philosophical question of the meaning of life has perplexed thinkers, scholars, and individuals throughout history. Various philosophical perspectives offer different interpretations and insights into the profound and existential inquiry. While there is no single, universally accepted answer, several key schools of thought throw light on the diverse ways in which people have approached the eternal question. Existentialism, posits that life inherently lacks intrinsic meaning, and it is up to each individual to create their own purpose and meaning. Existentialist philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre argued that humans must embrace their freedom and responsibility in the face of life's absurdity. So, the meaning of life is a deeply personal journey of self-discovery and self-determination.

On the other hand, religious and spiritual traditions often contend that life's meaning is tied to a higher and transcendent purpose. For many Christians, it involves fulfilling God's plan or seeking salvation, while many Buddhists see it as a path towards enlightenment and liberation from suffering. In such frameworks, the meaning of life is intertwined with moral and ethical guidance, providing a sense of purpose and direction. Another perspective comes from nihilism, which asserts that life is ultimately devoid of objective meaning, purpose and value. Friedrich Nietzsche, a prominent nihilist thinker, believed that the absence of inherent meaning required individuals to confront the abyss of nihilism and create their own values and purposes, albeit in the face of an indifferent universe.

In contrast, philosophers, like Albert Camus, explored the concept of absurdism, which acknowledges the apparent lack of meaning in the universe but encourages people to confront absurdity of life with courage. The quest for meaning becomes an essential part of the human condition, even if it remains elusive. Besides, utilitarianism, a moral

and philosophical theory, suggests that the meaning of life may be linked to maximizing happiness and minimizing suffering for the greatest number of people. Utilitarians, like Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill argue that actions and choices should be guided by their capacity to produce happiness, thus imbuing life with purpose through the pursuit of the greater good.

Hence, the philosophical meaning of life is a deeply subjective and complex matter. It varies according to one's philosophical, religious, or ethical framework and often reflects the fundamental questions of existence, purpose and value. Whether one embraces existentialism, seeks divine guidance, confronts nihilism, or pursues happiness and altruism, the quest for meaning remains a central aspect of the human experience, inviting individuals to explore and define their own purpose in the enigmatic universe. Understanding the meaningfulness of life becomes more pertinent when a person face lethal conditions like cancer. It compels humans to look at life from a different perspective.

LIFE EXPECTANCIES

Life expectancy is a statistical measure which is based on various factors like birth cohort, gender, geographic location and societal conditions. It serves as a valuable indicator of the overall health and well-being of a population. One of the primary determinants of life expectancy is advances in healthcare and medical science. Improved access to healthcare services, vaccinations, antibiotics and medical treatments have significantly increased life expectancy over the past century. Social and economic factors also influence life expectancy. Access to education, employment opportunities, income and social support systems also have a significant impact on a person's overall health and life expectancy. Societies with strong social safety nets and healthcare systems tend to have higher life expectancies.

Geographic location can lead to disparities in life expectancy. Different regions or countries have varying access to healthcare, sanitation and nutrition that leads to differences in life expectancy. Factors like environmental pollution, climate, and infrastructure also affect health outcomes and life expectancy. So, life expectancy is a

complex metric influenced by a combination of medical advancements, lifestyle choices, social and economic conditions and geographic factors. It is an important tool for assessing the health and well-being of populations and can provide insights into the effectiveness of healthcare systems and public health policies. Efforts to improve life expectancy involves addressing a wide range of factors that impact the overall health and longevity of individuals and communities.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEMPORARY MEANING OF REVELATIONS

The word, 'Revelations' is prominent in the Bible. It appears in *The Book of Revelation* or *The Apocalypse of John*. This is the final book of the New Testament in the Christian Bible and holds significant religious and symbolic importance for many Christians. It is a complex and mysterious text that deals with themes of prophecy, divine judgment and the ultimate triumph of good over evil. The book is interpreted as a prophetic and allegorical account of the end times or eschatology. It contains vivid and surreal imagery, including angels, beasts, seals, trumpets, and bowls, which are seen as symbols of the cosmic struggle between God and the forces of evil.

As per definition by Online Oxford Languages, 'the meaning of revelation is something that is made known, that was secret or unknown before especially something surprising besides it is also a thing or a person that surprises you and makes you change your opinion about somebody or something' (Google). In the context of cancer narratives, revelations, refer to the shocking diagnosis of cancer. The revelation causes lot of turmoil and transitions which later on brings about profound and transformative insights and experiences. The revelation of cancer encompass a wide range of emotional, psychological and philosophical aspects and it also plays a significant role in shaping the way the selected characters and survivors perceive their lives and the world around them.

The common revelation in cancer narratives is a heightened appreciation for life in the later stages. In the face of a life-threatening illness, the characters reevaluate their priorities and recognize the importance of cherishing each moment. They experience newfound gratitude for even the simplest joys in life, such as spending time with loved ones, enjoying nature and savoring a good meal. The heightened sense of appreciation

brings a sense of richness and depth to their existence. Another revelation common in cancer narratives is the resilience of the human spirit. Confronting the challenges of cancer treatment, the uncertainty of the future and the physical and emotional toll of the disease reveals an inner strength of the characters. The realization of their own resilience empowers them to face adversity with newfound courage and determination.

Cancer narratives reveal the significance of community and support systems. The major characters diagnosed with cancer find that their journey is made more bearable and meaningful through the support of family, friends, and healthcare professionals. These relationships and the bonds formed during the cancer experience leads to a profound revelation about the importance of human connection and empathy. The selected cancer narratives highlight the importance of self-discovery and personal growth. The experience of cancer results in a deeper understanding of their values, priorities, and life goals, leading to personal transformation and a commitment to living a more authentic and fulfilling life. So revelations in cancer narratives encompass the profound insights and transformative experiences that individuals undergo when facing a cancer diagnosis. Cancer narratives serve as powerful reminders of the resilience and capacity for growth within the human spirit.

The disease compels them to revisit their life journey and see what is left unfulfilled. They prepare a wish list of their unfulfilled desires. In *Before I Die*, Tessa Scott comes up with her wish list, 'I have got a whole long list of things I want to do' (BID 6) and goes on a spree to fulfill them. In *The Fault in Our Stars*, Hazel Grace and Augustus Waters go to New Zealand so that they can meet their favorite author. In fact even the mother of Hazel wishes that her daughter get the best of life before she dies, Hazel admits, 'one might marvel at the insanity of the situation a mother sends her sixteen year old daughter alone with a seventeen year old boy out into a foreign city famous for its permissiveness. But this too was a side effect of dying' (TFOS 159). Lara Blaine patches up with all her broken relations in the end and in *A Rather Unusual Romance* both the cancer sufferers; Alan and Erin dump their bitter past and relations so as to live a meaningful life.

The close study of the novels reveals that the cancer patients Hazel Grace, Augustus Waters, Jamie, Tessa, Lara Blaine and Alan and Erin go through pre-liminal, liminal and post-liminal stages. When cancer is first diagnosed all of them are thrown into a condition where they feel themselves separated from the society. Although they stay within their families, they feel separated because due to their lethal medical condition they will not be considered as normal. Though they are not normal due to the cancer cells, the impact is more on the mental state; the shock that revelation of cancer gives, affects the mental condition. So even if one is inflicted with a medical condition one has to make a decision about the left over time and space.

CANCER DIAGNOSES AS RITES OF SEPARATION

Rites of Separation were applied to the study of cultural rituals by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep and later elaborated by Victor Turner, it involved the initial detachment from a previous status or identity. In the context of cancer narratives, the concept is applied to capture the emotional and psychological journey that individuals go through when diagnosed with cancer. The diagnosis act as a separation stage in case of the characters suffering from cancer. In fact their near and dear ones also feel the same. The moment of diagnosis acts as a rite of separation. It marks the point from where the characters life is divided into, before cancer and after cancer. This separation triggers a range of emotions and reactions as the characters, Hazel, Augustus, Lara, Tessa, Eric and Alan begin to detach from their previous sense of health and normalcy.

In the novel *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower*, when the nurse tells Lara Blaine about cancer, her world falls apart. 'What? the walls felt like they were caving in. What do you mean caught it? I swallowed hard.....Information? Procedure? What the hell is she talking about? Awful I have cancer' (HTCET 16). Similarly, when Alan goes through various tests in the hospital and finally when the doctor reveals the bad news he felt like, 'the black cloud threatened to envelop him altogether. Cancer? You say I've got cancer? He thought of his daughter and wanted to cry' (ARUR 42). In the novel *A Walk to Remember*, when Landon comes to know about Jamie's condition he feels like, 'the blood drained from my face and a sheaf of dizzying images fluttered through my mind. Time had suddenly stopped. My head started to spin'(AWR 136). Landon could not sleep that

night. His eyes were swollen. He had gone from, 'shock to denial to sadness to anger and back again, all night long, praying that the whole thing had been some terrible nightmare' (AWR 138).

The initial shock and disorientation experienced during rites of separation by the cancer sufferers is graver than the shock experienced by an initiand during a cultural ritual. They go through a period of disbelief, fear and confusion. They grapple with the idea of facing a serious illness, leading to a sense of being disconnected from their previous state of well-being. As Tessa Scott gets the news from the doctor about cancer cells spreading through her spine and the way he hints that, 'I'd encourage you do things you want to do' (BID 53) her father starts crying, but she stops hearing any further because a thought suddenly raises, 'growing from my toes and ripping through me, it fills me up like a silent scream, a feeling of nausea that permeates to my bones It's not fair' (BID 54). Compared to the individuals undergoing rites of separation in cultural rituals, the characters in the selected cancer narratives experience a permanent shift in their social identity, cancer compels them to redefine the concept of self. The illness challenges their previous identity as a healthy individual, leading to a period of reevaluation and adjustment.

After facing the turbulent state of diagnosis, the characters enter a liminal phase characterized by uncertainty and ambiguity. This phase parallels the, betwixt and between, state in traditional liminality. The sufferer, navigates through treatment decisions, side effects, and the unknown outcome, which are emotionally trying. As the narrative progresses, all the five novels show incorporate elements of Victor Turner's third phase, where the characters suffering from cancer reintegrate into the society with a changed status. The characters find a new sense of purpose, renewed appreciation for life and a reshaped identity that reflects their experiences. The application of the concept of rites of separation to cancer narratives exposes the fact that the selected characters emotionally and mentally navigate the initial shock of diagnosis, then they move on towards transition and accept options for treatment and then eventually some of them try to reintegrate their lives as survivors while some of them accept death and prepare beforehand for their funeral rites like Augustus Water in *The Fault in Our Stars* and

Jamie Sullivan in *A Walk to Remember*. It triggers the profound impact of cancer on the characters sense of self and their relationship with the world around them.

Just as rites of separation involve symbolic actions or changes, cancer patients experience physical transformations due to treatments, surgeries and other medical interventions. The compelling changes serve as tangible markers of their separation from their pre-cancer bodies and contribute to a sense of detachment and adjustment. Rites of separation also involves a physical withdrawal from one's previous social context. Like dropping out from school and college in case of Hazel and Tessa and Augustus and frequent days of absence from job like in the case of Lara, Erin and Alan. In *Before I Die*, Tessa regrets of not going to school like other kids, 'It's October. All those kids recently returned to classrooms with new bags and pencil cases will be looking forward to half term already. Halloween. Christmas. Spring' (BID 54). Tessa analyses after all for how long will she regret of not experiencing all that.

Other characters also experience a sense of detachment from their usual social activities, like Lara Blaine had immersed herself in office work but now her, 'schedule had been ripped apart just like my cervix' (HTCET 53). Their relationships and roles also alter as they focus on their health and treatment. This leads to feelings of isolation and a reevaluation of their social support network. The diagnosis itself acts as a significant threshold in the cancer narrative. It marks the moment when they cross from the realm of health into the realm of illness. The threshold is emotionally charged, as it signals a profound life change and the need to adapt to new circumstances. Like in *A Walk to Remember*, Landon feels guilty of making Jamie do a lot of rehearsals of the Christmas play as he was unaware of her cancer but she reveals, 'doing the play was the thing that kept me healthy for so long' (AWR 138). So the cancer neophytes try to evolve coping mechanisms to deal with the grave condition.

All the five selected cancer narratives follow a pattern similar but serious to the three phases of rites of separation. The diagnosis and initial emotional response mark the separation phase. The treatment and healing process align with the liminal phase and it is characterized by uncertainty and challenges. The survivorship and final acceptance phase mirrors the incorporation phase, where they try to find ways to reintegrate their

experiences into their new identity. They develop greater resilience, a renewed perspective on life and a deeper appreciation for their own strength and the support of other. They try to incorporate ritualistic and symbolic practices into their journey which parallel the rituals associated with rites of separation as stated in the theory of liminality. These practices include wearing specific items like Augustus always keeps an unlit cigarette in his mouth, Hazel immerses herself in fictional novels, Tessa wants to break the law for the sake of adventure, she also pays more attention to the paintings on the walls of the hospital while Jamie always carries a Bible with her. Jamie became so charitable that, 'she would pull weeds in someone's garden without being asked, she would buy a new basket ball for the orphans' (AWR 18). Jamie would also carry wounded animals like squirrels, cats, frogs to veterinary doctor for treatment.

Other characters also follow many other common activities like participating in support groups, awareness campaigns like Lara Blaine participated in fund raising activity for cancer awareness, small deeds of kindness etc, all of which serve as coping mechanism for escaping harsh and painful realities, it also help in acceptance and healing. So, the concept of rites of separation provides a framework is clearly visible in the complex emotional, psychological, and social dynamics that the selected characters go through. It highlights the transformative journey they undertake and it starts from the moment of diagnosis which separates them from their daily routine life.

The characters go through liminal process, that dilemma of, 'to be or not to be' (Hamlet) that uncertainty, that predicament of not knowing about the next day, the process of frustration, fight, helplessness and futility of that frustration. One more thing that is revealed in the study is that due to each other's support the teenaged couples Hazel and Augustus, Tessa and Adam, Jamie and Landon and the aged couple Alan and Erin emerge from their Liminal stages in a far better way than they could have done it all alone. The moral support that they give each other plays a pivotal role in crossing over the threshold of life and death. They emerge as winners not over death but over their own thoughts about death.

rites of transition

According to the theory of Liminality, the second phase involves the ceremonial processes that mark significant life changes. In the context of selected cancer narratives, the concept of rites of transition clearly brings the emotional, psychological, and societal dimensions of the cancer journey. The initial diagnosis of cancer is marked by shock, disbelief and a sense of departure from the familiar. The prolonged period of undergoing treatment, surgeries, and recovery shows the liminal phase. Hazel has been struggling against cancer since the age of twelve. Augustus has to bear amputation of one leg and he cannot go to the regular college. Tessa faces a big hopeless situation after four years of treatment. Jamie has no hope of survivorship because she is suffering from acute case of leukemia. Lara's cervix has to be removed so she cannot hope of marrying and having a baby. While Alan and Eric have to live under the fear of returning of the cancer cells. So they live under the shadow of uncertainty and disruption. They are betwixt and between, their old and new realities.

Rites of transition are supported by the community or society. Similarly, the characters benefit from social networks, support groups, and healthcare systems that guide them through the various phases of their journey. Like rites of transition, the cancer journey involves personal transformation and growth. They emerge from their experience with a renewed sense of purpose and increased resilience. The cancer narrative, *A Rather Unusual Romance* is unusual in many aspects. It is the narrative of a divorced woman Erin who is shown fighting with cancer alongside looking after her children all by herself. During the frequent visits to hospital and chemotherapy sessions she happens to meet Alan who is also suffering from cancer. The protected radioactive chamber where both of them receive chemo sessions becomes their first meeting ground. The radiation chamber is the place where their romance blossoms. They give company to each other because now both of them have drunk the radio-active liquid as per doctor's instruction and like the initiands they are now impure, separated and isolated from other humans. But despite that Similarly, Hazel Grace and Augustus Waters, the two cancer-afflicted teenagers in the fiction, *The Fault in Our Stars*, meet each other at an informal Support Group Centre meant for cancer patients. Both of them fall in love but the sword of death constantly

hanging on their heads doesn't allow them to promise each other that they are meant for each other till eternity.

NEITHER LIVING NOR DEAD

The very word, Cancer, makes one feel, 'at death's door' (Stevie 109) it makes one feel, 'a sinking feeling in the pit of the stomach' (Stevie 108). The feeling of neither being here nor there is well expressed when Alan says, 'I am between the devil and the deep blue sea then, aren't I? I'm damned if I do, and damned if I don't' (Stevie 119). In fact the linguistic deconstruction also helps us in gauging the fact that cancer keeps the person at the threshold of life. The following phrase is repeated many a times, 'Aha! Back in the land of living' (*ARUR* 95). Consecutive appearances of negative phrase like wears off, wandered off, drifted off, whiff off, head off, and signed off etc are also common in cancer narratives. The doctors are presented as bad news deliverers; doctors as people who are not sure about the treatments they are giving. The constructed identity is shattered with the entrance of Cancer. Like the cultural liminal phase, the cancer journey is characterized by grave challenges, tests of endurance, and a sense of ambiguity. It is more difficult than the liminal phase of the initiand in the cultural realm because the threat of death is involved. The phase of survivorship and post-treatment reintegration aligns with the incorporation phase.

Cancer narratives follow a narrative arc that aligns with the three phases of transition. Just as different cultures have their own variations of rites of passage, cancer experiences vary among individuals influenced by factors such as age, gender, culture, and personal beliefs. The application of concept of rites of transition to cancer narratives helps the society to understand the emotional and psychological challenges faced by the sufferers during their journey, as well as the personal growth and transformation that results from navigating the complexities of cancer diagnosis, treatment and survivorship.

As the narratives progress, the completion of treatment and moving forward as a survivor (successful or unsuccessful) represent the successful incorporation of the cancer experience into one's identity. Just as traditional rites of transition involve symbolic elements like rituals, symbols, and ceremonies, the characters create their own symbols

of strength, resilience and hope. It includes wearing ribbons, creating art, or participating in events that symbolize their journey. For example, Lara Blaine starts working for cancer charity support group. Jamie Sullivan's Bible is a remarkable symbol of support. Landon observes that, 'Jamie carried her Bible wherever she went' (AWR 17).

Grave illness brings reformatory changes in one's perception about life as well as a better understanding of the time and space left with individuals. The famous critic Susan Sontag, herself a cancer sufferer, stated in her famous book *Illness as Metaphor*, 'Illness is the night-side of life, a more onerous citizenship. Everyone who is born holds a dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick' (Sontag 1). Thus having a disease and developing an understanding about it are two important issues while medicines can take care of the physical aspect to the best of the latest development but the way cancer is demoralized is a sign of worry. Not telling the patient about cancer was also a norm in the recent past because of the fear associated with it may harm the patient and hence the close relatives were informed about it by the doctors. In fact there were laws like the Freedom of Information Act of 1966, in which a clause, 'exempted from disclosure matters whose disclosure would be an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy' (Sontag 8).

Sontag notices that it is quite astonishing on the part of our much advanced post industrial societies that they find it difficult, 'to come up to terms with death'(Sontag 8). Death has become a taboo. So far death in sleep or sudden death is considered a good death. The most common definition that is accepted about death is, 'to cease to be alive'(2). But it is an ordinary and outdated definition of death. Shelley Kagan raises some pertinent questions, 'If I won't exist after I die, can death truly be bad_ for me? Would immortality be desirable? Is fear of death appropriate? Is suicide ever justified? How should I _live_ in the face of death?'(5).

Death is associated with ceasing of vital activities but modern science offers us the possibility of reviving life e.g. a frozen sperm can be used for artificial insemination in humans as well as in animals. Death is always posed as something 'mysterious,' the biggest challenge with the idea of death is what happens after death. In the five novels it is found that the characters of the four novels are quite young and face death at early

stages of life. Hazel got cancer at the age of thirteen; Augustus is barely seventeen and an amputee because of cancer. Jamie is sixteen and is about to die (*A Walk to Remember*); Tessa Scott is sixteen and she is told that she hasn't got enough time (*Before I Die*) and Lara Blaine is a healthy young woman of twenty nine who while exercising in a gym falls unconscious and the hospital authorities give her the bad news that she has cancer.

When it comes to acceptance it is also found that there is a common response, Lara Blaine is unable to accept the fact that she is only twenty nine and she got cancer. The most tragic case among all the cancer sufferers is that of Hazel Grace. She admits sarcastically, 'I told Augustus the broad outline of my miracle diagnosed with Stage IV thyroid cancer when I was thirteen. I didn't tell him that the diagnosis came three months after I got my first period. Like: Congratulations! You're a woman. Now die. It was we were told incurable' (TFOS 24). Arthur Van Gennep makes the readers understand death as something that separates humans from life. Death is basically the separation of different elements, 'man is often thought to be composed of several elements whose fate after death is not the same-body, vital force, breath-soul, head-soul, etc' (Gennep 146).

A disease like cancer also brings the notion of victimhood. Sontag says, 'Cancer today – always seemed to be a mysterious disease of individuals, a deadly arrow that could strike anyone, that singled out its victims one by one' (Sontag 38). Not only this the person afflicted with cancer often asks, Why me? The same notion is not attached with any other disease like diarrhea or TB. Susan Sontag observes, 'Cancer is viewed as forms of self-judgment, of self- betrayal' (40). Severe illness conditions also test one's will power to face it. It often brings out the worst and the best in a person. Not only as an individual but as a community also, in the face of epidemic or pandemic, how an individual or a community responds, reacts and revives also depends on the deeper values besides external factors. Like recently the world witnessed in the case of different nations and their response during Covid-19.

Not only does the revelation of fatal diseases cut short one's life it also comes as a revelation of how the life was well spent or not well spent. The common factor that comes out in the five novels is the realization of having done not enough during the given time and space. Not only in the selected texts can one find this sort of emotion, in fact in

several other fictional and non-fictional accounts of cancer such regretful feelings are observed. Suddenly the characters realize that they were leading an ordinary life. They have wasted their time so far. They haven't left any mark on the world.

Sontag mentions the case of a sixty year old civil servant in Kurosawa's film 'Ikiru'(1952). The protagonist feels, 'With one year left to live, Watanbe wants to do something that is worthwhile, wants to redeem his mediocre life' (Sontag 42). Likewise when Hazel asks Augustus in *The Fault in Our Stars*, whether he fears oblivion he replies, 'I fear earthly oblivion'(168). He further says that he regrets, 'that I won't be able to give anything in exchange for my life' (168). The guilt of not being able to do something great for society is heavy on the minds of cancer sufferers. Hazel asks jokingly that Augustus' obsession with giving something in exchange for his life is just weird. Augustus replies, 'Everyone wants to lead an extraordinary life' (169). Similarly in the novel *Before I Die* Tessa Scott broods over her past fifteen years of tiny life and regrets the fact that she will never be able to do anything that might make her famous, 'I'll never be famous or leave anything worthwhile behind'(BID 53). The young lady, Lara Blaine of the novel *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower* is blatantly told that she will not be able to have kids after radiation. Lara regrets, 'No man would ever want me now. I was damaged goods' (HTCET 71).

Human body is a field of play for millions of microbes, bacteria, viruses etc. One human body of flesh, blood, bones and well-engineered systems is viable to attacks by foreign bodies and internal malfunction can also happen at any point of time. But its' not just the body that is affected, it is the mind also that is greatly involved especially when the disease is life threatening. Thinking beings are greatly affected from a grave illness the moment it is revealed. Announcement of a lethal disease breaks the normal flow of thought. The mere announcement shatters the on- going constructed identity. The check-up, test reports and the treatment transport the individual to the threshold. The threshold, where the individual has to take a decision about oneself; either the individual has to learn to accept and carry on with the condition or crumble under the pressure of pain and limited time.

BEWILDERMENT FACED BY DOCTORS

The study of cancer narratives reveals that cancer not only affects the patient but it also affects the doctors as well. Famous oncologist, Siddharth Mukherjee writes in his book *The Emperor of All Maladies*, one of the best-selling books also, ‘Cancer was an all-consuming presence in our lives. It invaded our imaginations; it occupied our memories; it infiltrated every conversation, every thought’ (Mukherjee 4). He calls the treatment of certain kinds of cancer as, ‘terrifying to experience, terrifying to observe and terrifying to treat’ (Mukherjee 3). The pleading eyes of patients, the hopes that they have from the doctors, the last hope that they want to cling to is the doctor and this is all pervading in his entire book. ‘Will you turn me out if I can’t get better?’ (Mukherjee 191) haunts the sensitive doctor.

It brings even the doctors to the threshold of sanity and insanity because most of the times they also feel helpless in the absence of a sure shot cure. Lara Blaine and her friend Jane also pity the doctors because an oncologist’s job is quite tough. When Lara confronts her doctor Dr. Pemachokatha she realizes that, ‘it must be so hard to be an oncologist. This poor guy has to give people bad news all day’ (Hein 161). It is indeed expected that anyone who is not from the field of medical sciences would find it difficult to understand and accept cancer but what if a world famous neurologist happens to catch the same problem.

That is what happened when a famous neurologist and scientist came to know that he has cancer. Just to mention one such example, it happened with Paul Kalanithi, the world renowned neuroscientist, he penned down his biography before dying at the age of thirty seven. The reaction of the all knowing doctor is also the same. When the test report is read out he says, ‘do you think there’s any possibility that it is something else?’ (Kalanithi 4). And then it is followed by the same response as that of any family in such a situation. ‘We held each other tightly, like young lovers. In the past year we both suspected, but refused to believe, or even discuss that a cancer was growing inside me’ (Kalanithi 4).

In his biography Dr Kalanithi admits, 'I was trying to see death as both doctor and patient' (138). While his studies in knowing his stage IV lung cancer helped him in collecting the data and possibility of treatment as a doctor, it was in no way helping him as a patient. He was in the same liminal condition of betwixt and between like a layperson, 'Like my own patients, I had to face my mortality and try to understand what made my life worth living'(Kalanithi 91). He dangles between the two worlds of being neither here nor there. He says, 'Torn between being a doctor and a patient, delving into medical science and turning back to literature for answers, I struggled, while facing my own death, to rebuild my own death, to rebuild my old life-or perhaps find a new one' (Kalanithi 139).

It might be asked that why cancer specialists and doctors are being discussed in the study that too at this stage it is because as compared to any other disease cancer has still no proclaimed cure. In the recent past human inventions have conquered polio, diphtheria, cholera, smallpox, AIDS etc and recently Covid but cancer treatment has not given any permanent assurance. In fact many diseases that came after cancer have been controlled with accurate mode of treatment but cancer cure has not progressed that much. Pain and trauma is also associated with it. The process of treatment is also difficult. Moreover it is something that devours the cells from inside according to the type of cancer a person has. It is still at the stage of trial and error at the behest of thousands of patients around the globe. Mukherjee calls Cancer an enemy about which we know not much. He takes Sun Tzu's support to make the readers understand it, 'if you know your enemy and know yourself, you will not be imperiled in a hundred battles: if you do not know your enemies but do know yourself, you will win one and lose one: if you do not know your enemies nor yourself, you will be imperiled in every single battle'(Mukherjee 210). So it is how a doctor explains cancer.

The application of the theory of Liminality gives a new dimension and novelty in understanding cancer narratives. Liminality is primarily an area of anthropology but it encompasses many other domains also because Anthropologists study Archaeology, Biology, Cultural practices, Language and its impact besides Applied and Practicing Anthropology. So cancer narratives have been looked at through the purview of biology

because it affects the physical body, archaeologically many oncologists are studying it under a separate branch called as Historical Oncology. Linguistic analysis of cancer narratives is also important because whether it is the study of fictional account or non-fictional account it is deduced that there is an undercurrent similarity in all the cancer narratives. Hence a comprehensive analysis of cancer narratives is beneficial within the purview of Liminality as proposed by Victor Turner and founded by Arnold Van Gennep.

CANCER NARRATIVES AS ILLNESS NARRATIVES

Many autobiographical accounts of cancer have been educative in nature like some of the best sellers narratives are by Cartoonist Miriam Engelberg's *Cancer Made Me a Shallower Person*, it is a graphic memoir of her cancer journey. She was bold enough to record her journey right from revelation to hair loss to treatment with a tinge of humor. *When Breath Becomes Air* has already been discussed, Dr Kalanithi died before completing the book: his wife later on completed it and published it. *I'm Sorry You Have to Be Here* throws light on the impact of cancer on gender. It is the struggle of a mother afflicted with breast cancer. *A Cancer in the Family: Take Control of Your Genetic Inheritance*, talks about the role of genes in inheriting cancer. *Help Me Live* pays attention to the caregivers, families, spouses, children of cancer sufferers. It gives suggestions to caregivers in dealing with cancer sufferers. *Cancer Vixen*, it is also an interesting graphic novel about cancer.

Since the human mind is complex, the study of mental state in different conditions is of utmost importance. Cancer narratives are being studied for the sake of knowing the human experience encoded in language. Fiction also helps in decoding the hidden meanings in the text. How the unconscious tries to balance the conscious level is well evident in cancer narratives. During the course of terminal illness and due to a variety of life experiences the mind is stored with many memories; in conflicting situations the suppressed feelings of unconsciousness sometimes conflict with consciousness; it often leads to depression, anxiety and isolation. If the deep rooted cause is rightly analyzed, the conflict is resolved and it results in better human health at least for the period of survival.

LIMINALITY AND THE MENTAL PROCESS

Arnold Van Gennep, worked thoroughly to understand Liminality. Victor Turner (1920- 1984) added new dimensions to it particularly the mental processes that one goes through during the middle phase i.e. the liminal phase. He devoted his entire life to investigating rituals. He explored the social process in terms of the way tribal people resolve crises. As a researcher he integrated the idea of liminality, the threshold, the betwixt and the between. 'Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial' (Turner 104). For him all these processes were designed to restore behavior in the society, in the garb of rituals. He categorized liminality into Liminal and the Liminoid. In technologically simpler societies people undergo liminal process whereas in technologically complex societies they undergo the process of Liminoid.

He had also tried to study the connection of body, brain and culture, but unfortunately he did not live long enough to explore it extensively. Liminality helps in operating one's social life and how it helps in the evolution of a person. Turner also proposed the notion that the human brain is a liminal organ that operates between the genetically fixed and the radically free state. The technique of co-adaptation helps us to evolve out of our genetically engineered brain. Turner's idea of liminality is something that is fluid, dynamic and anti-structural in nature.

Turner was keen on understanding the liminal stage, the state where an individual doesn't belong to the previous condition nor he/she is part of the reincorporation. Besides he also coined the term *communitas*, a term that refers to an unstructured community; a kind of social group in which people come together because they have common experience. Liminal has originated from the Greek/Hebrew word limen that means harbor, a place between the land and the sea. The word has various meanings in different cultures like in Latin, limes used to be known as borders or confines of the Roman Empire. Similarly, limen meant threshold or passage.

According to Christian belief the word limbo that is similar to limn meant, half-way station i.e. place between Heaven and Hell, where the souls of those who died in the

friendship of God wait for their salvation by Jesus Christ. The concept of liminality is visible in ancient religions also like the Pythagorean view of metempsychosis, which is also referred to by Socrates in the myth of Er in Plato's Republic. Er was allowed to come back to the world of the living and recount what he saw in the land of the dead, the souls of recently departed people meet at a middle station, where they are allowed to select their next destination.

Innate human behavior and the process of identity formation immediately correlate with cancer narratives. The study of cancer narratives reveal that as soon as Cancer is diagnosed the first thing that it shatters is a person's constructed identity. Famous cricketer Yuvraj Singh when came to know that he is diagnosed with cancer he felt, 'Only this time what I really wanted to shout out was to the Gods above, that this cannot be happening to me. I am young, I am a sportsperson, I am living my life full-tilt. I have just won a World Cup. How can I have Cancer?' (Singh 92). So, shock, denial and chaos is witnessed in grave illnesses like cancer. Identity crisis doesn't apply to minors with cancer because by the age of twelve a child is not that much conscious about a fixed identity. Although, the traces of identity in the form of name and gender is there but largely the child is unable to understand what cancer is doing to him/her. Before the diagnosis of Cancer the constructed identity is 'I', after the diagnosis it causes the shifts to shattering of that identity. It is starkly visible in the selected cancer narratives. The moment the doctor reveals the bad news to the person, after that how He/she looks at that constructed 'I' is worthy of exploration not just as a scholar but as a human also. So besides attacking the physical body the first thing that Cancer attacks is one's identity. The study of cancer narratives reveals how the survivor converted the 'I' into the other.

Research reveals that writing about cancer helps in spreading awareness as well as establishing support groups for better care. 'Writing has always been a refuge for me, a place to express my thoughts, my reality and also share my fears and insecurities'(Vaidya 6). The study explores the impact of Cancer narratives in creating social bonds also. The close reading of the texts also show that cancer acts as a trigger in the patient about, 'how and what to desire' because his/her common desires comes into direct conflict that is constructed by society around him-comes to a standstill. It is also an interesting point

revealed in the chosen cancer narratives. ‘Not ever. I’ll never be famous or leave anything worthwhile behind. I’ll never go to college or have a job. I won’t travel, never earn money, never drive, never fall in love or leave home or get my own house’ (Denham 53).

AMBIGUITY

Cancer stories reveal that right from the revelation of diagnosis up to the treatment, the conscious as well as unconscious dangles into uncertainty. The fear of recurrence of the cancer cells always bothers the psyche of the patient. It leaves a permanent impact on their psyche. Although all humans know that they are going to die and life and death instincts are inbuilt. Besides several instinctive behaviors like fear, the instinct is stored in the form of memory. In all the selected novels there are many common motifs in various forms in fact they are mostly present in binaries. Some of the common motifs are fight or flight, hope and despair, life and death, light and dark etc. Some of the words that are observed in all the five texts are time, cancer- enemy, war-battle, miracle, mind-body-spirit, blood, hair, agony, isolation, nausea, haunting of memories, nostalgia, prayer, spirituality, food, uncertainty, pain, psyche and loss of breath.

TRANSITION FROM PRE-CANCER TO POST-CANCER STAGE

Pre-cancer to post-cancer condition is a difficult transitional journey and a painful in-between state where the characters of the selected novels experience a sense of ambiguity and uncertainty. Liminal journey reveals the psychological and social aspects of transitions and the suspension of normal order. For cancer sufferers, liminal experiences encompasses a painful journey. The process is marked by uncertainty, a sense of being in-between health and illness and a shift in identity due to the disease's impact. The medical journey and emotional toll create a liminal space where patients and their loved ones grapple with fear, hope and adaptation. When Lara Blaine was given radiation, she wondered how the doctors are going to burn the cells inside her uterus. Liminality exposes the complex emotions and challenges faced by those dealing with cancer and the transformational nature of their experiences.

Cancer sufferers are liminal beings in the sense that they often exist in a state of transition and ambiguity due to their diagnosis and treatment. Their experience involves a profound shift in identity, lifestyle, and well-being. The disrupting range of emotions and challenges that cancer patients face reflects their liminal state. Liminality conceptualizes the unique journey of characters in the selected texts, but each individual character's experience is complex and multifaceted.

The transitional journey exposes, 'the many dangers accompanying these transitions – threats to identity, potential disruptions to the social order are managed and contained by the rites of passage'(Gennep 22). Arthur Van Gennep, gave the world an opportunity to understand the transitions through cultural perspectives. Cancer narratives offer an opportunity to understand the liminal concept through permanent perceptual changes. According to van Gennep, 'rites of passage follow a tripartite pattern and consist of: a separation or dis-aggregation phase during which the individual detaches himself/herself or is detached from the community and the role he/she played hitherto within that community; a transitional or liminal stage in which, isolated from his/her familiar social context, routines and activities, he/she 'passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state' and normally undergoes tests that gauge his/her readiness for the new role that he/she will assume'(Turner 80); a reincorporation or re-aggregation stage in which he/she is welcomed back into the community' (Turner 23).

John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars*, presents the dilemma faced by two teenagers who suffer from cancer. Augustus Waters and Hazel Grace, feel themselves separated from normal society. It is evident when Augustus and Hazel plan to go to Amsterdam. At the airport the authorities announce their names so that they can be pre-boarded because according to flight rules sick people need to be boarded first. Hazel feels, 'Every single person in the gate area turned squarely to me' (144). She was wearing a canula and also carrying an oxygen cylinder. The physical evidence of feeling separated from the rest is apparent from her mental dialogues, 'I could feel everybody watching us, wondering what was wrong with us, and whether it would kill us, and how heroic my mom must be and everything else. That was the worst part of having cancer,

Hazel is disturbed by the fact that, ‘the physical evidence of disease separates you from other people. We were irreconcilably other, and never it was more obvious than when the three of us walked through the empty plane’ (TFOS144).

Initially when cancer first enters in Hazel’s life at the age of thirteen, she feels separated from her school friends, when her best pal Kaityln comes to meet her she feels, ‘I guess it could never again feel natural to talk to her’(47). ‘Any attempts to feign normal social interactions were just depressing because it was glaringly obvious that everyone I spoke to for the rest of my life would feel awkward and self conscious around me’ (47). The feeling of separation that a cancer patient feels can be compared with the pre-liminal stage suggested by Genep.

In the novel *The Fault in Our Stars*, Hazel Grace is diagnosed with Stage IV Thyroid Cancer, it followed terrible tests, diagnosis, treatments, ‘then radiation’(TFOS 24) always gasping for air, and ‘soon got into one of those experimental trials’(25). Since she is a teenager so didn’t even have the chance to go into denial mode that normally happens in such cases. In fact she grew up with cancer, so she didn’t even get enough time to experience pre-liminal stage, hardly twelve years of life and she is into cancer. Augustus Waters also a teenager but now an amputee because of Cancer. Thankfully in their liminal stage they happen to meet each other in the Cancer Support Centre and their meetings help them in coming out of the liminal stage together. Their love affair blooms in an environment where uncertainty is already guaranteed. Their teenage romance revolves around sickness, diagnosis, doctors, death, drugs, trials, treatments, philosophy and decision making. Their friendship helps them in making a decision about their life. They reach a conclusion, ‘My cancer is me. The tumors are made of me. They are made of me surely as my brain and my heart are made of me. It is a civil war, Hazel Grace, with a pre-determined winner’ (TFOS 216). They reach a stage of maturity where they decide not to think of death any more. They look at the world with a pragmatic approach and they accept that, ‘the world is not a wish-granting factory’ (TFOS 198).

The pre-liminal phase of Hazel Grace shows that she is under acute depression because right from age thirteen and after the disclosure of cancer she has been dropped from school. She has no friends to move around with. She has only one friend to talk to

that too once in a while. The novel begins with her state of mind, 'Late in the winter of my seventeenth year, my mother decided I was depressed, presumably because I rarely left the house, spent quite a lot of time in bed, read the same book over and over, ate infrequently, and devoted quite a bit of my abundant free time to thinking about death' (TFOS 3). This is the state when she is still in the mental stage of initiation with her condition. She claims, 'depression is not a side effect of cancer. Depression is a side effect of dying, 'Cancer is also a side effect of dying. Almost everything is, really' (TFOS 3).

It is understandable that when she just began her life, when she was just thirteen and tried to make sense of the world around her that she got afflicted with cancer. Her parents and the doctors saved her life and kept her alive. The heaviest price that she has to pay is she always has to carry an oxygen cylinder with her cannula or pipes attached to nose extended and hanging on up to her ears. It is obvious that she is unable to cope with the situation. Physically as well as mentally, it is unbearable for a teenager to be seen with a canula and an oxygen cylinder. Time and again her medicines are changed by the doctor. This is her pre-liminal stage where she is separated from ordinary daily life. She can't go to school; she can't go on her own like other teenagers. So cancer separates her from the society.

PHYSICAL MARKERS OF SEPARATION

Hazel's use of a portable oxygen tank and Augustus's prosthetic leg serve as physical markers of their separation from their healthy selves. The diagnosis forces them to reevaluate their life goals, relationships, and expectations. The liminal phase is characterized by ambiguity and transformation. This phase encompasses the time when Hazel and Augustus meet and develop a romantic relationship. Their time together is marked by their shared struggles, hopes, and dreams. They are "betwixt and between" their old lives and the new emotions and experiences they're encountering.

The uncertainty of their health statuses and the fragility of life become central themes during this phase. Their trip to Amsterdam to meet the author of their favorite book becomes a significant liminal experience, as it challenges their perceptions and

leads to self-discovery. The incorporation phase involves the reintegration of characters into a new identity. In the novel, this phase coincides with the characters' reactions to the progression of their illnesses. Augustus's health deteriorates, leading to a shift in his sense of self as he grapples with the possibility of death.

Hazel's grief and eventual acceptance of Augustus's death further represent the incorporation phase. She incorporates the impact of their relationship into her identity, finding strength in her memories and the lifelong lessons she learned from Augustus. The novel concludes with Hazel reflecting on her own life and the importance of living it to the fullest, representing her reintegration into her new reality as a survivor. The three phases of liminality are intricately woven into the characters' journeys in *The Fault in Our Stars*. The novel beautifully captures the emotional complexity, personal growth, and transformation that result from navigating the challenges of illness and mortality.

Thus they overcome the anxiety of being a cancer patient. They accept the things as they are and try to come up with the decision to do the best for themselves. They do not break up or feel defeated after developing an understanding of the scenario. Similarly, in the novel, *An Unusual Romance*, Erin and Alan's romance blossoms in a Radio-iodine Suite while getting a treatment of radio-iodine drink. They are both isolated and kept in Radio-iodine suites next to each other. They become friends because people having treatment on high radiation are allowed to talk to each other.

Cancer affects the day to day life of cancer patients. Hazel is confined to home at the age of thirteen. Augustus leaves the dream of going to college like other teenagers. He uses prosthetics to support the amputated leg. Alan and Erin lose their jobs and cannot support their families financially like they used to do. They happen to spend more time in completely isolated Radio-iodine chambers for radio-active treatments. Thus disorder, disruption and disturbance in day to day routine are a part of cancer patient's life. Hazel always carries an oxygen cylinder wherever she goes.

The analysis of the character, Augustus Waters shows that there are several elements of liminality. Augustus Waters embodies liminality in various aspects of his life. First and foremost, his battle with cancer places him in a state of physical liminality.

He is neither completely healthy nor terminally ill, but instead, he resides in the uncertain territory of remission. His precarious health condition underscores the fragility of his existence, making every day a transitional phase between life and death. The liminal state forces him to grapple with questions of identity, purpose, and mortality, contributing significantly to his character's depth. Augustus also demonstrates liminality through his persona. He adopts an air of confidence and charisma, presenting himself as a self-assured young man who has come to terms with his circumstances.

However, beneath this facade, he harbors vulnerabilities and insecurities, especially regarding his amputation of one leg and his fear of oblivion. The duality between his outward persona and inner struggles creates an emotional liminality, where he navigates the tension between self-assuredness and self-doubt. He tries to overcome fear by believing, 'Our fearlessness shall be our secret weapon'(TFOS 202). Augustus's relationship with Hazel, the novel's protagonist, is another dimension where liminality is evident. Their love story blossoms in the midst of their shared experience of cancer, an arena marked by uncertainty and impermanence. When Augustus makes love with Hazel she feels that her existence is validated, the body that she hated for so long turns out into a feeling, 'the space around us evaporated, and for a weird moment I really liked my body' (TFOS 203). Their romance is a liminal space where they find solace, hope, and connection amid the existential challenges they face.

It is a love that exists in the threshold between life and death and it profoundly shapes Augustus's character as he grapples with the intensity of his feelings for Hazel. So his physical health, his persona, and his relationship with Hazel all exist in transitional states, highlighting the novel's exploration of the liminal nature of existence itself. Augustus's character serves as a poignant reminder that life's most profound moments often occur in the spaces between certainty and ambiguity, he thinks that it is up to an individual about how he treats his life, 'You have a choice in this world, I believe, about how to tell sad stories, and we made the funny choice' (TFOS 209) where the boundaries of identity and purpose are continually challenged and redefined.

Besides, Augustus often uses the word, metaphorically in a playful manner throughout the novel. He tells Hazel, 'I'm in love with you, and I know that love is just a

shout into the void, and that oblivion is inevitable, and that we're all doomed and that there will come a day when all our labor has been returned to dust, and I know the sun will swallow the only earth we'll ever have, and I am in love with you' (TFOS 153).

His playful use of the word metaphorically reflects his tendency to navigate the liminal space between sincerity and irony. It's an example of how he uses language to convey deeper emotions while maintaining a certain emotional distance, hinting at his inner complexities. Augustus's symbolic use of cigarettes is also a recurring theme. He's seen with an unlit cigarette in his mouth, never actually lighting it. This symbolizes his position in the liminal space between being a cancer patient and resisting the idea of letting the disease define him. The unlit cigarette represents his defiance against fate and his desire to retain control over his identity. He tells Hazel the reason behind always keeping an unlit cigarette, 'they don't kill you unless you light them. And I've never lit one. It's a metaphor see, you put the killing thing right between your teeth, but you don't give it the power to do its killing' (TFOS 20).

Augustus's plan to have Hazel and himself resurrected as stars in the wake of their deaths is a poignant example of liminality. It's a fusion of science fiction and spirituality, highlighting his desire to transcend the boundaries of mortality and exist in a realm that exists somewhere between the earthly and the cosmic. This plan underscores his ongoing exploration of existential questions. Augustus's attendance at a cancer support group, even though he himself is in remission, is a striking example of his liminal existence. He chooses to be in a space where the line between life and death is often blurred. This choice reflects his desire to connect with others who understand his experiences, even as he occupies a transitional state of health.

Augustus and Hazel visit the literal, Heart of Jesus, statue in Amsterdam, and Augustus expresses his desire to have a meaningful life. This visit represents a pilgrimage of sorts, a journey to a sacred place, and it highlights his longing for a life that transcends the mundane. It's a moment where Augustus grapples with his existential questions in a space filled with religious and spiritual significance. In these instances, Augustus Waters consistently embodies the concept of liminality, blurring the lines between sincerity and irony, life and death, and the earthly and the transcendent. 'I cannot tell you how thankful

I am for our little infinity' (260). His character is a testament to the rich thematic exploration within the novel, emphasizing the complex interplay of life, love, and mortality.

The post-liminal life of Augustus Waters in *The Fault in Our Stars* is characterized by the lasting impact he leaves on the lives of those he touched, especially Hazel. While Augustus's physical existence is tragically cut short due to his relapse and eventual death, his presence continues to reverberate through the narrative and the lives of the other characters. One of the most significant incidents that exemplifies Augustus's post-liminal life is his letter to Peter Van Houten, the reclusive author. In the letter, Augustus passionately defends Hazel and her love for literature, challenging Van Houten's dismissive attitude.

Even after his passing, Augustus's words in the letter serve as a catalyst for Hazel's journey to Amsterdam to seek answers from Van Houten. This letter becomes a conduit for Augustus to continue influencing Hazel's actions and the course of the story. Hazel's enduring love for Augustus is a central theme in the post-liminal phase of his existence. Her memories of their time together, their shared experiences, and their profound conversations continue to shape her outlook on life.

For Hazel, Augustus remains a powerful presence in her thoughts and emotions, underscoring the idea that his impact transcends death. This enduring love becomes a testament to the enduring nature of their connection beyond the liminal space of life and death. Augustus's posthumous effect on Hazel's relationship with her parents is noteworthy. After his death, Hazel's parents express their gratitude for Augustus's presence in their daughter's life, recognizing the positive changes he brought about in her attitude and well-being. Hazel realizes and accepts, 'we live in a universe devoted to create' (TFOs 266). This acknowledgment highlights how Augustus's influence extends to those around Hazel, transforming not only her life but also the lives of her loved ones.

Augustus Waters post-liminal life is marked by his enduring influence on the characters and the story. Through his letter, his impact on Hazel's choices, and the positive changes he brings to her family, Augustus's presence continues to resonate long

after his physical existence has ended. His character represents the idea that the influence of a loved one can persist in the lives of those left behind, transcending the boundaries of life and death. Hazel knows, 'I was good enough' (313).

It is also revealed that the liminal stages are irreversible. After going through pain, mental agony, a lot of anguish, body image issues, disorientation, threat of perishing into oblivion the characters come to an understanding about accepting each breath as it comes. Once they come to an acceptance about their own temporary existence and the temporariness of the existence of millions of other people who inhabit the earth or who had inhabited the earth before them also- this revelation becomes irreversible. So their post-liminal stage is irreversible. Alan puts a ring in Erin's finger despite knowing their future and Hazel decides not to mourn the death of Augustus Waters.

The phenomena of liminality brings is transformational in nature. Its role in transforming an individual is also being studied. Liminality has also helped in realizing that the society is not a thing it is rather always in a process with successive phases and so is the individual. The constant human desire to seek some solace from a structured society forces them to pass through rituals of various kinds. It is a part of the evolutionary process and it will continue because humans are always in a state of liminality. Turner emphasizes the fact that the tribal ritual processes were far better than the modern day corporate *communitas* because their rituals were based on a structure capable of bringing harmony and social order within the *communitas*. It was in sync with nature, cyclical changes and the movement of the planets thus keeping the social order in sync with the natural order of the cosmos.

According to Turner, the rituals that are performed externally or that are visible are not just physical rituals instead they are a part of our genomic evolutionary process. As a researcher he integrated the idea of Liminality, the threshold, the betwixt and the between. For him all these processes were designed to restore behavior in the society, in the garb of rituals. He categorized Liminality into Liminal and the Liminoid.

Prof Bjorn Thomassen has introduced the term Limivoid. It is basically applied to adventure sports like bungee jumping. Turner had also studied the same thing because the

origin of bungee jumping is in the Ndembu tribe but he had not assigned a particular term for it. Thomassen called this experience as Limivoid. He says, 'I take it to denote the kind of constant search for excitement or even near- death experiences, where touching the ultimate boundary is the goal, but where there is absolutely no change of subjectivity; the suffering or danger has become the end goal'(Thomassen 56). It is like playing with the void - the empty space. The analysis of this space is interesting because this is transformative in nature. It is that space where a person is triggered to ponder upon the constructed meaning, values and overall understanding of the outlook of life. It is like the third space.

Tessa Scott of *Before I Die* tries to understand herself when she watches the garbage turning into ashes. She becomes conscious about the environment around her. She tells herself, 'All matter is composed of particles. The more solid something is, the closer the particles are held together. People are solid, but inside is liquid' (BID 48). She observes what other sixteen years old cannot. 'We both watch the space where it was'(BID 49). Similarly, Hazel Grace wishes to share the pleasant experience that she feels with Augustus Waters, she calls him but he looks unavailable but still she experiences, 'that secret post-terrestrial third space with him that we visited when we talked on the phone' (TFOS 263).

The teenage characters of *A Walk to Remember* also evolve themselves after facing the liminal condition of life. They experience the Limivoid space when finally Landon understands the extremely religious and charitable behavior. The mental agony, the ambiguity of being alive as well as being unsure of it at the same time, the strong sense of dissolution of identity, the disorientation caused by the dilemma, the sense of withdrawal, the agony of being the other, being not normal is well depicted by Nicholas Sparks in the cancer narrative, *A Walk to Remember*.

The character Jamie Sullivan experiences liminality in a few ways. Jamie is a compassionate and kind-hearted young woman. She is dealing with terminal leukemia but she tells nobody about her condition in her school. Only her father knows about her grave condition. Her liminal experiences are centered around her awareness of her limited time and her effort to make the most of it. Jamie's interactions with Landon, the protagonist, bring her into a space of transformation as she helps him grow and change.

Their relationship and her eventual death create a liminal space where they both navigate the emotions of love, loss and acceptance.

Her impact on Landon's life and her ability to inspire him reflect the liminality of her presence, as she bridges the gap between his former self and the person he becomes. The novel portrays Jamie's journey through illness and her influence on those around her. She is already quite mature about capturing the liminality of her existence. She lost her mother during her birth. Despite all the grave problems in her life she leaves a lasting impact on others.

In the novel *A Walk to Remember*, Jamie Sullivan always carries a Bible with her as a reflection of her deep faith and spirituality. The Bible gifted by her mother for her would be baby acts as a tool for coping with her betwixt and between condition. Jamie is a devout and religious young woman and she lives her life in accordance with her Christian beliefs. Carrying the Bible serves as a physical representation of her commitment to her faith and her desire to live a righteous and meaningful life. Her faith plays a significant role in her interactions with others, particularly Landon, her antagonist. It guides her actions and decisions, and it's a key aspect of her character's identity. The Bible serves as a symbol of Jamie's values, her source of strength during her illness, and a reminder of the hope and love she holds onto even in the face of adversity like cancer.

Landon also goes through transitions due to his obsession about Jamie Sullivan. He is always intrigued by her extreme charitable behavior. He wonders how Jamie could always be so full of compassion despite the fact that Landon always makes fun of being her so plain and unattractive. Landon's post-liminal phase is primarily depicted through the aftermath of Jamie's death and its impact on Landon's life. After Jamie's passing, Landon goes through a period of reflection, growth and change. Jamie's influence during their time together in the last half of the narrative, triggers a significant change in Landon's character. Her love and the lessons she taught him help him become a better person.

The post-liminal phase shows Landon carrying Jamie's legacy forward by becoming more compassionate, understanding, and selfless. In the aftermath of Jamie's

death, Landon takes steps to fulfill her dreams and wishes. He pursues his education, eventually becoming a medical doctor, which reflects his personal growth and commitment to honoring Jamie's memory.

The post-liminal phase showcases Landon's emotional and psychological growth. He matures as he navigates his grief, reflecting on the impact Jamie had on his life and the lessons he learned from her. The transformation helps him appreciate the deeper aspects of life and relationships. Landon's decision to share Jamie's story through his own perspective, as evidenced by the novel itself, is a representation of the enduring impact of their relationship. It demonstrates how Jamie's influence continues to shape his life even after her passing. So, the post-liminal phase in *A Walk to Remember* portrays the lasting effects of Jamie's presence on Landon's life and his journey towards self-discovery, growth, and understanding.

Liminal phases are experienced by all individuals because all the individuals go through transitional phases but when the time and space is restricted due to some lethal condition like Cancer the individual strongly experiences the state of between and betwixt, the sudden onslaught on life forces one to experience the threshold of life. Jamie Sullivan and Landon face the transition through influencing each other while the state of liminality is a compulsion for Jamie, Landon goes through this state of mind deliberately.

Liminal stage offers the opportunity to go through unique experiences and many times the liminal changes are permanent. The new found transformation offers an opportunity to understand the transitory nature of life at a greater level. Those who experience liminality tend to show a greater maturity towards life and society. They in fact have greater power upon themselves after crossing the mental threshold of constructed identity. Uncertainty has always been a part of life but one becomes conscious of it only when one is thrown into that condition where one actually realizes the uncertainty of life like the uncertainty that cancer brings.

Although the person undergoing rituals is just physically separated, he/she has to remain in a different physical and mental state as compared to others. Like in many fertility rites of Ndembu tribe the person is kept in, 'a different spatial structure' (Turner 21) or environment and thus is separated from other people of the community. It is only

the priest or the village doctor or the close relative who is allowed to stay near the person (undergoing the rites), monitor him/her is allowed. So is the case here in her condition. All she sees around her is her mother and father who are always worried about her and the doctors who are treating her cancer. So, whether she wants it or not her medical condition separates her from the society.

The pre-liminal condition is further categorized into, 'sympathetic rites,' (Vizedom 41) under the rites of separation as proposed by Arnold Van Gennep in *Rites de Passage*. Sympathetic rites are performed when someone is under a special condition like pregnancy. During pregnancy many communities take special care of the mother and her unborn baby so as to save them from evil forces. Hazel Grace is given special care because she is the only child of her parents and she is in a critical condition. It is so difficult for them to put up a brave face in front of their ailing daughter so that she doesn't get disheartened. They are always around her, to protect her and to care for her. They are always under the clouds of fear of losing her anytime. Thus it is found that she is also experiencing the conditions followed in sympathetic rites. Another character from the same novel Augustus Waters, the young and handsome guy is also given special care by his parents.

In the novel *Before I Die*, Tessa Scott is allowed to follow the life that she wishes to live because the doctor has declared that not much time is left in Tessa's life. Tessa is highly depressed because at the mere age of sixteen she is unable to come to terms with her condition. She has also been dropped from school. She cannot meet friends and have fun with them. The only company she has is of her friend, Zoey. All she does is cry over her condition. It is her pre-liminal condition where she feels that she is the other. She is not normal. She says, 'I'm not sure. I think I am. I sound like those women on the telly when their entire family gets wiped out. I sound like an animal gnawing its own foot off. Everything just floods in at once-like how my fingers are just bones and my skin is practically see through. Inside my left lung I can feel cells multiplying, stacking up, like ash slowly filling a vase. Soon I won't be able to breathe' (BID 5). She is terrified, alien and in a painful condition.

When death is at one's doorstep, the first thing that comes to a person's mind is that I haven't lived enough. Is it finally over? That's it. Was I supposed to live this much

only? When did I live enough? Life expectancy seems natural to one self. The picture becomes clear when the very opening lines of the novel is observed, 'I wish I had a boyfriend. I wish he lived in the wardrobe on a coat hanger. Whenever I wanted, I could get him out and he would look at me the way boys do in films as if I am beautiful' (*BID* 1). She has the same fantasies just like any western teenager. She wants attention, assertion and affection. All she wants to hear is, 'Tessa, I love you. I really bloody love you. You are beautiful'(BID1).

So, she considers herself alienated from the living world. She is no longer going to be a living being. A sense of separation creeps in. This is her pre-liminal stage where her condition is not like the majority of the others. She already feels, 'Live fast, die young, have a good-looking corpse!' (*BID* 16). Tessa has a long list of what she wants to do before she dies but she is unsure whether she will even live that long. Thus she is in a state of shock after the doctor's revelation that there's no hope'(16). She burns all her letters, diaries, cards and photographs and feels, 'four years of optimism burns well'(BID 47).

So, it's been four years since she was in a condition where she thought she was in great trouble and some medical treatment would save her. Thus, like Hazel she is no more the common lot. She is separated from them. Her father is also not putting any restrictions like normally fathers do so as to protect their daughters from falling in bad company. Her father allows her to fulfill her wishes and have fun before she dies. She is also given special care. He cooks for her. As a single parent, he looks after all her needs. She is undergoing the sympathetic rites. Her friends, her brother and her new boyfriend are all sympathetic towards her. She is separated from them because of her extreme medical condition. Miles Little and other critics observe, 'We believe that all cancer patients enter and experience liminality as a process which begins with the first manifestations of their malignancy. An initial acute phase of liminality is marked by disorientation (Dihub).

Thus, initially a sense of loss of the previous normal condition is experienced by the characters. Many medical practitioners are also studying the liminal phases that cancer patients experience. Many studies support that the patients were no longer the same the way they were before undergoing cancer surgery. Willig and Wirth observe,

‘the phenomenology of death awareness,’ in terminally ill patients, ‘provide a deeper insight into cancer patients’ engagement with their mortality.

In the novel *A Rather Unusual Romance*, the cancer sufferers, Erin and Alan are adults but they have their own set of problems. Being the earning hand of the family, their families depend on them. While they are not that shocked about their condition, they feel guilty of not being able to fulfill the dreams of their children because of their terminal illness. Before meeting each other they feel lonely, disillusioned and dejected. They feel that now there’s no hope in their lives. The Radio-iodine chambers which are adjacent to each other happen to be their meeting abode. Till then they were feeling that they were fighting a lonely battle. The predicament of not knowing about the next day, the process of frustration, fight, helplessness and futility of that frustration is all visible in the pre-liminal stage.

When Alan goes for a medical examination, his doctor becomes silent which raises Alan’s anxiety. The doctor’s response shocks him, ‘Regarding your comments, I don’t think it’s anything to do with your Adam’s apple’ (ARUR 24). Alan was mature enough to understand what the doctor meant. When finally his medical condition is confirmed all he thinks is, ‘I wish I’d never gone there now’ (ARUR 33). Since in the pre-liminal stage the characters feel confused and they go in a denial mode. Sometimes they even wonder whether it is a punishment for some bad karmas of previous life. ‘Alan wondered what terrible thing he might have done in the past to be punished so hard’(ARUR 43). Sleeplessness, suffocation and choking feelings are also common in the pre-liminal stage. When Erin gets the news, ‘she let the information sink in for a moment before replying’ (ARUR 53). In happy rituals the person feels excited, a little nervous and curious but in a tragic condition the emotions are quite heavy and even dangerous for the mental health of the concerned person.

COMMUNITAS

One interesting phenomena that flows in all the selected novels is the formation of communitas. *The Fault in Our Stars*, *Before I Die* and *A Rather Unusual Romance* it was found that the next stage the characters move on to is the formation of communitas. The major finding is the discovery of communitas in all the novels. In *The Fault in Our Stars*,

Hazel's mother sends her daughter to a Cancer Support Group so that she can overcome depression. Initially, Hazel feels shy and reluctant to join the group but her mother wants her to be social. Initially, she dislikes the group.

In the support group all the members were those who were undergoing cancer treatment. They meet casually in Episcopal Church shaped like a cross. One by one people used to share their stories about how they got cancer and how they are facing the battle against cancer. Initially she hates such detailed stories. 'Once we got around the circle, Patrick always asked if anyone wanted to share. And then began the circle jerk of support: everyone talking about fighting and battling and winning and shrinking and scanning. To be fair to Patrick, he let us talk about dying, too. But most of them weren't dying. Most would live into adulthood as Patrick had' (TFOS 5). After her first bitter experience she refuses to go again. But somehow she goes again and this time a young handsome boy keeps on staring at her. She feels like a normal young girl when she meets someone interesting for the first time in her life. 'A boy was staring at me....He looked my age...I looked away, suddenly conscious of my myriad insufficiencies... the guy was still staring at me' (TFOS 10).

The support group brings a fresh lease of life for Hazel. Actually she falls in love with him. Since love always gives hope, new dreams and a sense of looking forward to. His name was Augustus Waters and he confidently shows his amputated leg that was due to osteosarcoma, a type of cancer. Hazel falls in love with his liveliness and confidence. Augustus is very well acquainted with the group. He has a set of good friends. After Hazel and Augustus become friends, he acquaints her with other friends as well. Hazel at least enjoys their company and especially Augustus's company. Since their problems were somewhat similar, they forget the pain in each other's company and enjoy the time together. The *communitas* of the cancer sufferer acts as a source of hope in the hopeless circumstances.

Victor Turner prefers to use the Latin term *communitas* for community. Turner used this term in context of social relationships from, 'an area of common living'(Turner 105). It is the anti-structure of society. *Communitas* offers, 'lowliness and sacredness, of homogeneity and comradeship.' It gives, 'moment in and out of time, in and out of secular social structure, which reveals, however fleetingly, some recognition of a

generalized social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties' (Turner 105). The *communitas* that is the community of Cancer Support Group, also meets in the sacred place church in the center of the shaped church, situated exactly in the center of the church. They follow the ritual of sharing their stories, agony and sufferings one by one. They pray for each other's wellbeing together.

Turner has given examples of religious *communitas* like Chaitanaya Mahaprabhu group, the monks of St. Franciscan group. Some *communitas* are tribal in nature, some are spontaneous. They share the same values, they follow some common ideals and they share a feeling of belongingness. Like the religious (*satsang*) groups of different gurus in India or the cultural or literary groups where people voluntarily join each other. When the cancer sufferers meet they say a prayer, 'Living our best life today' (TFOS 14). They do not deny, 'the simpler pleasures of existence' (16). Reading is also a common passion among the characters in all the novels be it Tessa, Hazel, Lara or Jamie Sullivan. The *communitas* makes each other understand, 'Without pain how could we know joy?' (TFOS 35). Tessa Scott forms *communitas* with Zoey and her brother. Though their condition is not alike, they join hands with her to spend the next six months left in her life to completely devote to her. They become partners in the kind of life she wants to live and fulfill her wish list. Party, pubs, dance is her priority on her list. After the doctor gives up giving any hope, a thought runs through her mind, 'It fills me up like a silent scream. I have been ill for so long, puffed up and sick, with patchy skin, flaky fingernails, disappearing hair and a feeling of nausea that permeates to my bones. I don't want to die like this.... I want to live before I die' (BID 54). Zoey helps her to realize her dream. She is not afraid of her illness. She gets her the best dress; she nurses her; she helps her in dating a young guy. She goes ice-skating with Zoey. She could understand her better because she herself, 'lived her life as if the human race was about to become extinct, like nothing really mattered' (BID 87). They travel together. She spends her best time in her company for the rest of her period. So there is homogeneity in their behavior that is why they could pair together as good friends. All they do now is, 'fun, fun, fun' (158). Her new found *communitas* helps Tessa to keep on ticking her wish list and scrap the items one by one.

In *A Rather Unusual Romance*, the radio-iodine chamber becomes the meeting place for a life-long communitas. While Erin is holed up in a chamber, Alan is also holed up in the adjacent chamber. They are supposed to drink a radio- active liquid and stay there till the next day. Co- incidentally there's a door between the chambers. In case both the patients feel bored they can talk to each other. They can't expose themselves to anybody else because of radiation. The process begins and both are worried in their own chambers and curious to know who the other victim or brave heart is in the other chamber. They have all the basic facilities except for meeting other non- radioactive people for the time being.

The scene is interesting, 'She heard the phone ringing in the next room, and the pleasantly deep, resonant tones of a male voice answering. She wondered whether to knock on his door and introduce herself, but then thought better of it. She turned on the TV.' Suddenly she hears a bell sound; actually it was delivery of food through a small window'(154). She looked around to find a pleasant looking middle-aged man standing around six feet tall, with thick graying hair and a day's stubble on his chin' (ARUR 154). Both could connect easily with each other. 'You look as rough as I feel' (154). They instantly become friends. 'Hi, I am Erin Mason. I feel like I've been run over by a bus if that's any consolation. No consolation. Nice to meet you, I'm Alan Beaumont; fat, fifty and fucked up. Yeah join the club, although I've not reached fifty yet. Erin chuckled' (155). They feel happy to have met each other although under the most unromantic, grave and life-threatening circumstances.

Their conversation shows their instant spontaneous bonding. 'Lucky old you. Anyway, it's all happening in my room if you want to bring your supper in?,' Alan peered again at the small bowl of pasta, yawned and then looked over at Erin.' Like teenagers they feel excited about having discovered each other. Alan invites her to join for dinner. 'Why not? Nobody else wants to know us. We're unclean' (*A rather Unusual Romance* 155) Erin reveals. So their condition is like the isolated neophyte, as mentioned by Victor Turner, during the ritual process, the neophyte also feels like he is unclean and impure. I'll come in then and join the party' (*A Rather Unusual Romance* 155). So, both of them enjoy each other's company and celebrate even under the gravest circumstances i.e., having drunk radio-active liquid for treatment and scanning the very next day. Thus,

this *communitas* makes their journey against cancer a little easy. They give hope to each other. They try to face their liminality with the help of forming *communitas*.

rites of incorporation

The third phase of the tripartite ritual structure, involve the reintegration of individuals into a new status and identity after undergoing a period of transition. In the context of cancer narratives, the concept of rites of incorporation is applied to explore the characters in the face of cancer and how they work to reintegrate into their lives as survivors. The completion of cancer treatment is seen as a pivotal moment of incorporation. It signifies the end of the liminal phase, where they have undergone the challenges of treatment and are ready to transition back to their life in the world of the living. Just as rites of incorporation involve the reclamation of a new identity or status, the chosen characters work to reclaim their identity beyond being a patient. They aim to reintegrate into their roles as lovers (Hazel and Augustus), couples (Jamie and Landon), friends (Lara and Jane), employees, parents (in case of Alan and Erin) and community members, while carrying the wisdom and strength gained from their cancer experience. They seek to emotionally reconnect with their pre-cancer selves and their loved ones. It involves addressing feelings of uncertainty, fear, and anxiety that lingers even after treatment. Reconnecting emotionally allows them to regain a sense of stability and continuity in their lives.

Similar to the way rites of incorporation provide closure to a ritual, cancer narratives aim to achieve a sense of closure and resolution. The characters share their stories to help each other, find meaning in their experience, and try to bring their journey to a full circle. They try to relearn how to navigate their daily routines and responsibilities. The last phase, mirrors the reintegration phase, where individuals gradually integrate the lessons and experiences from their transitional phase into their post-transition lives. Just as rituals of incorporation involves community celebrations, cancer survivors find solace and strength through support groups, survivor networks and communities of others who have faced similar challenges. These connections aid in their reintegration process. Applying the concept of rites of incorporation to cancer narratives helps the society to understand how survivors work to reintegrate into their lives after facing a significant and transformative experience.

CHAPTER IV

BEWILDERMENT AND LIMINALITY: AN EXPOSITION OF THE INDECISIVE SELF

Greek physician Hippocrates was the first to use the word ‘cancer’ to describe a specific type of disease in 400 BC. Historically also cancer has thus been metaphorically framed as a kind of intruding, biological other growing inside the body in crab-like formations. According to Susan Sontag’s famous essay, *Illness as Metaphor* which was published in 1978, ‘cancer is to be regarded as a master illness and which works as a cosmic disease’ (Sontag 64). In recent times, the study of the life-writings of individuals sharing their experiences of illness has been very closely connected to the concept of illness narratives. Since the 1990s, ‘the study of illness narratives has influenced various disciplines such as medical anthropology, sociology and social work, literary studies and language’ (Kleinman 1).

The liminal condition of the characters in the select five cancer narratives viz. *The Fault in Our Stars*, *Before I Die*, *A Walk to Remember*, *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower* and *A Rather Unusual Romance* is well evident. When life throws the challenge of being alive and yet not sure of remaining alive, the cancer sufferers experience trauma because of the physical pain and alienation from society. When the disease prolongs the sufferer experiences the threshold of life and death. The patient is threatened by the idea of the body as a closed biological system.

Cancer is a major challenge for modern civilization as compared to any other disease; it has yet no sure shot remedy which is a cause of bewilderment for the medical fraternity also. It is a massive challenge for the doctors, pharmaceutical companies and researchers. Above all, it is an ingrown disease because all human beings are born with cancer cells. It is not a new disease in human history but in the past few years it has grown rapidly due to environmental issues, changing lifestyles and unfavorable working conditions. Lack of actual reasons for cancer is also a cause of discernment and disillusion for patients as well as for the medical fraternity.

Cancer narratives act as a place of shared experiences. The knowledge, experience and attitudinal change that cancer brings is quite fascinating also. If cancer touches, it changes human life but not before extensive churning of the inner recesses of the human mind. It is definitely a life changing event. The first major change that it brings is the sabotaging of self-image. The identity given by the society is shattered into pieces. The selected cancer narratives reflect all the major liminal changes. The characters pass through the pre-liminal, liminal and post-liminal stages. The characters go through an identity crisis and it takes a very long time for them to evolve as a new personality. The journey of cancer is painful.

The process of reaching the inner metamorphosis is quite challenging in the face of cancer. One can clearly observe the three liminal phases during the metamorphosis. Cancer narratives help in understanding how the new understanding of time, space, people, culture, society and life takes place among the cancer sufferers. Pain, fear, confusion and uncertainty brings a permanent change in their persona. At the mental plane also just like liminality; ambiguity, chaos, confusion and bewilderment become an integral part of a cancer sufferer. Cancer narratives allows the readers to understand the dynamics that are involved in the liminal journey of cancer sufferers. Hayden observes that, 'experiencing these narrative orientations of identity allows for a concept of liminal identity to be fluid, dynamic, ongoing, interconnected, multiple, and complex' (Hyden 1). Human beings experience the world through the body, through the sensory organs and through the eyes that always look outwards. Drew Leder says that, 'the body plays a central role in shaping our experience of the world. Why, then, are we so frequently oblivious to our own bodies? We gaze at the world, but rarely see our own eyes. We may be unable to explain how we perform the simplest of acts. We are even less aware of our internal organs and the physiological processes that keep us alive' (Leder 1).

Therefore, the unawareness that remains there with human existence is given a jolt by lethal diseases like cancer. The human consciousness is suddenly shifted to the body. The physical body is neglected in day-to-day existence except for that it is outwardly it is given a good bath, given new clothes, applied soaps and shampoos to and sometimes given a cosmetic lift to look good and young.

Otherwise, it is mostly, 'forgotten, alien, uncontrollable and obscured' (Leder 1). The onslaught of cancer changes the perception irreversibly as is the case with Lara Blaine in the novel *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower*. She is so horrified that she dreams of cancer cells devouring her from inside her rear end because she suffers from cervical cancer. She dreams, 'green cancer cells were hacking off the pieces of the membrane and devouring them with glee' (HTCET 22). Augustus and Hazel discuss cancer as the cells that they are made up of. Alan and Erin want to forget cancer but the excruciating pain reminds them of the painful body in which they are existing. Jamie Sullivan of the fiction *A Walk to Remember* always holds a Bible in her hand to safeguard herself from the devouring cancer cells. Tessa Scott gets a new understanding of the body as part of the larger ecosystem. For Tessa, even the small dead body of a small bird looks like giving her some message.

Since the consciousness about the body remains neglected in normal day to day life, it suddenly gets attention when some grave disease infects it. A new way of observing the body emerges when some lethal disease attacks it. It was Leder who first wrote about the importance of the body in his seminal work, *The Absent Body*. He draws the attention of the public by bringing attention to the body which contains many bodies within and which is often neglected by western philosophers. Leder pays attention to the inner bodies which have their own rhythms, the body that sleeps at night, the body that remains awake while the other bodies sleep. Besides the prenatal body that develops in the mother's womb. He breaks the traditional notions associated with the body. As a medical practitioner Leder gives a fascinating account of the body through various medical examples in his research-based book.

Cancer narratives also break the various notions about the body. Through cancer sufferers, the notion about the body is changed. Initially the characters look at cancer cells as evil but as their cancer journey proceeds, they understand, like Lara feels, 'It had taken being diagnosed with cancer and withstanding the pain of treatment for me to stop my body as an instrument of evil. It was work but I was determined to integrate my mind and body into one entity' (HTCET 240).

As the narrative progresses, the pressure of life and death increases and when death plays hide and seek with a person, the individual is left with two choices either he/she succumbs to its pressure and surrenders or he/she remains oblivious to the threats of death and utilizes each moment before taking the last breath. Extending this concept to something more ambiguous and indescribable, Siegfried Kracauer states that, 'Ambiguity is of the essence in this intermediary idea' (Kracauer 2). In other words, when poised on the threshold- in the liminal space, the form of transformation is unknown and there is an ambiguity on the outcome.

Liminal space is a transitional space, where transformation occurs. It is a space where there is potentiality of change and transformation. It acts as a process of transformation from known to the unknown. It can't be seen physically but it can be felt and experienced. It is an active process moving in a linear fashion but operating at many dimensions. To a great extent, it is a condition that is like a boundary but every time it's not necessary that the threshold should act as an impediment as Martin Heidegger points out in *Building, Dwelling and Thinking*, 'A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presenting' (Bhabha 1). So many times, it acts as a beginning of new understanding. The impact of cancer and its repercussions on the mental state of the characters is conspicuous in all the five novels. Although there are five select novels by five different authors based on the life of fictional cancer sufferers but the close analysis of the cancer narratives reveals that there is a stark similarity between their responses, behavior, mental state and even the metamorphosis.

In the novel *Before I Die*, Tessa's normal routine is disrupted, she has to drop out from school and all she is left with is regular visits to the hospital and resting on bed. She is just a teenager; a young teenager is someone who has just stepped into welcoming life. What it means to have cancer at sixteen? is a matter of great concern in her case. She thinks it means, 'You can! Live fast, die young and have a good-looking corpse' (BID 16). It also means, 'I imagine climbing into bed breaking the dead air of my room all night, waking up to the morning and nothing being any different' (BID 17). Landon goes into utter shock on getting the news of Jamie's condition, 'she had leukemia; she'd known

it since last summer. The moment she told me, the blood drained from my face and a sheaf of dizzying images fluttered through my mind. It was as though in that brief moment, time had suddenly stopped' (*A Walk to Remember* 136).

PRE-LIMINAL PHASE

Teenage is a time of hope, a new beginning and a new life of exploration but it is heartbreaking for Tessa to lie in bed all the days and nights. She tries to keep hope alive but it's difficult for her, 'I try to claw back some enthusiasm, but I feel as if a vulture is perched on my chest'(BID 14). She is going through the pre-liminal stage because there is a break from the normal routine life. She has not yet come to terms with her condition completely. She is trying to tolerate her physical unease, pain and nausea with the hope that she will be fine one day. In liminal terminology she is an initiand.

She tries to use various coping mechanisms, 'I try to remember the rules about feeling sick-whenver possible get lots of fresh air, open a window or go outside if you can. Get good at distraction therapy-do something, anything, to keep your mind off it' (BID 21). It is a state of sudden change from the common ordinary healthy life into running to and fro in the hospitals. Gennep calls this state as, 'period of marge' (Kertzer 19). The passage is disrupted and a person has to take off a new kind of liminal journey where rather than the society it is the individual who has to cross the threshold of life and death while being alive. In fact it is a rather difficult journey. In terms of anthropological interpretation there is a range of, 'different socially defined roles: pubertal initiands, betrothed, spouse, parent, elder and posthumously, ancestor' (Jean H. Duffy 22).

BEWILDERMENT

Observing bewilderment in cancer sufferers is a complex process as it involves understanding their emotional and psychological responses to a life-altering diagnosis. Bewilderment manifests differently in individuals, but some common signs and observations in the texts provide insight into their experiences. One of the key indicators of bewilderment in characters suffering from cancer is a sudden and intense emotional response to the diagnosis. It includes feelings of shock, disbelief and confusion. They struggle to come to terms with the reality of their condition, and the initial emotional

turmoil is a clear sign of bewilderment. Even the care takers find it difficult to handle the situation, they are also bewildered by the uncertain health conditions, like when Tessa's nose bleeds her mother feels unable to handle the situation,' all I get is an impression of fear and bewilderment' (BID 220). The study of such condition proves educative for the healthcare professionals and loved ones. It also makes them aware that how they need to be attentive to those emotional reactions, as such studies provide valuable information about the patient's state of mind. Bewilderment is observed through the characters communication and behavior.

The change in important phases of life involves critical junctures and shifts. New roles are assumed. While adopting new roles there is threat to previous identity, disorder in the regular social order. So, in Tessa's life everything is disrupted and due to cancer the changes come with a severe threat to her existence. Further in so called normal conditions, as the individual struggles with the physical and psychological problems of 'becoming male and female, of relations within the family and of passing into old age' (Kimball 17) the ritual provides the means of negotiating these transformations and of passing from one social group to another in a regulated and codified manner' (Duffy 23). In normal conditions, it is done to continue the tradition and patterns of a community for maintaining the structure and functionality of that community as a whole. In the selected texts, it is seen that the individual deals with these transitions more at a mental level and it happens due to the disruptions caused by cancer at the physical level. The sufferer has to overcome and pass through the stages of disruption with determination, will power and the *communitas* offered by friends and family. The difference between normal transitions and transitions under cancer condition is that the later one is more difficult, painful and many a times accompanied with shattering of inner core of one's spirit.

Cancer sufferers experience difficulty in articulating their thoughts and initially become withdrawn and distant. They struggle to make decisions regarding their treatment options, leading to delays or indecision. Observing these communication challenges and decision-making difficulties helps healthcare providers and support networks recognize bewilderment and offer appropriate assistance. Cognitive symptoms are also indicative of

bewilderment. The characters experience difficulty concentrating, memory lapses, and a sense of cognitive fog. These cognitive challenges are attributed to the overwhelming stress and anxiety associated with cancer diagnosis and treatment. Recognizing these cognitive impairments is crucial, as it impacts the character's ability to process information and make informed decisions about their care. Physical symptoms related to bewilderment include sleep disturbances, changes in appetite, and increased stress levels. It further compounds the emotional and psychological distress experienced by cancer sufferers.

Sudden bursts of anger, frustration, sadness, anxiety, horrible dreams etc. is also witnessed. These emotional outbursts is a result of their difficulty in coping with the diagnosis and treatment. Bewildered characters also withdraw from their social circles and isolate themselves. They try to avoid friends and family members which leads to a noticeable change in their social interactions. Many a times their decisions are inconsistent and erratic in nature. A noticeable loss of interest in activities and hobbies they once enjoyed is also observed. They find it challenging to engage in things that previously brought them pleasure. Due to bewilderment they face difficulty in articulating their thoughts and struggle to express their feelings communicate their needs effectively. They feel overwhelmed by the need to discuss their illness. Bewildered cancer sufferers experience heightened anxiety and fear about their prognosis, leading to excessive worry about the future and what it holds for them.

Chronic stress resulting from bewilderment also manifests through physical symptoms such as headaches, muscle tension, and gastrointestinal issues. These physical manifestations are observed during medical assessments. When Lara Blaine lies on the examination table and all the large machines started hovering over her she goes into a shock, 'my heart beat like a jackhammer in my ears. I tried to focus on the machine's control as thin beams of light danced across my naked pelvis. I could feel my brain slipping away from my body'(HTCET 85). Constantly seeking second opinions from multiple healthcare professionals is also an indication of bewilderment. While seeking additional information is reasonable, an excessive need for reassurance also signal emotional distress. Bewildered patients also express a sense of hopelessness about their

prognosis, believing that their situation is beyond help or that treatment won't be effective. Recognizing these diverse signs and symptoms of bewilderment is crucial for healthcare providers, as it allows them to customize their support and communication strategies to meet the unique needs of each sufferer. Family and friends play an essential role in offering emotional support and assistance in navigating the complex emotional terrain of cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Healthcare professionals, palliative care givers, family and friends should be aware about these physical symptoms during their interactions with such cases, because addressing them contributes to better overall well-being. Observing bewilderment in cancer sufferers involves a comprehensive understanding of the emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and physical signs that manifest in response to a cancer diagnosis. If readers, scholars and concerned people are attentive to these indicators, healthcare providers and support networks would be able to offer the necessary emotional and psychological support to help patients navigate their cancer journey with greater resilience and clarity.

The novel *Before I Die* begins with a wish, a wish that is common among the teenagers in the West, 'I wish I had a boyfriend... Whenever I wanted I could get him out and he'd look at me the way boys do in films, as if I'm beautiful' (BID 1). Tessa imagines that he would whisper, 'Tessa, I love you. I really bloody love you. You are beautiful' (BID 1). Her friend Zoey helps in finding her mates but every time she feels that emptiness in those relations as she knows very well that there is no hope for her. She can only wonder, 'Maybe we will fall in love. He'll hunt for a cure and I'll live forever. I think of Adam and Eve'(23).

Such romantic ideas are common among young teenagers. These ideas are generated by media, films, hormonal changes and the society around them. Cancer breaks all the constructed ideas. After making a boyfriend with the help of Zoey, Tessa dances, parties and experiences sexual pleasure also but the moment it is over she realizes the emptiness of it. While lying next to her boyfriend, she questions the irrelevance of casual affairs, 'I think of a safe place I would be under the bed, or with my head on my mother's lap. I don't think words reach people. May be nothing does' (BID 26). So the transition is not easy. It is difficult, it is full of bewilderment.

Tessa Scott has been permitted by her father to follow her wish list after the doctor declares his helplessness in saving her life. They are told that Tessa is left with less than six months time. Even in the West, normally the parents do not allow teenagers to party, take drugs and have sex early in life. But now that the father knows that she is left with only six months he allows Tessa to do whatever she wants and go wherever she wishes to. In such conditions the rules of a structured society are not followed. Tessa takes high dosage of drugs with her friends but she realizes it does not give her any happiness, in fact she feels, 'Why do I feel as I'm about to cry all the time?' (BID 34). She is confused, disappointed and disgusted with her new found condition. She feels the chaos, confusion and is completely unsure about her choices. She cancels her wish list because now she is disillusioned by her choices. She says, 'I have cancelled the list. It was stupid' (BID 35). Her friend Zoey protests, 'It was fun! Don't give up on it. At least you are doing something with your life at last' (BID 35). But for Tessa, 'everything's a pile of crap' (BID 36).

THE CANCER NEOPHYTE AND SEPARATION

Just like in liminality the initiands go through a number of ambiguous phases, a stage of uncertainty, chaos and powerlessness; the cancer sufferers also behave like initiands. The only difference is that the condition of cancer initiands is more grave and painful but it is important to note that Tessa Scott also goes through the tripartite pattern suggested by Van Gennep and further explored by Victor Turner. It is observed that Tessa also experiences separation. A separation or disaggregation phase during which she detaches herself from the community and the role she plays hitherto within that community; a transitional or liminal stage in which, she is isolated from her familiar social context, routines and activities. Turner says in context of cultural rituals that a neophyte, 'passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state and normally undergoes tests that gauge his/her readiness for the new role that he/she will assume a reincorporation or re-aggregation stage in which he/she is welcomed back into the community and into his/her new status within it' (Turner 80). Tessa also experiences similar conditions.

LIMINAL PHASE

So, in the novel, *Before I Die* Tessa wants to break all the rules and norms of the society to separate herself from the community. She takes drugs at sixteen, runs away with her boyfriend for one night, shoplifts from a store, she doesn't want to meet her mother because she had left them all alone early in life besides doing other stuff like breaking the law. If she happens to meet her school friends in the shopping area she doesn't want to recognize them. It's been four years since she hasn't gone to school. She feels she is separated from her school mates. After cancer she thinks she doesn't belong to that place. She burns her diary, 'Over four long years, you forget people's names. Four years of pathetic optimism, burns well, look at the flare' (*Before I Die* 45). In the hospital if any patient wants to befriend her she avoids them because, 'It's a rule of mine not to get involved with dying people. They're bad news' (BID 51). Similarly for Erin it is unbelievable to accept Alan's condition, 'How could she have- advanced cancer?' (ARUR 109).

From the pre-liminal stage of four years of optimism with cancer, when finally the doctor declares, 'I can't judge it, but I'd encourage you to do the things you want to do' (BID 53). She is thrown into the borders of liminal condition. It is difficult for both the father and the daughter to come to terms with this disastrous news. But she has to accept it anyhow. She pities herself, 'I'll never be famous or leave anything behind. I'll never go to college or have a job. I won't see my brother grow up. I won't travel, never earn money, never drive, never fall in love or leave home or get my own house'(BID 53). She realizes that she has no other choice but to accept her fatal condition. She decides, 'I don't want to die like this, not before I've even lived properly. I want to live before I die. How long can I stave it off ' (BID 54). She decides that she can't spend the left over time on bed wrapped in blankets. She gets her wish list back and tries to get on with living. In the similar way Landon also understands why Jamie wanted, 'Christmas at the orphanage to be so special.. Why she didn't think she'd go to college Why she'd given me the Bible.. Jamie Sullivan had leukemia...Jamie, sweet Jamie, was dying. My Jamie..'(AWR 136).

NEITHER HERE NOR THERE

The cancer sufferer often develops a new philosophy, a new outlook towards life. The in-betweenness of being neither among the living nor among the dead, forces an individual to rethink, reconstruct and rediscover the true meaning of life. Going to college, having a job or a house, becoming famous etc are the constructed identities given by the society especially by the class and the culture in which a person lives. This is the pattern that all human societies have adopted as a natural course of living whereas the reality is that these are the systems that are created and reinforced by post-industrial societies to a great extent. So what cancer does is that it breaks that common pattern or the norm. The analogy of neither here nor there aptly captures the experience of the characters under study as they navigate the space between illness and health, life and death, and their previous and potential future selves. The physical uncertainty makes them face unpredictable and fluctuating health statuses. The ever-changing nature of their condition places them in a liminal space where they cannot definitively say they are healthy, yet they are not in a constant state of illness either. Like Alan is disturbed when the doctor tells her that the cancer cells are under control hence she has good cancer, 'how can they call a thing a good cancer. She could not see any light at the end of the tunnel'(ARUR 213).

The diagnosis of cancer disrupts their sense of identity. They feel detached from their former selves due to the physical changes, side effects of treatments, and the uncertainty of what lies ahead. This sense of being, neither here nor there, leads to feelings of loss and confusion. The timeline of cancer treatment acts as a form of temporal ambiguity and makes their existence more uncertain. The duration of treatments, remissions and potential relapses contributes to the feeling of being suspended in time, where they are neither fully living their pre-diagnosis life nor fully embracing the future. They experience a rollercoaster of emotion viz. hope, fear, optimism, and despair that too within a short span of time.

The emotional flux further reinforces the sense of being in a transitional and ambiguous state. When after the first Radio Iodine therapy Erin goes for check up and the doctor tells, 'the cancer is still present. He feels disgusted, 'Oh no! not again' (ARUR

212). They feel isolated from their social circles due to the difficulty of explaining their experience and the emotional toll it takes. This isolation exacerbates their feeling of being in an in-between state. but it brings and abstract narrative transformation also as it prompts them to redefine their life stories. They seek new meanings, purposes, and priorities, further emphasizing their passage through a liminal phase. While the liminality of cancer is distressing, some as the characters move on they find empowerment in embracing uncertainty.

They focus on day-to-day achievements and celebrate small victories, which serves as coping mechanisms. Despite the challenges, Hazel, Augustus, Tessa, Lara, Alan and Erin display remarkable resilience and strength. Their ability to navigate the liminal space, embracing ambiguity while maintaining hope, showcases their capacity to adapt to the unknown. But it is difficult for them to endure the therapeutic ritual, 'Oh God, I've to go through it all again though' (ARUR 212). So the analogy of neither here nor there, offers a powerful perspective on the experiences of cancer sufferers.

They inhabit a space that challenges conventional notions of health and illness, forcing them to confront their own mortality and redefine their sense of self. While this liminal journey is fraught with difficulties, it also highlights the resilience, adaptability and depth of the human spirit in the face of profound uncertainty. Alan confesses to Erin, here we are, two of the unhealthiest people in the whole wide world, we were made for each other' (ARUR 207).

Tessa consoles herself, 'I see how beautiful the people are. I'll die first, I know, but they will join me, one by one' (BID 96). Lara Blaine realizes that despite having now the best of time with her new found love, she understands that, 'It's not quite a fairy tale ending' (HTCET 315) but still she will try to, 'live the whole experience, not just the hard parts' (HTCET 315). Similarly, when Erin asks Alan, 'Do you ever worry about the cancer returning?'(ARUR 260) He stoically replies, ' We're healthy at this point in time, and that's as good as it's going to get' (ARUR 260).

THERAPEUTIC RITUALS

The ritual process that cancer sufferers go through is therapeutic in nature. Besides medication the other therapeutic rituals help in the transition from pre-cancer to post-cancer stage. Although the fear of reoccurrence is always there. The original concept of therapeutic rituals has roots in various cultures and traditions throughout history, so it's not attributed to a single individual. Indigenous communities, ancient civilizations, and modern psychological approaches have all contributed to the development of therapeutic rituals as a way to promote healing and well-being.

Therapeutic rituals encompass a wide range of practices that are designed to bring about psychological, emotional and spiritual healing. These rituals often involve repetitive actions, symbolic gestures and structured ceremonies that aim to create a sense of comfort, meaning and control for individuals facing challenges or seeking personal growth. In indigenous cultures, rituals have been used for centuries to address psychological and spiritual needs. These rituals involve ceremonies, dances, chants, and interactions with the natural world. They are often rooted in the belief that restoring harmony and balance is essential for overall well-being. In the field of psychology, the concept of therapeutic rituals has gained attention as a complementary approach to traditional therapy. Like besides allopathic medication and surgeries Lara goes for a massage and spends a whole day in the Chinese massage centre. She feels relaxed, all her fears melts away. The masseur tells her that Lara might be carrying, 'lot of emotions in her pelvis' (HTCET 240). It's true because a victim of rape since childhood she was unable to develop any healthy relationship with a man in adulthood. She always feels scared of a man's presence after all her step father had broken the faith in humanity a whole.

Therapists incorporate rituals to help patients process trauma, reduce anxiety and navigate life transitions. These rituals range from mindfulness practices to creative expressions like art, music, or journaling. Modern society also has its own versions of therapeutic rituals, such as the practice of meditation, yoga, and mindfulness. These practices are often used to promote relaxation, self-awareness, and stress reduction. Overall, the concept of therapeutic rituals is a reflection of humanity's innate desire for

healing and connection, drawing from a diverse array of cultural, spiritual, and psychological influences. After getting well, Lara brings a pet dog and cares for him like a baby. This helps in regulating her emotional balance. Alan and Erin go to the beaches for peace and solace. Hazel and Augustus go to Amsterdam to forget their painful condition. Tessa travels with her family. Jamie and Landon keep themselves in the preparation of a play for the orphans on the day of Christmas.

Alix G Sleight's research work on *Liminality and Ritual in Biographical Work : A Theoretical Framework for Cancer Survivorship* plays a very important role in shedding light towards holistic care. The process of therapeutic rituals involves several key elements that work together to promote healing and well-being. It involves intention setting, before engaging in a therapeutic ritual, individuals set an intention or goal for the practice. This intention provides a clear focus and purpose for the ritual, guiding the individual's thoughts and actions. Many therapeutic rituals involve creating a designated space that feels safe, calm, and conducive to the practice. In case of Hazel and Augustus the trip to Amsterdam acts as that therapeutic space. For Tessa the short journey to the forest proves a sacred space. For Jamie and Landon, their sole walk at night becomes the ritual of sharing their sacred feelings. Similarly Lara Blaine also tries alternate holistic therapies for mental relaxation as the ovarian surgical treatments horrifies and embarrasses her. So therapeutic ritual might involve arranging meaningful objects, lighting candles, using aromatherapy, or playing soothing music besides meeting quietly on the beaches like Alan and Eric.

Therapeutic rituals also incorporate symbolism to represent personal or universal meanings. These symbols can range from colors and elements to specific objects that hold significance to the individual. Many rituals involve repetitive actions, which can have a calming and meditative effect. These actions might include chanting, breathing exercises and rhythmic movements. During the ritual, individuals direct their attention and energy toward the intended goal. This focused attention can lead to a heightened sense of awareness and connection.

Therapeutic rituals encourage individuals to be fully present in the moment, fostering mindfulness. It helps the characters to let go of worries and distractions and connect with their inner experiences. Like when Tessa gets too close to Adam she feels a soothing effect. She feels, 'I bury these things in my heart-the feel of him under my

fingers, the taste of him in my mouth. I'll need them like talismans to survive an impossible journey' (BID 244). Some rituals facilitate emotional release, allowing them to express and process their feelings in a safe and controlled manner. After the therapeutic ritual, the characters take time to reflect on their experience and its impact. The sweet memories linger on. This reflection aids in integrating insights gained during the process. Engaging in such rituals regularly leads to cumulative benefits. Lara Blaine seeks guidance from trained professionals, therapists, counselors so as to ensure that the chosen ritual aligns with her intention of overcoming the threshold. The common thread in all types of therapeutic rituals is the intention to promote healing and well-being through intentional and meaningful practices.

Gennep has also suggested that, 'rites provide a model for the analysis and understanding of the passages that mark changes in the individual's relationship to his/her community, the notion of the *limen* or threshold assuming a particularly important role as the point of transition from one type of space to another and from one state to another'(Duffy 23). Besides Turner's idea of *communitas* is also visible in *Before I Die*. Tessa's relationship with the society changes when she comes to know about the limitedness of her existence. The transitional phase after four years of cancer acts as an irreversible event in Tessa's life. It also proves that, 'the quasi- autonomous status' (Duffy 24) is visible in cancer sufferers. Whereas in typical rituals there are certain sanctioned mechanisms that, 'allows the individual to move between two fixed states' (Duffy 24) while in fatal diseases the individual is automatically thrown between, 'to be or not to be state' (Shakespeare 71).

The ordeals and tests that are an integral part of liminality are conspicuous in the lives of cancer sufferers. Besides, 'with the suspension of responsibilities and obligations, and with deference to the authority and superior knowledge of mentors' (Duffy 24). They remain in a state of limbo. After being declared that Tessa is now a guest on earth for another few months only, all chains that she is born with are set free. The father and the mother allow her to do anything she wants to and to go anywhere she likes. No authority is imposed on her by family and friends. Roles are reversed, categories are dissolved and ambiguity becomes the new norm. Liminality was first formally studied on rituals.

Turner's concept of liminality went beyond the ritual practices.

COMMUNITAS

Liminality occurs in terms of passivity, otherness and absence, the stripping of status and interruption of routine also promotes the development of *communitas*. Communitas is a community of social cohesion in which the common hierarchies are not followed and which permits the 'liberation of capacities of cognition, affect, volition, creativity, etc. from the normative constraints incumbent upon occupying a sequence of social statuses' (Turner 4). Tessa Scott develops her own communitas with Zoey, her school friend, Cal her own brother and Adam, her neighbor. She doesn't like anybody else. She likes Zoey because, 'Zoey was the only girl at school who wasn't afraid of my illness' (Before I Die 59). Cal always makes her laugh and Adam is also a mature teenager who understands pain. Adam has also seen tragedies in his small life time. Tessa feels some connecting vibes with Adam. She feels, 'It's a wound that connects us' (Before I Die 115). She wants to remain around them so that she can get the best out of the remaining time. Adam plays a transformative role in her life. He makes her realize what bone breathing is. For the first time she goes to a dense forest on a bike ride with Adam. This became the turning point of her life. Among the woods she feels her consciousness has expanded and from here she overcomes the threshold of fear of death.

A new world opens to her when she wakes up in the woods. She walks among the dense trees, 'touching the bark, greeting the leaves' (Before I Die 98). She decides to make a shelter there, 'with sticks and leaves, and live here forever' (Before I Die 98). In fatal conditions it is often found that the person tries to go back to the archetypal motherly womb, that is mother earth or mother nature. While roaming among the millions of species of flora and fauna, an individual realizes his/her own smallness in the larger scheme of things. As the narrative progresses, she seems to be at peace with herself after the ride. She moves gradually from liminal to post liminal stage. A new understanding of life dawns about her person. In the jungle, she claims, 'I'm not sick anymore. I'm so excited it's difficult to speak. I need to stay here in this wood. I need to keep away from the modern world and all its gadgets and then I won't be sick. We'll build things, shelters and traps. We'll grow vegetables' (BID 100).

Tessa Scott's mental condition reveals that she is in a liminal state in which she is not status-bound, the social order is suspended and she is allowed to follow primordial or natural life. Right now she is in an a-hierarchical communion with the *communitas*. Duffy also echoes that liminality becomes much more than an intermediary stage in a transitional process. It also helps in bringing required change through action. It requires creativity and innovativeness on the part of the individual and the society.

Tessa's liminal condition compels her to understand death creatively and invent a new idea about it rather than the conventional sad idea about death. In her house, in the green lawns, when Tessa and her brother notice a dead bird, she observes it closely and ponders, 'A dead body is its own ecosystem. Under certain conditions, it only takes nine days for a human body to rot down to the bones' (Before I Die 136). The dead body of the small bird symbolizes the mortality of everything that is living. She takes a keen interest in the beauty of death. She likes the blue shining feathers, maggots attacking its flesh and the grass on which it is lying breathless. Her brother makes a small pit and buries it under the soil. 'One eye shines up at us. It looks peaceful even grateful' (Before I Die 140).

Tessa imagines herself in place of the dead bird. She feels that she will be buried and soil shall be thrown all over her dead body after sometime the maggots and termites will feast over flesh. She imagines, 'my ears will fall off and my eyes will melt. My lips will turn to glue and my lungs will dry up like paper fans. No taste or smell or touch or sound. Nothing to look at. Total emptiness forever' (Before I Die 140). The bird's small grave helps her in going through the transition from chaos and opens a window of new wisdom for her. Thus, grave illnesses like cancer throw an individual at the threshold of the physical and the temporal. Every activity around that person becomes a symbolic framework of the bridge between life and death; a condition when a person is neither here nor there. The 'betwixt and between' situation becomes the prominent feature in their lives. The liminal phase forces them to take decisions in their lives and breaks them free from the old pattern of thought.

Seeking new experiences symbolizes her desire to live life to the fullest despite her limited time. She also focuses on strengthening her relationships with those around

her, including her family, friends, and neighbor. She seeks emotional connections and cherishes the time she has left to make lasting memories with them. In her post-liminal phase she comes to a point where she wants to reconcile with everyone around her. Tessa strives to reconcile with her estranged father, who left her family when she was young. This represents her journey towards forgiveness and healing, allowing her to find closure before she passes away. She now also has the maturity to recast her identity and what defines her beyond her illness. She explores her dreams, passions, and desires, aiming to leave behind a legacy that goes beyond her cancer diagnosis. By embracing love through her neighbor, Adam she makes the most of the time that is left between life and death. This relationship allows her to experience love and intimacy, providing comfort and companionship in the midst of her illness.

Post-liminal stage also witnesses the factual reality that human beings are mortal beings. Throughout the novel, Tessa grapples with her mortality and the reality of her impending death. In the post-liminal stage, she confronts these feelings and makes peace with the idea of dying, focusing on making her remaining time meaningful. She even reveals plans for her own funeral, 'I want to be buried in my butterfly dress, my lilac bra and I also want to wear the bracelet Adam gave me' (Before I Die 283). She even takes a jiff at her own death, 'Don't put make up on me. It looks stupid on dead people' (Before I Die 283). She is concerned about environment also. She doesn't want to pollute the earth by using the regular coffins available in the crematoriums. She says, 'I want a biodegradable willow coffin. I want wild plants and flowers growing on my grave' (Before I Die 284). So, the examples illustrate Tessa's journey through the post-liminal stage of her life, where she navigates her emotions, experiences, and relationships while facing her imminent death.

Lethal diseases create such liminal conditions that the sufferer is bound to ask like Emily Dickinson. In one of her poems she claims that she is nobody. Similarly in ritual processes also, the great transformation takes place with the help of rituals. Outwardly, it may look like a physical activity but actually it induces psychological changes, so all the, 'ordeals, myths, masking's, the presentation of icons to novices, secret languages, food and behavioral taboos create a weird domain in the seclusion camp . . . and the novices are

induced to think, and think hard, about cultural experiences they had taken for granted' (Turner 124). Thus, in cancer along with the cultural and social changes the psychological changes are also witnessed. So, the illness narratives, whether fictional or non-fictional offer a great source of understanding of the theory of Liminality.

COMMUNITAS

The main character Tessa, who is terminally ill with leukemia, finds solace and support within her community as she copes with her cancer diagnosis. The community, comprised of family, friends, and neighbors, offers Tessa a network of emotional support, companionship, and understanding. Tessa's interaction with her brother, Zoey and her neighbor Adam showcase the power of human connection in the face of adversity. Through these relationships, Tessa is able to share her thoughts, fears, and aspirations, finding comfort in the presence of people who genuinely care about her well-being. These connections also help Tessa pursue some of the items on her *Before I Die* list, allowing her to create meaningful memories and experiences. The community also helps Tessa's family in dealing with the challenges of her illness. They provide a support system that assists in practical matters and offers emotional outlets for her loved ones as they navigate the complexities of Tessa's condition. Overall, the community depicted in the novel illustrates how human connections and relationships can serve as crucial sources of comfort, strength, and coping mechanisms for individuals facing life-threatening illnesses like cancer. Similarly Alan is happy after meeting Erin, both of them are divorcees hence he feels good in meeting her. He claims, 'I'd gladly have cancer the rest of my life just so long as we can be friends' (ARUR 193).

LIMINOID EXPERIENCES OF TESSA SCOTT

Liminoid experiences refer to moments of transformation, self-discovery and personal growth that go beyond the ordinary. Several liminoid experiences can be identified in the novel *Before I Die*. Like the way Tessa creates a list of things she wants to do before she dies is a precursor to liminoid experience. This list represents her desire to experience life to the fullest, transcending her illness and embracing the extraordinary. The pursuit of these activities, such as falling in love and having sex, marks her journey

toward self-discovery. Tessa's relationship with her neighbor Adam is a liminoid experience for her. Despite her illness, Tessa forms a deep connection with Adam, allowing her to experience the joy of love and intimacy, even if it's within a limited time frame. The carnival scene in the novel is a liminoid experience for Tessa. Amid the excitement and vibrancy of the carnival, Tessa momentarily escapes her illness and revels in the sensory and emotional stimulation, showcasing her desire to engage in life's pleasures. Tessa's interest in art and her desire to create something beautiful represent a liminoid experience. Her artistic endeavors allow her to channel her emotions and thoughts into something tangible, giving her a sense of purpose and accomplishment. The moments of bonding with family and friends involve shared memories, emotions, and personal growth as they confront the reality of Tessa's impending death. Besides in the latter half of the novel Tessa's trip to Spain with her father and brother is a liminoid experience. The change in environment, cultural immersion, and bonding with her family allow her to escape the routine of her daily life and create lasting memories. These liminoid experiences in the novel emphasize Tessa's pursuit of meaningful and transformative moments, despite the challenges posed by her illness. They showcase her desire to transcend the mundane and engage in activities that contribute to her personal growth, emotional well-being, and connection with others.

LIMINOID EXPERIENCES OF THE CANCER SUFFERERS

In the novel, *A Walk to Remember*, by Nicholas Sparks, both Jamie undergoes liminoid experiences that lead to personal growth and transformation. Jamie's unwavering faith, kindness, and selflessness helps her to live the present moment. She stops worrying about the painful future. Through her interactions and growing relationship, Landon experiences a shift in his perspective on life. He transforms from a typical high school troublemaker into someone who genuinely cares for others, discovers the importance of kindness, and learns to appreciate life's simple pleasures. Landon's involvement in the school play, which Jamie encourages him to join, represents a liminoid experience for both. Stepping out of his comfort zone and taking on a role in the play allows Landon to overcome his inhibitions, showcase his talents, and develop a newfound confidence in him. As Landon gets to know Jamie better, he witnesses her unwavering strength and

courage in the face of her terminal illness. Jamie's resilience inspires Landon to reevaluate his priorities and make positive changes in his life. Her determination to live life to the fullest influences him to become a better person. The progression of Landon and Jamie's relationship, followed by Jamie's eventual passing, is a profound liminoid experience for both characters. Their love transcends the challenges they face, and Landon's experience of loving and losing Jamie leaves an indelible mark on his heart, forever changing his perspective on love, life, and what truly matters. Landon's interaction with Jamie, makes him mature emotionally, learns to appreciate the beauty of simple moments, and becomes more empathetic and compassionate towards others. In "A Walk to Remember," the liminoid experiences of both Jamie and Landon contribute to their individual growth and the transformative impact they have on each other's lives. These experiences shape their characters and ultimately lead them to a deeper understanding of love, empathy, and the importance of embracing life's meaningful moments.

LIMINOID EXPERIENCE IN *THE FAULT IN OUR STARS*

One of the most significant liminoid experiences in the novel is Hazel and Augustus's trip to Amsterdam. This journey, which is granted through the charitable organization WISH allows them to escape their everyday lives and immerse themselves in a new and exciting environment. The trip becomes a symbol of their shared hopes and aspirations, offering them a chance to experience the world beyond their illnesses. Hazel and Augustus share a common passion that is reading Peter Van Houten and Hazel is desperate to meet him before dying. Augustus wants to fulfill Hazel's wish hence both of them go to Amsterdam to meet him. There they encounter with the reclusive author Peter Van Houten in Amsterdam. While their expectations of meeting their literary idol are shattered by his behavior, this encounter prompts both characters to reevaluate their own lives and the way they approach their challenges.

They realize that meeting Peter has not given them that happiness which is given by the time that they spent together in each other's arms in Amsterdam. Augustus writes a letter to Peter Van Houten, expressing his thoughts on life, death, and the impact of their meeting. This act of self-expression becomes a liminoid experience as Augustus

articulates his philosophical reflections, revealing his inner thoughts and emotions. Both Hazel and Augustus engage in writing as a means of personal expression. Hazel's love for books and Augustus's interest in writing provide them with outlets to process their feelings, aspirations, and fears. Sharing their writing with each other deepens their connection and fosters moments of intimacy.

Throughout the novel, Hazel and Augustus confront their mortality, which serves as a recurring liminoid experience. Their discussions about life, death, and the unknown create opportunities for introspection, leading them to develop unique perspectives on existence and the importance of leaving a lasting impact. These liminoid experiences in the novel contribute to the characters' individual growth, their evolving relationship, and their deeper understanding of life and love in the face of adversity.

LIMINOID EXPERIENCES OF LARA BLAINE

In the novel, *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower*, the character Lara Blaine goes through a series of transformative experiences that are liminoid moments. Lara's decision to join a cancer support group becomes a significant liminoid experience. This choice allows her to connect with others who are going through similar challenges, providing her with emotional support, camaraderie, and a sense of belonging. Throughout the novel, Lara engages in introspection and self-discovery as she grapples with her illness. These moments of self-reflection contribute to her personal growth and represent liminoid experiences where she gains insight into her own strengths and vulnerabilities. As Lara navigates her journey with cancer, she learns to embrace her vulnerability and open up to others about her fears and feelings. This act of vulnerability leads to deeper connections with her family, friends, and fellow support group members, fostering liminoid experiences of authenticity and emotional connection. Lara's desire to fulfill certain wishes and reconnecting with her roots, her childhood home before her time runs out reflects a series of liminoid experiences.

These pursuits, whether big or small, allow her to create meaningful memories, experience joy, and focus on what truly matters in her limited time. Lara's relationships with old neighbors of her grandparent's house also help her in reliving old happy

memories. These moments of reconnection, forgiveness, and shared experiences contribute to her emotional growth and constitute liminoid experiences of healing and bonding. As Lara grapples with the challenges of her condition, she seeks to find purpose and meaning in her life. Her pursuit of self-expression and creative outlets, such as photography, represents a liminoid experience as she channels her energy into something that brings her joy and fulfillment. Lara's contemplation of her mortality leads her to contemplate her legacy and the impact she wants to leave behind. This process of contemplating her own mortality and legacy can be seen as a liminoid experience that shapes her priorities and perspectives. Lara's experiences of personal growth, connection, and transformation align with the concept of liminoid moments—those that transcend the ordinary and contribute to a deeper understanding of oneself, others, and life's profound aspects.

LIMINOID EXPERIENCES OF ALAN AND ERIN

In the novel *A Rather Unusual Romance* the characters Alan and Erin, meet in a radioiodine chamber and go on to share a unique journey filled with liminoid experiences. Alan and Erin's initial meeting in the radioiodine chamber is a liminoid experience itself. The shared dangerous environment and their common struggle create an instant connection that goes beyond the ordinary, setting the foundation for their relationship. As Alan and Erin become friends, their camaraderie becomes a significant liminoid experience. They support each other through their treatments, sharing their fears, hopes and aspirations. This friendship offers them a safe space to be vulnerable and find emotional solace during a challenging time.

Inspired by their shared diagnosis, Alan and Erin embark on a series of bucket list adventures together. Traveling to new places and trying out new activities, represent liminoid moments as they push their boundaries and make the most of their limited time, focusing on creating cherished memories. Through their friendship, Alan and Erin find ways to rediscover joy in simple pleasures. Whether it's sharing stories, laughing at jokes, or enjoying a meal together, these moments provide liminoid experiences that remind them of the beauty in everyday life despite their illness.

As Alan and Erin navigate their health challenges, they engage in profound discussions about life, death, and the meaning of their experiences. These philosophic conversations offer liminoid moments of introspection, leading to a deeper understanding of their own mortality and the value of their time together. Alan and Eric's journey involves confronting their fears and finding ways to accept their circumstances. This process of growth and acceptance act as a liminoid experience, as they evolve as individuals through their shared struggles. In *A Rather Unusual Romance*, Alan and Erin's experiences showcase how their friendship, shared challenges, and determination to live life fully lead to a series of liminoid moments. These moments of connection, self-discovery, and embracing the extraordinary in the face of adversity create a poignant and meaningful narrative.

LIMINALITY IN ILLNESS NARRATIVES

One of the breakthroughs in illness narratives has been done by famous sociologist Arthur Frank. His canonical work, *The Wounded Storyteller*, immensely contributed in identifying the major stages of illness that correspond to liminal phases. He divides the lethal illness stages into, restitution, chaos, quest and testimony. Suffering and powerlessness over bodily condition gives rise to a new insight into life, it can be negative or positive in nature. Chaos, lack of control and shaking of the existing thought process are the key features of the human condition under the shadow of incurable diseases. 'Chronic illness is more than the sum of the many particular events that occur in an illness career' (Kleinman 8).

The ambivalence that is prevalent causes turbulence inside as well as outside. However, excess of anything leads to some different results hence excess of pain, anxiety, disorientation and suffering can lead to positive changes also. The painful cancer journey helps in acquiring new found wisdom and uplifting of inner recesses. Suffering, conflict and too much chaos opens new vista of insight. Panic, helplessness and frustration are part of liminal stages in case of cancer sufferers.

The journey of a cancer sufferer is difficult and it forces him to face certain difficult truths about himself and acknowledge the temporariness of life. The

conventional thought process about self is broken and new wisdom is evolved. The complex moral issues, the vulnerability, and the dilemma are courageously faced by them. Conflict, contradiction and confusion pose a grave challenge to the sufferer. However, it is done after much resistance, displacement and dissociation from the existing self.

The liminal beings have to face the ambiguous condition till they cross the threshold. Anthropologically speaking, the cancer sufferers in the select novels are liminal beings because when the condition is revealed they become, the other, the initiands, 'an initiate is first stripped of status and then detached from an earlier fixed point in the social structure' (Theresa et.al 109) as the disease progress, they are withdrawn from day to day routine of life like, going to school, to the college or to the office. When the doctors negate all hopes of living they become limen beings, as a limen being they go through a journey like, 'a passenger inducted into an ambiguous period of transition' (Theresa et.al 109).

AGGREGATION IN POST LIMINAL PHASE

As per the ritualistic norms of the anthropological studies done by Gennep, in case of the cancer sufferers, the third stage corresponds to aggregation, in liminality, 'a subject is given a new status upon re-assimilation into society and expected to behave in accordance with customary norms and ethical standards binding on incumbents in a system of such positions' (Theresa et.al 109). In the case of the characters suffering from cancer, they are able to re-assimilate or regain their normal mental condition by developing a greater conscious understanding of the universal truth. They understand the actual customary norm i.e. that the living is bound to perish either today or tomorrow or day after. They realize the ethereality of the body that is all flesh and blood. Although everybody is aware of this truth they are not conscious about it all the time whereas after passing through the liminal phase the chosen characters become conscious of this fact. Whether it is Tessa Scott, Jamie or Landon they all realize that they are passing through, 'being and nothingness of liminal personae, the threshold people' (Theresa 109).

The transformation from one identity that was given by the society to a new found, evolved and created identity; that comes as a result of their efforts of overcoming the threshold, the cancer sufferers live with a new understanding. From neophytes to new found identity they develop comradeship through *communitas*, where they meet people facing the same ambiguity and chaos. *Communitas* helps in accepting the loss of prior status and fixed identity.

LIMINALITY AND THE BODY

The awareness of the body is a prominent feature of this transition. Liminality has helped in understanding illness experience. The routine that is disrupted due to cancer and the chronic disability that it starts offering is a cause of major concern. Drew Leder recognizes this fact in his work, *The Absent Body*. A person understands that why the body was absent so far, it was so, 'because it is perpetually outside itself, caught up in a multitude of involvements with other people' (Leder 7). It is only when the body is attacked by some lethal disease that brings back a person's attention from the outside world to his or her body. When the threat of perishing of the body persists it encourages the idea that perhaps some magical power might save them. Just like Tessa hopes that Adam, her new found love, might come up with some miraculous remedies that can save her life.

As the cancer journey progresses, 'the psychological splitting that can occur in the liminal state allows the sufferer to face the difficult tussle between the deeply held notions of the self and moral confusion and uncertainty' (Therese 115). As the person goes through the experience s/he tries to face the challenge with courage and resolution and it leads to transformation. Turner notes, the resolution of liminality comes through 'transformation' and the system 'hailing' the individual expects that transformation to support its values, assumptions, and priorities. The chosen cancer narratives reflect that the transformation may take place in different forms. When the liminal entity is broken down with the hope of becoming an evolved person, the individual tries to make balance with reconstructing one's belief system.

It is not that the characters easily accept the betwixt and between state. It comes after passing through difficult liminal stages. Liminal state is an invisible abstract state, the structural invisibility of the liminal state. The invisibility and silence associated with liminality, which Leder describes as ‘disappearance’ also appear in cancer narratives. Liminal stage is not a fixed stage, it is fluid in nature, it is like a journey but it is full of pain, uncertainty and ambiguity. The transformational potential of liminal phases also helps in exploring the powerful survival instincts. Validation and appropriation of the perishing self as the ultimate result of human existence is also the outcome of liminality.

The vulnerable state of being, alienation and a recurrent problem like growth of cancer cells leads to the understanding of limited time and space, not only this many a times. It empowers a person to understand the power of left-over time. However, at the time of diagnosis a sense of loss, a feeling of loss of control and disorientation causes many troubles. As the time passes by one tends to grow adaptive to new conditions. The realization of the perishable nature of the body is also a prominent feature of all the liminal beings in the selected novels. Tessa tells Zoey, ‘I am me and you’re you and all of them out there are them. And we’re all so different and equally unimportant. It’s true, don’t you ever look in a mirror. Don’t you ever imagine your own skull’ (BID 154).

So, liminality helps in a deep understanding of the existence of the body that was absent so far in the absence of uncontrolled growth of the cancer cells. The body that was observed only from the external-that was only looked into from the perspective of dull skin and pimples. After going through a rigorous mental process of liminality, a liminal being moves on from dull skin to imaging one’s own skull, and each cell of the body, so a broad perspective of life emerges, ‘in the great scheme of the things none of it matters’ (BID 154). So, it is true because millions of bodies have perished earlier and it is an everyday process where millions are taking birth and millions are dying. Cancer reminds us about the existential eternal truth, ‘All men and women are merely players, they have their exits and entrances’ (Shakespeare 1).

Liminality helps in realizing the basic nature of the body. Like Tessa, Scott makes her friend Zoey realize this. ‘Every few years we disappear, Zoey. All our cells are replaced by others. Not a single bit of me is the same as when I was last in this room. I

was someone else' (BID 163). Human beings' consciousness is centered around the body and a few bunch of thoughts that occupy the abstract part of the nervous system. Lethal diseases not only attack the body but also the chain of thoughts is also hit upon badly. An interesting revelation is born out of the physical existential danger. Tessa says, 'You go on and on about yourself like you're the only one in the world with anything wrong. We're all in the same boat you know. We're born, we eat, we shit, we die. That's it '(BID 163).

LIMINAL PHASE AS ADAPTIVE PHASE

Liminal phase also acts as an adaptive and enduring phase. This phase helps in reconstructing one's idea about the self and the world around. The feeling of suspended and fluid thoughts often bothers a cancer sufferer. Liminality acts as a buffer zone to cope with the new situation. Physically, the body becomes the storehouse of cancerous cells. The self is always under the threat of extinction in such condition. The constructed meaning of life is sidelined by an effort of understanding the meaninglessness of life. The subjunctivity and uncertainty helps in developing a new understanding. Life threatening conditions bring a new awareness about the surroundings in which a person lives. When the doctor gives an ultimatum about the time and space left in a person's life; the sufferer suddenly looks at the world with a renewed awakening interest. A new consciousness arises that was suppressed due to the heavy influence of urban living promoted by the industrial revolution.

Besides, the idea that since, I have come to this world and I'll stay here for at least, an average of seventy to eighty years, compels one to forget about the value of life in particular and the importance of the ecosystem in which one exists, in general. Cancer narratives also reveal that after the initial shock, the excruciating pain and frequent life threatening conditions makes a person draw towards the universal womb that is mother nature. The threat of impending death makes one establish a reconnection with nature, the natural surroundings. Reconnection with the natural ecosystem and the universe around oneself is re-established.

ROLE OF NATURE IN LIMINAL PHASE

Nature in Pain narratives is different from the way it is represented in the other narratives. The natural life cycle is viewed differently by a dying person. The possibility of a new awakening about the living and non-living entities around, through the mental condition of a dying person is visible in cancer narrative. Sitting close to beautiful natural surroundings acts as eco-therapy. Eco-therapy plays an important role for a person under life threatening conditions. The earthy experience that remains neglected in otherwise non-life threatening conditions takes center stage in the life of a person who is about to bid adieu to the world. When medicines fail, people turn to the archetypal mother earth for healing which is now given a term called Green Therapy.

During the liminal phase, it was found that the character's connection with nature helps the cancer sufferers in reminding them to reconnect with nature. It reminds them of their real origin, that the origin is from mother earth and they should have been in sync with the cycles of nature. It is interesting to note that pain narratives also reveal that too much pain compels the present day indoor species to move outside and feel nature. How wilderness helps in well-being is also a conspicuous feature of pain narratives. The holistic balance that becomes an urgent need at the threshold of life and death is achieved by earthing oneself as it happens to Tessa Scott in the novel *Before I Die* and to Amit Vaidya in *Holy Cancer: How a Cow Saved my Life*.

Pain is a great teacher, although its teachings come in a harsh manner. But the more painful a person's life, the more maturity it brings in his/her life, provided the person undergoing pain is able to cross the threshold of mind that dilly dallies between life and death. Pain is a prominent feature of all the liminal phases of cancer narratives. Hazel tells her trauma, 'The pain was always there, pulling me inside of myself, demanding to be felt. It always felt like I was waking up from the pain when something in the world outside of me suddenly required my comment or attention'(The Fault in Our Stars 142).

Arthur Frank did a great service by bringing out his phenomenal book, *The Wounded Storyteller*. The text reveals that during chronic illness it's not just the body

that suffers but the attitude of the society, the doctors, the palliative care givers, the cultural norms and over all the philosophical ideology of the environment in which a person lives also plays a key role in the entire process of curing. Pain narratives are not just the tales told by the sick, in fact they are the representation of the self through the action of complex neuro-biological changes. Pain narratives are not individual stories in fact they are an amalgamation of human emotions, learning about the alternate meaning of life, motivation, as well as stories of isolation, and a deep understanding of psyche. The present research study has also brought out the importance of pain narratives.

Pain narratives have brought out a breakthrough in pain management also. The engrossing tales that are published both from the patients point of view and the doctor's point of view has helped psychologists, anthropologists, clinical researchers, physiologists, journalists, neurologists, social scientists and policy makers in understanding and managing the pain through the adoption of corrective measures constantly. The power of storytelling cannot be overlooked anymore. Survival depends on better diagnosis and treatment. Death is still unconquerable. Realizing that if one has to face the impending death then the caregivers need to see how best they can manage the pain. How best the time and space left with a dying person should be managed has now become an integral part of medical sciences, at least in the west.

There are many studies that support the study of pain narratives. Pain, sickness and suffering leads to difficulty in life, depression, anxiety, scattering of the self and endless unmet requirements. Narrative medicine also helps in understanding the mental condition of the sufferers. Isolated ruminative stories also help in bringing eureka moments in the life of the readers as well. Chronic pain stories are also often surreal in nature. Fraas says that, 'the importance of narratives throughout the course of treatment during the process of diagnosis, narratives encourage empathy and promote mutual understanding between health-care providers and patients' (Yang 6). Narrativity helps in challenging the established conventions about varied aspects of life. Susan Sontag's seminal work, *Illness as Metaphor* (1978) postulates the idea that the society should not wrap up diseases under the metaphors because it makes the patient feel guilty. Getting a lethal disease is not anybody's fault. Why humans get diseases is still a mystery to many

scientists.

However, paying attention to the chaos behind the disease and the pain is definitely helpful in healing the sufferer. The experience of illness is an integral part of human existence. Each body part is likely to be attacked by many micro-organisms. Illness, pain, death and decay is a universal part of human existence. While death brings a full stop to life and closes the chapter of human life but waiting for death brings out a new philosophical interpretation of life. Till recent times illness was considered to be the domain of medical sciences but as the society is progressing a holistic view of wellness and well being. Experience of severe illnesses many a times brings irreversible changes in the understanding of a person's life, values and overall outlook of life. Philosophers like Carel consider, 'illness as a philosophical tool'. He looks at illness from the phenomenological perspective, 'through its pathologizing effect, illness distances the ill person from taken for granted routines and habits and reveals aspects of human existence that normally go unnoticed' (Sontag 20).

The degree of pain also varies in terms of types of diseases both physical and mental. The pain that is brought by incurable diseases is more of concern than the pain brought by minor diseases or accidents that can be cured and healed. Cancer is also one of the grave diseases that bring a lot of upheaval in the life of an individual and his/her entire family. The close analysis of the cancer texts reveal that among other entities that impact the well being of a person dealing with lethal diseases, nature comes as a rescuer from anxiety, depression and isolation. Besides other kinds of palliative care, strolling in the forests among the vast grasslands has a different impact on the overall attitude towards the disease, oneself and the world at large.

The novel *Before I Die* is a fictional account of a cancer sufferer penned down by British novelist, Jenny Downham in 2007. The novel is about a sixteen year old teenager, Tessa Scott who is diagnosed with terminal cancer. She has to drop out from her school and it's been over a year that she is battling with cancer with the hope of getting cured. Finally when the cancer cells spread incessantly, the doctor surrenders and tells her that she is not left with enough time. The urgency of living comes out as a common factor in all the selected five cancer narratives. The doctor hints at the urgency of living her life

the way she wants, 'I can't judge it, but I'd encourage you to do the things you want to do' (Before I Die 53). Tessa's world shatters, 'It's (death) really going to happen. I won't be able to go back to school. I'll never be famous, I'll never go to college or have a job. I won't see my brother grow up. I won't travel, never earn money, never drive, never fall in love' (Before I Die 53). She is broken from inside. But decides, 'I want to live before I die. It's the only thing that makes sense' (Before I Die 53).

People live their lives according to the social construct around them. They act, hope, dream and think according to the socio-cultural circumstances around them. Of course geniuses and independent thinkers are an exception to this rule. So, Tessa Scott's hopes and dreams are that of a typical European or American teenager's dreams. She wants to do drugs, taste alcohol, have a handsome boyfriend and enjoy the pleasures of life by partying hard. She prepares her bucket of wish list and fulfills them with the help of her friend Zoey.

Since her father knows that she is already dying, he loosens all sorts of parental control. As she keeps on experiencing the accepted ways of having fun she realizes the emptiness of the popular beliefs. Nothing gives her peace and calmness in fact it depresses her more than ever. She even asks, 'Is this living? Is it even anything? Her liminal phase allows her to re-examine the constructed beliefs around living. The breaking of rules acts as an attempt to break the structure by forming an anti-structure. It is the anti-structure that helps her in understanding the structured constructed identities and ways of living.

When one fine day she goes for an excursion in the forest with her neighbor, Adam, she gets a unique experience. As she steps out of the car in the dense jungle, she realizes, 'I feel very peaceful as I open the door and step outside. There are plenty of trees..... I walk for a bit, touching the bark, greeting the leaves. .. I'll make a shelter with sticks and leaves, and live here forever. There are no microwaves or pesticides. No fluorescent pyjamas or clocks that glow in the dark. No TV, nothing made of plastic. No hairspray or hair dye or cigarettes. The petrochemical factory is faraway. In this wood I am safe'(Before I Die 98).

The therapeutic effect of nature is visible, the moment she opens her eyes in the forest. Calmness and peace dawns upon her when she stands under the shadow of the tree. Though cancer cells are still there in her body she feels she has been healed. She observes, 'I'm not sick anymore. I need to stay here in the woods. I need to keep away from the modern world and all its gadgets and then I won't be sick'(Before I Die 100). The archetypal mother earth provides the much needed solace to Tessa Scott that she was trying to find in drugs, sex, shopping and shoplifting.

Later on, she comes back but soon she feels like returning to the woods. She requests Adam to take her away. This time they go on a bike ride. As they cross the boundary of the urban area and enter into the woods she feels, 'the world opened up from the back of the bike, that the sky looked like silk, that I saw the afternoon arrive not white, not grey, not quite silver but a combination of all three'(Before I Die 113). She identifies herself, 'as crisp as a winter leaf' (Before I Die 116). After getting close to nature she observes nature in every act, 'there's a sun in my teacup and it's very easy sitting outside this cafe watching it's shine' (Before I Die 121). She observes the line of birds, the cold frost and the black cloud sky. During the liminal phase, the cancer sufferer tries to find out all the alternate means of cure so as to get some relief from the alleviating pain. Connection with nature, herbal remedies like ginger tea helps them in getting some relief. It proves little beneficial for them. Thus re-establishing connection with nature helps in the overall well being of human beings.

Major liminal phases of transition are vividly depicted through various incidents and examples in the life of the protagonist, Tessa Scott. One prominent instance of the liminal phase occurs when Tessa decides to embark on a journey to complete her bucket list of experiences before she dies. This decision marks the beginning of her liminal journey, symbolizing her break from her previous routine and mundane life. As Tessa engages in experiences like falling in love with Adam and forming deep connections with friends, she immerses herself fully into the liminal phase. Each of these experiences represents a break from her past and a transformative moment in her life. The intensity of these moments underscores the liminality of her existence as she grapples with her

impending death. Another significant example is when Tessa confronts the reality of her deteriorating health. As her condition worsens, she enters a liminal state between life and death, where her body becomes increasingly fragile, and her sense of self is challenged. This phase is emotionally charged and serves as a poignant illustration of the liminal experience.

Tessa's strained relationship with her father in the pre-liminal phase undergoes a transformation during the course of the novel. As she grapples with her mortality, they both enter a liminal phase in their relationship. They begin to communicate more openly, bridging the emotional gap that existed before, and her father becomes an essential source of support and understanding. Tessa's experiences with the side effects of her illness, such as weakness and hospitalizations, represent liminal phases of her physical and emotional state. These moments highlight the vulnerability of her existence and her shifting sense of self as she navigates the challenges of her deteriorating health.

Throughout the novel, Tessa's relationship with her younger brother, Cal, evolves significantly. The liminal phase of their relationship is marked by moments of tenderness and shared adventures as Tessa tries to create lasting memories for Cal after she's gone. This transformation in their bond reflects the liminality of their sibling connection. The concluding chapters of the novel encompass the ultimate liminal phase for Tessa, as she approaches the end of her life. These moments are poignant and heartbreaking, underscoring her transition from life to death.

Similarly when Tessa decides to go out and experience the nightlife with her friends, it marks a clear break from her previous, more sheltered life. This night out represents the liminal phase of her quest to feel alive, as she dives headfirst into a world she had never fully embraced before. Tessa's decision to create an art project based on her experiences represents a significant liminal moment. Through her art, she not only expresses her feelings and thoughts but also transcends her own mortality by leaving a lasting legacy. This artistic endeavor signifies her passage into a creative and transformative liminal state. As Tessa's health deteriorates and she spends more time in the hospital, these moments become emblematic of the liminal phase of her life. The hospital serves as a threshold between life and death, and her experiences there highlight

her vulnerability and the stark realities of her condition. Towards the end of the novel, Tessa expresses her love and gratitude. This is a poignant example of her transition into the post-liminal phase, where she is coming to terms with her impending death and seeking closure with her loved ones.

Ultimately, the novel culminates in a post-liminal phase when Tessa's journey of self-discovery and transformation reaches its conclusion. Her poignant and heart-wrenching journey throughout the book exemplifies the concept of liminality, showcasing the profound shifts in perspective, identity, and experience that can occur when one faces the imminence of death. While it was already available in Ancient Indian Sanskrit texts like Yogasutra, the West is recently discovering the therapeutic effect of nature and studying concepts like cow therapy through western parameters of scientific researches that are largely authenticated on the basis of clinical or empirical studies. Instead of calling the new ideology as pantheism they are choosing terms like anthropocentrism and eco-centricism. These new concepts are gaining popularity in western medical sciences. 'Eco-therapy is a novel form of psychotherapeutic technique based on explicit environmental or ecological interventions. Social and therapeutic horticulture, animal-assisted interventions, care farming, green exercise, environmental conservation and wilderness therapy are some of the ecosystem-based approaches used in mental health' (Chaudhary & Banerjee 1).

Eco-therapy is based on the idea of promoting harmonious balance between humans and nature while integrating regular treatment also. Various studies have found positive results of Eco-therapy in children. P S Kamath claims, 'Eco-therapy is an intervention to help your child with calming and balancing benefits. Spending time in green spaces or bringing nature into your children's everyday life can benefit you both with profound mental and physical wellbeing. For example, doing things like growing food or flowers, exercising or meditating or being around animals can have lots of positive effects' (Parenting Desk 1) When Tessa tries to connect back with nature as a true soul she finds herself in sync with her surroundings even while on a bike ride in the forest she assimilates her surroundings as if she, 'left my breath behind on the road somewhere' (BID 121).

However, the same sentiments have been observed in other texts on cancer like Amit Vaidya's *Holy Cancer*. He gives credit to natural living for keeping him alive. In his book he gives a moving account of how cancer had engulfed his mother and left him an orphan. Soon he finds out that he is also suffering from cancer. Vaidya lives in New York and after the initial diagnosis and treatment, the doctor gives him six months to live the way he wants to. The diagnosis of his body reveals that only six months are left with him. Amit Vaidya is an Indian-American and he feels a calling for going back to the land of Ayurveda. He explores alternative methods of healing. Not only does he manage to remain alive after six months but also later on he opens an NGO for saving the life of other people suffering from cancer. Did the herbal medicines do magic? No, it was basically the whole lifestyle based on natural living and a greater outlook towards life that changed his life forever.

The small gestures like sitting under the sun, cuddling a cow, and tendering the animals in the farmland gave him a new meaning in life. He claims, 'All the wishful thinking in the world wouldn't have saved me if I didn't have discipline, a routine and faith. Faith in myself, my Earth and fellow human beings -- strangers who let me live, survive and thrive'(Vaidya 3). So going back to the motherly womb that is earth acts as a healing touch in his case. His journey starts with despair but ends in hope. His resilience, determination and adoption of natural life helped him in rising like a phoenix despite being declared to be extinct over six months. The natural healing path that he followed with staunch discipline is highly inspiring.

The exploration of cancer narratives under literary analysis, philosophy, history and anthropology viz. liminality– makes the readers understand the metaphors given by writers as expressions of the experiences of patients, caregivers and clinicians. The importance of the notion of rite of passage is obvious, offering a versatile means of expressing a range of phenomena including: the patient's passage from health to illness and from illness to health and the ways in which he/she makes efforts to give structure and meaning to that process; the impact of illness on the carer's life-trajectory; the initiation of the practitioner into the techniques of healing. Since the publication of

Ronald Frankenberg's seminal work on *Illness Narrative* (1986), health-care researchers have explored the potential applications of the concept of liminality to the analysis of numerous medical and psychiatric conditions. Though the emphasis varies according to the condition examined, most critics highlight the usefulness of van Gennep's and Turner's exploration of liminality in describing the lifelong disruptions that serious illness or injury imposes on the patient and his/her family. Some critics also point out the potentialities for positive change that may accompany a drastic physical or psychological event and that may be opened up during therapy, sometimes through the performance of or subjection to new quasi-ritualized activities.

All the five selected cancer narratives show similarity in terms of liminal experience. A closer look at the opening of all the five selected cancer narratives it shows striking similarities like in *The Fault in Our Stars*, Hazel Grace says, 'late in the winter of my seventeenth year, my mother decided, I was depressed, presumably because I rarely left the house, spent quite a lot of time in bed, read the same book over and over, ate infrequently and devoted quite a bit of my abundant free time to hearing about death' (TFDS 3). In the similar vein, the novel, *A Walk to Remember* begins with, 'When I was seventeen, my life changed forever' (*A Walk to Remember* 1) whereas the novel *A Rather Unusual Romance* and *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower* begins with the scene inside a cancer hospital, 'Can you tell me when I have to wait for the next train to New Cross please. The Little old lady stood at the reception counter of the hospital disheveled and distressed. Erin Mason sighed and stood up for the fifth time in as many minute' (ARVR 6) In Elizabeth Hein's novel *How to climb the Eiffel Tower*, the opening lines begins with cancer hospital and the title of first chapter is The Colors of Cancer, 'Ellery Cancer center protruded from hospital's façade like glass' (HTCET 1). While as mentioned earlier, the novel *Before I Die* starts with a wish because by the middle of the journey the protagonist knows that she is under the clouds of a life threatening disease.

Liminality is inherent in the selected cancer narratives. It also reveals that the characters challenge the societal perceptions and norms associated with the disease. It confronts the unspoken narratives of invincibility and immortality, forcing the characters to acknowledge their vulnerability. The liminal space of cancer narratives is also a mirror

reflecting the collective discomfort with mortality and thereby prompts a societal reckoning with the fragility of the human condition. The narrative structure of cancer stories mirrors the liminality of the experience. The plot arcs of the cancer narratives also defy traditional structures, reflecting the unpredictable trajectory of the cancer journey. The narrative itself is a liminal space that mirrors the emotional and psychological commotion of the cancer experience.

Moreover, the visibility of liminality in cancer narratives lies in its potential for empowerment. While the liminal space is laden with challenges, it also serves as a crucible for personal growth and transformation. Individuals undergoing the cancer journey find within themselves reservoirs of strength, resilience and courage that might have remained untapped in the absence of such a profound challenge i.e. cancer. The liminality of cancer narratives, therefore, becomes a canvas for the exploration and expression of the human spirit's indomitable nature.

The liminality of cancer narratives provokes the readers towards the reconsideration of the concept of normalcy. The journey through the liminal spaces of cancer challenges the very idea of a normative, uneventful life. It urges a societal shift towards embracing the variability and unpredictability of the human experience. Cancer narratives become a catalyst for fostering empathy, understanding and a deeper appreciation for the nuances of the human condition.

Hence, the importance of liminality in cancer narratives cannot be ignored. It is the crucible where the alchemy of transformation occurs, where individuals grapple with the profound uncertainties of life, illness and recovery. Liminality shapes the narrative structure, emotional terrain and societal implications of cancer stories, thus offering a unique lens through which one comprehends the intricacies of the human experience in the face of a frightening adversary. The challenges and vulnerabilities as well as the resilience, strength, and profound humanity defines the journey of cancer sufferers and survivors through the unknown.

So, the selected novels based on cancer unfold in the liminal spaces of human experience, where the boundaries between health and illness, life and death, normalcy

and crisis blur into a tapestry of uncertainty. Liminality, brings profound transformations. In the context of cancer narratives, liminality encapsulates the journey from the pre-diagnosis normalcy to the post-treatment reality, it shapes the very fabric of the narrative and offers a profound lens through which the readers understand the complexities of the cancer experience. At the heart of cancer narratives lies a departure from the known leading to the entry into the unknown. A cancer diagnosis thrusts individuals into a liminal realm where the familiar contours of life are disrupted, and an uncertain, often treacherous and painful terrain full of agony, unfolds. The liminality in the select cancer narratives is evident in the pre-diagnosis phase, where individuals grapple with vague symptoms, then face the ominous waiting for test results, and the looming specter of the unknown.

The threshold moment initiates the transformative journey, challenging the sense of normalcy and ushering in a state of in-betweenness. The liminal landscape of cancer sufferers like Hazel, Augustus, Lara, Tessa, Alan , Eric and Jamie is marked by a sense of suspension, as they find themselves betwixt and between the certainties of health and the uncertainties of illness. This suspension extends to the treatment phase, where the liminality of cancer sufferers intensifies. Their treatment becomes a rite of passage, a transformative process that unfolds in the liminal space between sickness and recovery. The physical and emotional toll of treatments renders them suspended between the debilitating effects of interventions and the hope for a renewed lease on life.

CHAPTER V

BEYOND THE THRESHOLD: TRANSFORMATION OF THE INNER SELF

Crossing the threshold of fear of death is highly transformative and subjective experience that manifests in various ways in the lives of the cancer sufferers in the select cancer narratives. For some, confronting and overcoming the fear leads to a greater sense of resilience, personal growth and a more profound appreciation for life. It also results in a shift in priorities, a renewed sense of purpose, and a deeper understanding of one's values. Like Tessa Scott realizes that her existence is in sync with the cosmos around. She feels, 'all the qualities are the same—the light through the curtains, the far-away hum of traffic, the boiler rush of water' (*Before I Die* 298). Conversely, some others like Landon Carter, grapple with the existential questions and continue to navigate the ongoing challenges related to life and mortality. The impact of crossing the threshold is also influenced by factors such as individual resilience, support systems, coping mechanisms and the specific circumstances that prompted the confrontation of fears. Ultimately, how the characters respond to crossing the threshold of the fear of life and death is unique to their own experiences.

Beyond the threshold experiences for cancer sufferers is profound and multifaceted and it includes physical, emotional and existential dimensions. The journey that begins with the diagnosis—a moment that marks the crossing of a threshold into a new and uncertain reality. The impact of this revelation is immediate, triggering a cascade of emotions that range from shock and disbelief to fear and sadness. Physically, the threshold is breached as the treatment commences. Chemotherapy, radiation, and surgeries, the hospital walls, the doctors, the doubtful eyes of the nurses become part of the landscape of a cancer patient's life. The sufferer feels that each session a step further into the unknown. The body undergoes changes, from the visible effects like loss of limb in case of Augustus, the oxygen pipe that Hazel has to carry, weight loss, flaky skin and sick demeanor of Tessa and Lara, hair loss and other significant alterations happening at the cellular level in Alan and Eric. The major physical transformations mark the crossing of another threshold, a tangible reminder of the battle being waged within.

The liminal effect of cancer makes the sufferers loom into liminal space and it compels them to move into transitional phase. Slowly and gradually their mind is conditioned to accept the transition and hence it causes the right transformation. Though the disease is very much there but the liminal phase helps them in coping with their situation. The behavioral pattern of the characters is strikingly similar despite the difference in their age and gender. Victor Turner's observation about the way liminality shapes and transforms the personality of the liminal beings is highly conspicuous in Hazel Grace, Augustus Waters, Alan, Eric, Lara, Landon, Sullivan and other characters associated with them. Thomassen seconds the observation of Turner in the article, *The Uses and Meanings of Liminality* because, 'Liminality served not only to identify the importance of in-between periods, but also to understand the human reactions to liminal experiences: the way in which personality was shaped by liminality, the sudden foregrounding of agency, and the sometimes dramatic tying together of thought and experience' (Thomassen 14). Likewise, *The Fault in Our Stars* it is shown how the personality of two young teenagers is changed when they get to know that they are afflicted with cancer. Hazel (16) and Augustus (19) are fighting hard against cancer at such a tender age, they try to decipher the meaning of a meaningless life. As initiands, they try to fight against the onslaught of cancer, Hazel says, 'Depression is not a side effect of cancer, it is the side effect of dying' (TFOS 3).

As far as the rituals are concerned the lexical meaning of ritual is an action, ceremony or process which is always done the same way and the plural noun of ritual means, the established form for a specified ceremony. During the close analyses of the texts, it was found that all the five cancer novels have a recurrent pattern of established actions, behaviors, emotional reaction and the common response in all the novels is similar. In the selected texts, the ritual that is recurrent is the emotional reaction that is of shock & denial. As the narratives progresses, slowly and gradually the characters act like liminal beings as if they are neither among the dead nor completely among the alive. They feel like they are on the border of life and death. Edgar Morin compares even the membrane of living beings with borders. He says, The frontier is both an opening and closing. It is at the frontier that there takes place the distinction from and liaison with the environment. All frontiers including the membrane of living beings, including the frontier of nations, are at the same time as they are barriers, places of communication and

exchange. They are the place of dissociation and association of separation and articulation (Bhabha 121).

The prolonged presence of cancer acts as the threshold between life and death. It is the border between living and dying. A common feature of Western teenagers that reoccurs in *The Fault in Our Stars* is that just like Tessa Scott, Hazel Grace also wants to behave like a typical American teenager. Hazel asks her mom, ‘if you want me to be a teenager, don’t send me to a support group. Bring me a fake ID so I can go to clubs, drink Vodka and take pot (drugs)’ (TFOS 7). Since it is a common practice in Western countries that the transformation from teenage to adulthood is marked by partying, drinking, sex and taking drugs. But cancer helps them in breaking the shallow ideas about mundane rituals of life and understanding life through a broader perspective.

EXPERIENCING LIMINALITY THROUGH SEVERE ILLNESS

Miles Little study on *Liminality: A Major Category of the Experience of Cancer Illness* projects that, ‘the experiences are best understood under the rubric of a category we call liminality. All cancer patients enter and experience liminality as a process which begins with the first manifestations of their malignancy. As an adaptive, enduring phase of liminality supervenes in which each patient constructs and reconstructs meaning for their experience by means of narrative’ (Miles 1). So, serious illness is not just bodily experience of one person, it is beyond that. Miles Little and other researchers also assert that, ‘because of reductionist tendency conventional medical understanding also typically fails to capture the embodied experience of illness. By construing the body and illness only in terms of organs, cells and systems it tends to arrive at an understanding of illness as the experience of an embodied suffering subject’ (Miles 1). Serious illness not only brings discomfort to the body but along with it comes the fear of extinction.

Like in, *The Fault in Our Stars* during a conversation among the participants of a cancer support group when Patrick invites Augustus to share his feelings about cancer. Augustus breaks his silence, ‘Augustus, perhaps you’d like to share your fears with the group. My fears ? Yes .I fear oblivion. I fear it like the proverbial blind man who’s afraid of the dark’ (TFOS 12). So the fear of dying is an important issue in cancer stories and how the liminality phase helps in coping with this fearful condition is the finding of the

study. Cancer Support Groups act as *communitas*. A *communitas* for therapeutic purpose where, 'illness accounts act as a kind of coping strategy' (Steffen 1). The stories of suffering, when shared in a group, helps in, 'the creation of a shared identity in the groups' (Steffen 1) and the individual and collective experience are merged into the same therapeutic process'(Steffen 1).

Hazel Grace unusually remained silent in the Cancer Support Group but on listening to Augustus she also gets the courage to speak. When Patrick implores upon her, 'Hazel I was I'm sure he assumed, opening up, becoming part of the Group' (TFOS 12). Hazel despite all resistance, could not stop herself from speaking up. Augustus Waters' impressive expression about cancer and fear of death, encourages her to become the part of the *communitas*. Otherwise she was very much critical about joining the group and considered it as a wastage of time. Hazel, a mere sixteen year old teenager speaks like a mature philosopher because the life and death condition has put her on a threshold. She says, 'There will come a time, when all of us are dead. All of us. There will come a time when there are no human beings remaining to remember that anyone even existed or that our species ever did anything.... Everything that we did and built and wrote and thought and discovered will be forgotten' (TFOS 13).

So, it is found out that cancer *communitas* acts as a buffer zone for all the cancer sufferers in the selected novels under study. It is a place where people come together and share about their sufferings and their ways of finding meaning in the meaninglessness of life. It is a place where, 'clear and open communication about death is encouraged' (Olson 1). When cancer patients are told that they have only a meager chance to live or they will spend only another few months on earth, after overcoming the initial period of shock and denial all that they can do is to achieve a good death. So it becomes essential for them to either die before the actual time or wait hopelessly for the end or spend the rest of the time in the best possible manner. The individual's response to the news of dying is affected by the contemporary social responses peculiar to the society in which the person lives but *communitas* helps in preparing for a good death.

Negative body image formation also affects the initiands. Hazel Grace has to carry a cannula tied with two small pipes around her nose and up to the ears and she has to carry a bag of oxygen cylinder all the time. Wherever she goes everybody notices her

and looks at her with pity in their eyes. Augustus's one leg is amputated. So it is a major issue for a teenager. Tessa keeps on losing weight and her face grows pale. Anybody could see that she is terminally ill. Alan and Eric of the novel *A Rather Unusual Romance* are not sure how cancer is going to harass them physically and mentally.

Since, all the selected novels under the present study are American novels or British novels, it has been seen that the attitude towards life and death is shown through the lens of Western thoughts. Berger talks about this aspect in detail, 'death is an essentially social and communal phenomenon. Although the existential crisis presented by death challenges each individual, the meanings associated with existing and ceasing to exist are the products of specific culture. These basic sociological tenets hold truth in all kinds of societies but pose particular problems for people living in contemporary Western societies' (McNamra 1). In *The Fault in Our Stars*, Hazel Grace is keen on going deep into the understanding of the phenomenon called death because she wants to, '(a) understand what it's like to be dying and (b) not have died' (TFOS 13). So it clearly shows her existential dilemma because dying and not having died is what the liminal being has to face and come out of it through various coping mechanisms and by sabotaging contemporary held views about life and death. According to Beverley McNamra, 'people die very much as they have lived, it's opposite has been termed as a good enough death by prominent palliative care practitioners' (McNamra 1) The concept of good enough death also gives the scope of accommodating 'the needs and wishes of the terminally ill people in their care' (McNamra 1).

Similarly, in *Before I Die*, *The Fault in Our Stars* and *A Walk to Remember*, it is found out that parents of teenage characters viz. Hazel & Augustus, Jamie Sullivan & Landon (AWR) allow them to fulfill their wishes & desires even though they may not be socially acceptable according to their contemporary societies. It is so because they know clearly that they will not live long enough to experience the basic pleasures of life. Hence, in order to provide a good enough death, the parents are ready to go to any extent. Likewise, the other two novels viz. *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower* & *A Rather Unusual Romance*, the characters are adults, Liza is 29 years old (HTCET) and Erin and Alan are in their fifties; they are grown up enough to decide the course of life that can lead to experience good enough death after cancer diagnosis becomes a problem.

A dying person's suffering can be reduced with the formation of, 'an idealized form of dying that is premised upon a willingness to agree upon what constitutes a good death and therefore a shared cultural understanding of dying and death' (McNamra 6). Hazel and Augustus Waters develop a good understanding of death but it takes a lot of effort on their part. During their liminal phase they keep on discussing all the aspects of life as they know about it from their parents, school, society, philosophers (even the pre-Socratic ones) to the great authors like Shakespeare, Van Hutton and others, they know that, 'dying sucks' (TFOS 281) but Augustus tells Hazel that, 'the fear of oblivion, is something universal and inevitable and the real problem is not suffering itself or oblivion itself but the depraved meaninglessness of these things' (TFOS 281).

Since they realize the value of each day, they try to cross that threshold that stops them from enjoying the small pleasures of life. They try to overcome the limivoid that is causing hurdles in spending the moments alive under the fear of approaching death. Augustus confesses to Hazel, 'I am in love with you and I'm not in the business of denying myself the simple pleasure of saying true things. I know that love is just a shout into the void and that oblivion is inevitable and that we're all doomed and that there will come a day when all our labor has been returned to dust and I know the sun will swallow the only earth we'll ever have' (TFOS 153). So they are trying to find joy even in pain and this is necessary because it helps in developing a broader vision that should overcome the so far held belief systems. So, the liminal phase of cancer patients involves breaking of the pre-liminal constructed beliefs. It is must for the liminal beings because then only the dying person's capacity to take control of his life can be done. The only way is by crossing the threshold of the cultural and institutional beliefs about life, death and the passing of time.

The quality of life cannot be measured in terms of days spend on earth; it has to be understood under the auspice of the days well spent. Liminality helps in understanding this basic aspect and thereby empowers the cancer sufferers. It gives autonomy to the individual. Though the doctor understands the disease better than the patient but the experience of illness also involves the mind, emotions, thoughts, reactions & responses of the sufferers. As Augustus says. 'What am I at war with ? My cancer, and what is my cancer? My cancer is me. The tumors are made of me. They're made of me as surely as

my brain and my heart are made of me. It is a civil war, Hazel Grace, with a predetermined winner' (TFOS 216) and the predetermined winner he is referring to is cancer.

Communitas of characters suffering from cancer acts as a 'self-contained, local world of care, which encompasses a social network' (McNamara 3) of its own. The young teenage characters from a sub-cultural group of their own like in *Before I Die*, it is Tessa, Zoey & Adam and in *The Fault in Our Stars*, it is Hazel, Augustus & Issac. In the novel *A Walk to Remember*, it is Jamie Sullivan and Landon. A common emotional and ideological bond is formed among them with the course of time. They are part of a communitas with a different sub-cultural pattern because unlike other teenagers they have to drop out of school, they cannot think of a career, job, marriage, family, children etc. Even, they are scared of falling in love, even when they know they are head over heels in love with their new partner. When Hazel Grace falls unconscious in the Netherlands, she feels like, 'I got to the threshold and looked up and figured, I could not do it, but also knew the way through was up' (TFOS 199). So every day is a challenge for them and it is lived according to the challenges that it offers.

Victor Turner has elaborated about Communitas in his seminal work, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. He talks about spontaneous communitas. He says, 'In complex industrialized societies, we still find traces in the liturgies of churches and other religious organizations of institutionalized attempts to prepare for the coming of spontaneous communitas. This modality of relationship, however, appears to flourish best in spontaneously liminal situations- phases betwixt and between states where social - structural role-playing is dominant and especially between status equal' (Turner 147). Similar spontaneous communitas are formed in all the novels. In *The Fault in Our Stars*, Hazel Grace who was initially reluctant to even visit Cancer Support Centre forms instantaneous communitas on the very first day. She falls in love with Augustus and the way he presents his views about life and cancer on the first day of her meeting. It turns into a permanent friendship and camaraderie.

Why are such communitas formed? Turner gives a valid reason, 'To exist is to be in ecstasy... the ecstasy of spontaneous communitas is seen as the end of human endeavor' (Turner 139). Since cancer takes away all ecstasy, it is cancer only that makes

them meet people who are sailing in the same boat like them. Since they understand each other's pain and suffering, together they try to move beyond suffering and find ecstasy. Hazel's parents allow her to go on a holiday with Augustus Waters to the Netherlands. Augustus goes with her because he wants to fulfill her last wish of meeting her favorite author, Peter Van Houten. In the Netherlands, both of them experience ecstasy in each other's company. Hazel wears her favorite blue dress, Augustus Waters wears the best suit, they roam around in trams and they enjoy watch the spring snow of Amsterdam. They eat in the best restaurants. They feel happy when the waiters address them as Mr. and Mrs. Waters. They are gifted champagne. They blush at each other and keep on thanking each other for coming together. 'Thank you for coming to Amsterdam Thank you for letting me hijack your wish....Thank you for wearing that dress which is like whoa' (TFOS 164). For Hazel Grace it was the perfect moment of her life. The spontaneous communitas makes her feel like, 'it was perfect....the Amsterdam of her imagination' (TFOS 166). She finds humor in the moment, it was hard for her to forget the fine dinner, 'like the trip itself, was a cancer perk' (TFOS 166).

The liminal space that they experience is, 'that uncreated third space' (TFOS 119) which was a space where Hazel always felt like meeting him. Cancer helps them in understanding life in its totality. Hazel assures herself, 'I would give up all the sick days I had left for a few healthy ones.... , that the world was not a wish granting factory, that I was living with cancer not dying of it, that I mustn't let it kill me before it kills me, and then I started muttering stupid. stupid stupid stupid.....stupid. stupid over and over again'(TFOS 121). Clinical studies by Mullan have also shown three types of cancer survivors and their behaviors. He describes cancer patients under three categories, viz. 'Acute survival, dominated by fear and anxiety' (Mullan 1) Extended survival, a phase of rigorous treatment and intermittent therapy,' filled with fear of recurrence. A period dominated by, 'physical limitations since the tumor and treatment have exacted a corporal price. Diminished strength, fatigue, a reduced capacity for exercise, amputation of a body part, or hair loss may have occurred in the acute phase, but now they must be dealt with in the home, the community and the workplace' (Mullan 2). The third stage is also quite complex. Though it is termed as permanent survival, the reality is that , 'the person who has come through a cancer experience is indelibly affected by it' (Mullan 3). Most of the survivors live after near death experiences.

In the novel, *A Rather Unusual Romance*, the spontaneous *communitas* is formed inside the radioactive chambers where Erin Elaine Mason and Alan go for radioactive treatment though initially they go there separately. In the hospital there are two secure Radioactive Iodine chambers separated by a wall. The patient is kept inside for twenty four hours and they are given food, water and medicines through a small window. They are supposed to drink a radioactive liquid and stay inside for twenty four hours. The radioactive liquid stains the cancer cells inside the body. The MRI scans help the doctors detect the location and spreading of cancer cells and the chemotherapy treatment is given accordingly. The radioactive chamber is equipped with basic facilities like a bed, personal washroom, nurse call buttons, well mounted TV, tea bags, water, kettle etc. They have to stay there until the radioactive levels are washed out of the body through urine. The room is equipped with an alarm in case the patient is scared or tries to run away the alarm will set off. Human endeavor has always been to seek ecstasy not to experience cramps and knots in the stomach after drinking radioactive liquid or to feel as if, ‘the heart is threatening to jump out of her chest’(ARUR 153).

Fortunately, the phone rings in the next chamber and Erin hears, ‘the pleasantly deep, resonant tones of a male voice answering’(ARUR 154). As soon as Alan knocks her door from the other side of the chamber she finds the other radioactive patient to be, ‘pleasant looking middle aged man standing around six feet tall, with thick graying hair and a day’s stubble on his chin who gave the outward impression of having been out on the tiles for the past few sleepless nights’(ARUR 154). Both of them make an instant connection. Erin comments, ‘You look as rough as I feel’ (ARUR 154). This conversation initiates their journey of spontaneous *communitas*. What is the role of spontaneous *communitas*? Turner advocates that, ‘Spontaneous *communitas* is richly charged with affects mainly pleasurable ones. Life in structure is filled with objective difficulties: decisions have to be made, inclinations sacrificed to the wishes and desires of the group and physical and social obstacles overcome at personal cost’ (Turner 148).

Thus it becomes necessary to make the anti-structure in the form of spontaneous *communitas* where one doesn’t have to crush needs and desires due to societal norms or the rigid structure. For a dying man and woman such structures become immaterial. However, the rigid structure was created, as Turner reasons, ‘that man’s social life is seen

as a process rather than the multiple aspects like the human temptations, that the Utopians wanted to crush in order to maintain discipline' (Turner 148). But people under threatening diseases create spontaneous *communitas* and an anti-structure because now the rules and norms of the structured society become immaterial to them.

Sparks' novel doesn't explicitly follow the structure of liminality, but the main elements are prominently correspond to the three phases in the narrative. The character of Jamie Sullivan, a teenager suffering from leukemia embodies liminality as she is portrayed as an outsider within her high school society. She is seen as different due to her strong Christian faith, modesty and innocence, which sets her apart from her peers. This sense of being on the margins is a classic example of liminality, as Jamie navigates the transition from adolescence to adulthood while maintaining her unique values and identity. The romantic relationship between Jamie and Landon illustrates a liminal phase in their lives. They start as acquaintances from different social circles, but as their friendship deepens and ultimately turns into love, they both undergo significant personal transformations. This transition from friendship to love represents a liminal space where their identities and emotions are in flux and they must navigate the impending uncertain territory.

The town of Beaufort, North Carolina, where the novel is set, is also an example of a liminal space. It's a coastal town, constantly influenced by the ebb and flow of the tides, much like the characters' lives. Beaufort serves as a backdrop for the transformative experiences of its residents, including the love story between Jamie and Landon. The town's seasonal changes and the pivotal events that occur there contribute to the novel's overall sense of liminality. In *A Walk to Remember*, the theme of liminality is woven throughout the narrative, reflecting the characters' journeys of personal growth and transformation. The story beautifully illustrates how Jamie and Landon navigate the uncertain and transformative phases of life and ultimately emerge as changed and enlightened individuals in the post-liminal phase.

In the threshold phase, the characters detach from their previous state. For Landon and Jamie, this phase is marked by their initial interactions. Landon is a popular and rebellious teenager, while Jamie is known for her strong faith in Christianity. As Landon spends more time with Jamie, he starts to detach from his previously shallow and self

centered outlook on life. This shift in perspective is evident as he begins to see Jamie as more than just a simple preacher's daughter. The liminal phase is characterized by ambiguity and transformation. In the novel, this phase encompasses Landon's growing feelings for Jamie and his journey of self-discovery. Landon's participation in the school play, prompted by Jamie's request, leads to personal growth and a deeper connection between the two characters. Landon experiences a shift in his identity and relationships as he becomes more compassionate, caring and willing to break away from societal norms to be with Jamie. The incorporation phase involves the reintegration of characters into a new identity. This phase is marked by Jamie's declining health due to her terminal illness. Landon's love for Jamie deepens during this time and he goes to great lengths to make her remaining days memorable. As Jamie's illness progresses, Landon's reintegration into his new reality involves a transformation of his priorities and values. He learns the importance of love, compassion and selflessness through his relationship with Jamie. The structure of liminality is present in, *A Walk to Remember*, and it does explore aspects of personal transformation, self-discovery and the impact of love on characters' lives. These aspects loosely align with the three phases of liminality and contribute to the emotional depth of the narrative.

CANCER DISEASE AND GENDER

Women patients face the additional burden of facing the grave challenge of disfiguring the body. Body image issue is an additional trauma that female cancer patients have to overcome. It requires a lot of courage on their part. Like, Hazel Grace is merely a sixteen year old teenager and she has to carry an oxygen cylinder wherever she goes and the cannula pipe that she has to wear around her nostrils extended up to ears is something that makes everybody look at her twice. Children often approach her out of curiosity so that they know what and why she is wearing that. While going to Amsterdam, at the airport everybody looked at her, 'the ticket counter announced they were going to start pre-boarding people who might need a bit of extra time and every single person in the gate area turned squarely to me' (TFOS 144). If the disease is not visible and it is not a point of discussion among people then still a person is able to bear it as a personal problem but when it is visible like the amputation of breasts or tonsuring of

hair or a bald woman or an amputee then it becomes a public display of disease which is more painful for the bearer.

At the airport Hazel feels embarrassed, 'I could feel everybody watching us, wondering what was wrong with us and whether it would kill us, and how heroic my mom must be. That was the worst part about having cancer, sometimes: The physical evidence of disease separates you from other people. We were irreconcilably other, and never was it more obvious.....the stewardess nodding sympathetically'(TFOS 144). So no doubt, 'cancer kills joy'(130). Rita Charon, a narrative theorist says, 'With the body in view, life story cannot claim immortality but must succumb to temporality (48). Jackie Stacey and Mary Bryson (2012) argue that as much as cancer warps time in particular ways, it also, 'warps the temporality of the body' (48) by twisting, 'our temporal perceptions of our own bodies, which, however illusory, anchored the modern subject in anxious desire for certainty and predictability'(7).

So the wrapping of time and body requires attention on the part of onlookers also. Femininity is affected more by cancer in terms of body politics where a woman is supposed to look like in a certain way while masculinity is affected more in terms of whether the man would be able to remain manly in terms of fertility. Jain writes about it in detail in the academic article, *Cancer Butch* (2007) , 'as the female body has to bear much more public shame when cancer hits. When one breast is cut off, when the head is hardly covered with any hair or when the body is disfigured. Similarly, the way cancer is rising it is putting everybody under threat of painful extinction' (Jain1). A popular study titled, *Chasing the Cancer Answer* (2007) by Canadian journalist, Wendy Mesley reveals that out of two Canadians one will be diagnosed with cancer. She claims, 'I can accept that I have cancer. What I can't accept is it's so common'(Mesley 13).

Cancer narratives clearly fall into the liminal domain and characters into liminal personalities. But they traverse the liminal journey not by choice but by compulsion, by default. The crossing of the threshold poses a great challenge to them. Like J. K Rowling comments in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, 'I open at the close' (Rowling 23). The dilemma of feeling lost as Rowling suggests, 'Midway through life's journey, I woke to find myself in a darkened wood, where the right road was wholly lost and gone'(Rowling 5). The liminal characters have to cross the thresholds to come to a new

understanding of life. ‘Within the liminal passage there were multiple thresholds of consciousness to traverse, truths to face and sublime beauty to receive. The dark wood was a threshold beyond which the process continued and concluded’ (Carson 1). Although it is not obvious that the liminal being feels conscious about that he or she is going through the massive transformation when it happens. Just like Timothy observes, ‘Does a caterpillar have any idea that a metamorphosis is about to take place as it enters its cocoon!’ (Carson 1).

Emptiness, chaos and disorientation is caused by the experience of liminality in the pre-liminal phase because after cancer there is a feeling of continuous loss and snatching away of familiar landmarks like going to school or college or to office or enjoying the day to day normal routine. As the doctors suggest Lara Blaine in *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower*, ‘I’m sorry Miss Blaine. I did not intend to frighten you, but you need to consider all the possible outcomes. If you think you might want to have children in the future, we suggest you have some eggs harvested before the radiation treatments, just in case’ (HTCET 71). Lara feels devastated by this she thinks as if now onwards she will be good for nothing, ‘no man would ever want me now. I was damaged goods’ (HTCET 71).

A sense of security is replaced by a sense of insecurity. Lara feels all alone while lying on the hospital table, ‘I didn’t understand any of it really. Why was I there? Why did I get cancer? Why was this little woman acting so nice to me? Why wasn’t she like Dr Lander’s nurse? Were they trying to trick me?’ (HCET 70). In the pre-liminal phase the cancer sufferers witness that the past secure structures are shattered and hope slips away with several rounds of hospitals and chemotherapy sessions. Lara Blaine, a twenty nine year old woman suddenly falls unconscious one day while gyming and a whole new bitter truth is revealed to her after smear tests. After examination, revelation and the details of the stages in which a person is, is revealed to the sufferer, he /she lose the routine track of life.

In fact the doctors, nurses and attendants look like monsters to the patients when they always bring bad news one after the other. A kind of mistrust develops as Lara Blaine feels when the doctor at the Ellery Hospital is too nice to her, ‘Why is the woman being nice to me? They’re not supposed to be nice. I had this all figured out- they treat us

like cattle and we're just supposed to take it' (HTCET 70). It becomes, 'a journey of the road less traveled by'(Frost 1). The fear of future events looms around them even though the future is nowhere near and it has not yet materialized. Since the physical pain and the mental agony is always there and with everything in flux, anxiety, depression and it becomes a predominant mood and a new norm. Pre-liminal phase can also be compared to the incubation period. When there is no other choice but brooding over is- over what is happening. Every action that one takes proves fruitless in this stage.

Lara Blaine's life is a reflection of the author herself. The author Elizabeth Hein is herself a cancer survivor. Lara Blaine's journey of fighting cancer and making communitas of friends on her way is inspired by Hein's real life. In the narrative, Lara Blaine decides that she will try to forget her past and her pain by completely indulging herself in rigorous exercise and work routine. She turns herself into a complete workaholic. She remains completely isolated from her family and friends until cancer is detected. This makes her lower her guard and the painful journey of self evolution starts. Her worst of times becomes a learning time. She meets many other cancer patients. Like during her rounds of check up at the hospital. Jane, another cancer patient, helps her in facing the threats posed by cancer. Until then she had not even allowed anybody to help her. She had such a big ego that she never accepted any help from others. So cancer breaks all the delusions that she had about herself. Slowly and gradually, she comes to terms with life and understands how it should be lived. Now she becomes conscious about the shallowness of her thoughts and how mundane they were but not before overcoming the threshold of her past experiences and her new one. The journey through her liminal period helps her in embracing her life as it comes by, minute by minute.

People's query about cancer also irritates cancer patients but slowly and gradually they overcome that irritation also, like when Liam says, 'Yeah because you're in fabulous shape. And a girl. That's all I meant. I had no idea you--' (HCET 178). Liam's uneasiness helps Lara in calming down and she is amazed at his embarrassment. She courageously replies, 'You can say that word you know. Cancer. It won't hurt you. Cancer. Cancer. Cancer . cancer, cancer!!!!'(HTCET 178). So in addition to body pain and discomfort the cancer sufferers have to face additional public pressure. It is only communitas that gives them some solace. Making of a communitas is also strongly visible in this novel because

as Lara evolves she thinks, ‘about raising money to dispel the stigma of cancer’.(HTCET 179). She resolves to help other women with, ‘gynecological cancers---I thought about actively doing something to help other women. It felt good’(HTCET 179). She had a desire to climb the Eiffel Tower but cancer spoils her plans.

The meta-synthesis of cancer studies and liminal experience reveals about the life of ‘terminally ill cancer patients’ engagement with their mortality’ (Wirth 1) the phenomenological studies of the experience of living with the awareness of having terminal cancer. Wirth and Willing found out in their phenomenological study that the structure of death awareness whilst living with terminal cancer, ‘gives a novel idea about experience of life and death at the threshold’ (Wirth 1). The results suggested that liminality takes a person into, ‘an experiential space from within which terminal cancer patients encounter a new relationship with their existence. Liminality offers opportunities for both connection (e.g., with the natural world) as well as disconnection (e.g., from loved ones and others who still have a future) and therefore contains the potential for suffering and distress as well as for joy and a sense of fulfillment’ (Wirth 1). Lara Blaine also goes through such experiences.

The three phases of liminality are highly conspicuous in Elizabeth Hein’s cancer narrative *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower*. Elizabeth Hein, an American novelist is herself a brave cancer survivor. She experienced catharsis by writing the fictionalized version of her reality. Lara Blaine, the protagonist of the novel, is the inner reflection of Elizabeth Hein. Lara Blaine is a working professional. She is an expert in predicting and forecasting the prices and sales of metals, mines and ores for her company. She is a thorough introvert. As an individual she works well but she can’t stand her colleagues who are nose, poking and exploitative. She has not developed the ability of working as a team. She wants to stay away from everyone. She had been a victim of child abuse which has turned her personality as a shy, introvert and suppressed one. Cancer breaks the complexes that she is suffering from since her childhood.

The diction of cancer narratives is also suggestive of the liminal condition. Like, Hein’s novel begins at the Cancer Centre and the first chapter is titled as, The Colors of Cancer. The first line of the cancer narrative is, ‘Ellery Cancer Center protruded from the hospital’s facade like a glass tumor’ (HTCET 1). Calling the window glass as a glass

tumor itself reveals her mental condition. Lara's pre-liminal stage begins with a, 'Kafkaesque voicemail' (HTCET 1) that told her, 'to report to the reception lobby by 7:00 for my 9:00am appointment' (HTCET 1). The language of cancer narratives is scary. The linguistic analysis of the very first page of the novel reveals that the diction generates tension and nervousness in the readers. The voicemail is termed as, 'Kafkaesque'(HTCET 1) because in the novel *The Trial* by Franz Kafka, the ordeals of Mr. K begins with a strange incident on Mr. K's birthday, early in the morning. The first ordeal's consequence was a series of further mysterious incidents and unknown charges on Mr. K. Till the end Mr. K. didn't know why, how and by whom he landed into that mysterious trouble. By his thirty-first birthday he died. Similarly cancer has no definite answers. It is still a mysterious disease and the patient feels that he/she is going into an unknown territory.

Further, the phraseology of the first page is filled with scaring adjectives like, 'nervous murmuring,' 'strange specialist,' 'people waiting in line,' 'robotically,' and 'red waiting room'(HTCET 1). Lara calls the people in the cancer hospital as, 'clot of people'(HTCET 2). The doors are red, the hospital has color coded areas that further scares a newcomer or an initiand. A neophyte who has to go through difficult rites of passage. Similarly, Lara can be called a cancer neophyte. She was just a normal person the day before. Her rituals would be cancer rituals. The cancer rituals would be performed by doctors and nurses in the cancer hospital under the scary radiation chambers filled with radioactive material. Her separation from other human beings shall be marked by her treatment in isolated and insulated radioactive chambers. The radioactive material that she has to drink will make others stay away from her for a while because the radioactive liquid has not only made the body impure but a step further, a dangerous body. The nurses and doctors will also not touch her for a few days. Everybody will have to maintain some distance just like it happens to the initiands in the ritual process as illustrated by Victor Turner.

The cancer rituals break the normal routine. The ambience of the cancer rituals involves frequent check up, examination with strange tools, radiotherapy, chemotherapy, the glove, the throw away gowns, the exchange of strange and mysterious looks between the nurses and the doctors-that further subjects the initiand to question his/her current

status. The readers can only speculate about what the liminal cancer sufferer goes through. The cold metal examination table on which the patient has to lie still, the doctors and nurses appear like eagles hovering on a prey. The process of examination by doctors and nurses while looking at the damaged cells inside the body and exchanging of strange glances afterwards and the words that the doctor say while their eyes talk otherwise leaves the initiand into a state of neither here nor there i.e. neither among living nor among the dead.

In the pre-liminal phase, the first visit to the cancer hospital fills Lara Blaine with a strange sense of non-belongingness. She describes the floor of the hospital as, 'worry worm carpeting,' the seats as, 'faded couches sagging under the weight of their occupants,' (HTCET 2) 'despair but all in green,' the fellow cancer initiands are referred to as, 'yet to speak to a soul,' because she is avoiding talking to anyone. She fears that she may hear some scary story of cancer. The first visit is terrifying and compels her to feel, ' I don't belong here (2), I am not like these people (2). She tries to calm herself by mental reassurance, ' I am fine.' (2) Lara Blaine behaves like a confused neophyte who is unaware of what is going to happen to her. What shall be the next course of action? How will the doctors and nurses behave to her? As an initiand into the world of cancer she feels like she has entered into an unknown territory.

She tries hard to reassure herself that she is fine. She consoles herself by telling, 'So what if you have weird periods' (HTCET 3). She was confident about her physical abilities because she is among the regular gym goers. Every evening after work she used to go to the gym. There she used to work out on different gym machines. One of the cycling machines had the settings in terms of speed. Lara always used to keep setting off the stepper at Eiffel Tower i.e. high speed. So, symbolically speaking she used to say that she climbed the Eiffel Tower daily and the title of the novel is also inspired by that. Her course of journey takes a different turn when one fine day she falls unconscious at the gym and is taken to the hospital. Her initial examination creates doubt about suspicion of cancer and since then everything changes as she has to visit the cancer hospital frequently. Her actual liminal phase begins from this vantage point. Her situation is similar to what Van Gennep has described, 'the liminal phases of rites and passages as

the rites accompanying every change, of place, state, social position or age' (Schwartz & Stein 55). Her state, place and social position changes after cancer enters into her life.

Initially, in the first few visits to the hospital Lara avoids people because she is not ready to identify herself with the Cancer Communitas. She reads a novel to avoid looking at people. 'My book friends would protect me from the room full of bewildered people clutching their itineraries like shields against bad news' (HTCET 4). She even stays away from a couple whom she thinks we are emanating, 'the stench of fear'(3). Lara Blaine wants to avoid the new reality that has entered into her life since accepting reality and transition management is not easy. But as Bridges and Bridges say in their famous book *Managing Transitions*, 'Practicing transition management skills taps into innate wisdom that you have sharpened through the years and gives tools and methods for learning new ways' (Bridges 14). Lara also learns coping mechanisms but it takes her almost a year and the camaraderie of her friends helps her to cope up with her new found condition. Cancer not only strikes her body but it opens a Pandora's box for her psyche. The psyche that she was suffering from complexities due to childhood sexual abuse by her step-father Dale. When for the first time a nurse tries to examine her pelvic region, she feels uncomfortable.

She even gets a shock when the nurse asks her about how many sexual partners she had, her mouth goes dry, her abdomen clenches because, ' the old sense of terror slithers up her spine' (5). Her childhood had been ravished by Dale so ruthlessly that she was never able to come out of these scars to the extent that she considered her body as a piece of shame. She always felt that she was 'an ill placed piece of furniture' (HTCET 6).

Although Lara had already faced a trauma and in order to overcome her past she had immersed herself into her work. Home, gym, office and dinner from a Chinese restaurant was part of her rigid daily routine. But the revelation of cancer comes as a blow. In fact it brings out all the suppressed bad memories just like a volcano. When the nurse reveals the report of the second medical test she thinks as if she has not heard properly, 'but I didn't remember her actually saying the word cancer. I would have remembered the word cancer. Cancer had taken away my grandparents'(HTCET 6). As an initiand she goes into shock when the nurse reiterates that,' it is cancer. We had hoped

it was pre-cancerous. I'll send off some tissue samples to pathology to tell us if the cancer has spread beyond the cervix itself' (HTCET 7).

The nurse tells her many things but due to shock Lara doesn't hear, 'beyond cervix before my mind shuts down again'(HTCET 7). It is highly difficult for Lara to accept her condition. 'Cervical cancer but it was just a false positive' (HTCET 8). This is the point from where she moves into liminal space. She is now the other, neither living nor completely dead. She is in that liminal space, 'from where a character journeys while on the way to something new' (Diana 1). So now she has no other choice but to accept her new found condition and she will have to move on to her cancer journey. Lara is pushed to her condition unintentionally. Diana C Lacy also affirms that one might be pushed into a liminal space, perhaps tricked or forced but a character in a novel rarely ventures there purposely'(3). Lara Blaine is thrown into the liminal space suddenly.

Turner has also identified that, 'liminality served not only to identify the importance of in-between periods but also to understand the human reactions to liminal experience' (Diana 3). So the analysis of the text, *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower* clearly reveals that the liminality experienced by the cancer sufferers is more obvious and transformative in nature as compared to the transformation in cultural ritual process. It is also found that the liminal condition created by cancer, 'plays an essential role in character growth as a space where decisions must be made' (Diana 3). After initial refusal to accept cancer, she had to make decisions about the next course of action although it is not easy but the spontaneous cancer communitas that she makes with Jane helps her in learning the coping mechanism. After cancer confirmation Lara comes out of the medical checkup room and takes the elevator in which coincidentally she meets Jane who is a sixty year old businesswoman having lung cancer. They exchange information about their cancer condition. Lara is yet an initiand so she is disturbed. With every floor the elevator falls, Lara feels a heat rising inside her. Her belly burns with the thought, ' I have cancer' (HTCET 8).

She is bewildered and confused. She always feels a burning sensation in her chest. After the confirmation of cancer she is highly baffled. In the hospital lift she hugs her backpack on her chest tightly. She is scared and frightened. Jane shoves her shoulder, 'Are you all right? You're frightening me' (HTCET 9). She cares about her, 'I can't just

leave you in hysterics. Would you like to get a cup of coffee or something’(HTCET 9). But even in her bewildered condition all that Lara wants is to go back to work. In the past several years she had found escape in work so that she could forget her past that was full of abuse and loneliness. As Jane was already into cancer she understood the bewildered status of Lara. So she takes her to have a cup of coffee. Lara Blaine looks at her keenly while having coffee. She comes to know that Jane is a successful businesswoman in her sixties. She looked like as if she has accomplished everything. She didn’t look like a person with cancer’ (HTCET 9).

Jane pushes her into a conversation so that Lara can get some counseling like it is expected from an elderly woman. Both of them share about their cancer conditions and talk about the packet of information given by doctors to them about their respective cancers. ‘This thing looks like the prospectus of a pre-school, not so you have a potentially fatal disease’ (HTCET 10). Their conversation surrounds their hopeless cancer condition. It also looks like some pain narrative is going on. During the conversation Jane keeps on coughing; she even admits that, ‘I thought I was prepared to hear bad news, but I guess you’re never fully prepared for news like this’ (HTCET 12). Jane also tries to know about Lara’s life, family and friends because after all cancer needs palliative care also. When Jane asks, ‘Do you have kids?’ (HTCET12). Lara replies that she is single and all alone. She tells Jane that her, ‘mother lives up north. We’re not close’ (HTCET 12). Henceforth onwards Jane becomes empathetic towards Lara Blaine. It is due to the help and camaraderie of Jane, Vanessa and the Chinese woman at the restaurant that Lara was able to come out of her confusion, complexes and her bewildered state. Her bafflement at the office is sorted by her boss, Ms. Vanessa. Her obfuscated mental state is handled by the nurses whom she meets during radiation therapy sessions. Although initially Lara refuses to accept any help but her liminal conditions shapes personality.

Turner proposed that, ‘Liminality served not only to identify the importance of in-between periods but also to understand the human reactions to liminal experiences’ (Diana 3). The human reactions to cancer experience has a recurring pattern in all the five selected cancer texts but flow from one phase to the other phase brings about massive change in their mental makeup. Cancer revelation throws them into a liminal space and

after the incubation period of their mental attitude they develop mysterious possibilities and even realize how humans can move beyond human capacities. Illness of this nature acts as a disruption. Not only it affects physically but also it becomes a threat to the people who are earning for themselves and there is no one around them to help them financially. Illness of this kind brings disability as well. Bury rightly says that any illness, 'is a discontinuance of an ongoing life' (2) Charmaz also claims that, 'Illness may revise our conceptions of what is changeable and we may be forced to change the premises upon which we plan and evaluate our lives' (Charmaz 2).

A person's opinion about future also changes. Lara Blaine had the habit of going to Lucky Lee's Chinese Restaurant after the gym in the evening. The restaurant owner lady was very warm towards her. After Lara's cancer revelation Lara's attitude changes. Mrs. Lee asks her, 'Can you wait a few minutes. Do you have time?' (19) 'I don't know. Do I?' (HTCET19) was the mental talk that she did. Here she questions, 'the continuity and inner coherence' (Hyden 53). Just a few decades ago cancer was a hushed up disease. Even today many people do not divulge the actual cause of a person's death if it is due to cancer. While some other people just say, he/she is suffering from 'C', because for some even uttering the name of the disease may carry a bad omen. Writing about cancer in a fictionalized form, more vigorously is a recent phenomena. Cancer narratives have educative value because it conveys knowledge and ideas about illness' (Hyden 54).

Concerns about pain management, healthcare and voices of the patients have also given rise to the field of Medical Humanities. It is pertinent to mention that not only the length of life but also the quality of life is also equally important. The physical component of life and the mental component need to be looked into in a holistic manner. Education is important for removing stigma associated with serious illnesses. Novels like, *When Breath Becomes Air* gives the readers an insight into the life of a doctor suffering from cancer and how is it difficult for even doctors to deal with such diseases. Besides, narratives also help in bringing awareness among people so that they become sensitive towards giving social support to patients during traumatic and post-traumatic stages of cancer. In order to make the cancer sufferers less isolated, social sensitization is important.

Chronic illness is also a social reality hence instead of hushing it up, the cancer narratives have developed an empathy and an insight into the better understanding of actually what a cancer sufferer goes through. Like Lara Blaine in addition to the stress of cancer fears that she may lose her job. Letita is her boss at the office. She is an exploitative and bully kind of boss. Lara Blaine works silently for her. She prepares well researched PPTs for Letita and she doesn't even seek credit for her work. She fears disclosing about her cancer in the office. Everybody starts suspecting that Lara is perhaps on drugs. Her colleagues also spread rumors that Lara is taking drugs and partying hard late at night hence she is missing office meetings. In fact Letita complains to Vanessa about it. Lara wanted to keep her cancer a secret. But she always looked pale, weak and disoriented due to the stress of cancer and people take it otherwise. Lara fears that she may be fired from the job if she reveals about cancer because having cancer means having disability in the eyes of common masses.

Letita complains about Lara's mysterious disappearance from the office more often than usual. Chronic illness disrupts job, employment and many a times it acts a threat to financial security. Lara is fearful because she thinks she may be fired for her absence from the office. She is thrown into a liminal space by cancer. Her liminal space is filled with pain, fear and a sense of insecurity. As a working professional the identity of being that of a successful working professional gets strongly attached to one's personae. Lara Blaine is diagnosed with cervical cancer but all she wants is, 'to go to work and study the possible market effects of a direct hit rather than drive to the hospital that morning to get a CT scan, 'before her procedure that afternoon (HTCET 24).

It is all because she has been so attached to her work that she doesn't want to break her routine. Her work is an escape from her terrible past. Work gives her the financial support which she can't seek from anywhere else. She doesn't know who her biological father is! Her mother was a truant. Her grandparents loved her but they died early due to cancer. Lara is not married nor has been able to have a boyfriend because her step father's made her a rape victim early in her childhood. She is so scared of making any physical relation with anyone. She is scared of her own body. She feels uncomfortable even when the nurses touch her thighs during the medical examination. She is always in an ambiguous state. She thinks, 'I wonder how many of them knew what

was going to happen. I know what's happening to me and I'm still walking in there. Free will is a bitch' (HTCET 104).

Cancer is that transitional point for Lara Blaine that erupts and brings out all the past mental complexes, bad memories, childhood trauma and the identity crisis of being a child of an unknown man. Cancer reminds her that she is lonely, scarred and isolated. Cancer hits her body as well as the recesses of her mind forcefully. Hyden also asserts that, 'Chronic illness forces us to face fundamental existential, moral and psychological issues, these overshadow the whole of our lives and calls into question our individuality, competence, identity and life projects' (Hyden 56). Lara's life projects are shattered. Since she has cancer in her womb, she considers herself as damaged goods and which man will prefer to marry a damaged goods. Moreover, 'people pity young women' (HTCET 31) suffering from cancer as compared to men.

So the liminal space that cancer brings into her life forces her to revisit her past and assess her present with a renewed attitude. The leftover time can be managed only if she reconstructs her life and cleanses off her past negative memories. The whole year after the introduction of cancer in her life, compels her to make decisions about herself but before that she has to understand her real self. Cancer brings a condition of loss of self and it requires a replacement with a renewed self. Cancer subjects her to question, 'Who am I? What is my real self? What is my fundamental identity?' (Welber 3). Disruption may not always be bad in fact it may reorient an individual if he or she is willing to do so. In the selected cancer texts, it was found that cancer acts as, 'a vantage point from which all other events are viewed and to which all other events are related' (Hyden 57). Not only the events, 'the ritual transitional phase, induced by liminality is vital in a human's understanding of his humanity and his spirituality' (Kouakou 182).

Elizabeth Hein's fictionalization of her personal cancer journey acts as an, 'unmatched window into her subjective experience' (Ochberg 1). It also shows how a person has made an image of himself. Cancer narratives are powerful expressions of pain, helplessness but yet resurging the will power of hoping against hope. These narratives edify and shape the manner about how a person should conduct his life. What an individual should actually own and what he/she should disown.

Hein has articulated the narrative of her suffering and she has given voice to her pain. Her narrative has become the shared space of experience for other such cancer pain voices which have not been written but do exist in reality. For those who are not into this condition become aware of the value of time given to them. Paul Ricouco, a French philosopher says, ‘time becomes human,’ in the pain narratives, ‘to the extent that it attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence’ (Ricouco 52). Cancer narratives recreate a temporal context that had been lost and thereby takes on meaning as part of a life process. Liminal and liminality offers, ‘interpretive strategies in readings’ (Kouakou 180) of cancer texts. Human understanding, through the lens of liminality offers, ‘a dialectical process between the continuity of life provided by social structures and the discontinuity engendered by the in-between space or phase which ultimately turns out to be an anti-structure’ (Sharma 110).

Lara lived a life of constant fear till she met her final fear of death in the face of cancer. Cancer breaks her chain of her past fears of the sexual abuse by her father. She comes out of her cocoon when Jane counsels her to address her social issues and her psychological issues rather than running away from them. Liminal experiences help people in embracing their personal issues and it also helps in resolving them. In fact they try to find humor even in this painful state, ‘tell me what is going on in the big world. My oncologist has put me under house arrest. He says my blood counts are too low and I can’t risk getting exposed to any germs’ (HTCET 257). A new dawn of understanding pushes them to cross the threshold, ‘look he can’t hurt you anymore. Today is a new day. You can’t go back and change it. You have to move forward’ (HTCET 209).

In *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower* Lara Blaine had to forgive her mother, her step father for being cruel throughout her life. It is because the common human grudges hold no importance to a dying person. Lara and her friend Jane decide to accept their condition and leave the blame game. Reading Buddhism also help them in grounding themselves and accept their microcosmic existence in the macro cosmos. *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower*, also explores the importance of friendship and feeling of sisterhood for the less painful journey of a single woman through cancer. The *communitas* formed by fellow woman sufferers helps her in overcoming the trauma caused by cancer. It is also an example of spontaneous *communitas*. Turner explains spontaneous *communitas*, ‘as

being generated between individuals who share and experience liminality together' (Enders 9).

James Hall also illustrates that, 'fraternity or sorority pledges, military recruits in basic training, persons who share hardships together, and participants in extended process oriented group psychotherapy'(36). In the novel, HTCET, Lara Blaine and Jane form a spontaneous *communitas* and try to help each other out and share their hardships brought by cancer. In her office also Vanessa stands besides her and tries to cure her childhood trauma of sexual abuse by her step father Dale.

Cancer patients have to go through a lot of embarrassment also, every time Lara Blaine has to lie on the gynecological examination table she feels awkward, 'Can't they talk to me? Why do I always have to be on my back with my feet up in the air?' (HTCET 69) Not only this the nurse tells that every time she will come to the hospital she will have to take radiation in the pelvic region. 'You are here to talk to the doctor about receiving radiation to the pelvic region. Do you understand what that means?' (HTCET 69) On the other hand she even applies dark humor to her condition, when the doctor says, ' Before we proceed with your treatment plan, what are your concerns about radiation therapy'(HTCET 73). She thinks, 'Why do I have to do this? Will the radiation beams melt my insides? Will I glow?' (HTCET 73) She only expects bad news from the doctors. 'So far, every time someone has looked inside me, it has been bad news' (HTCET 73).Lara Blaine's job is also affected by regular visits to the hospital, she accepts this change as initiands who are confused by the new found situation that, 'I'll never be able to concentrate now'(HTCET 77).

Judith Collins calls Hein's novel as a great book, 'What a great book! A moving novel of healing redemption, raw emotion, overcoming adversity, with realistic lovable and flawed characters' (HTCET 73) She further claims that she fell in love with the character, 'I loved the strong women in this book so impressed, as quite the page- turner and hard to put down. Elizabeth Hein has just made it to my favorite author list. 'She writes razor sharp and does not think I have ever laughed so hard' (Collins 1). Lara journey is a profound personal journey of suffering and evolution. At the outset, she is stuck in a mundane and unfulfilling life, symbolizing the pre- liminal phase.

However, as Lara embarks on her quest to climb the Eiffel Tower, she enters the liminal phase, characterized by uncertainty and a break from her routine. This transformative journey serves as a rite of passage, pushing her to confront her fears and redefine her identity. As she ascends the Eiffel Tower, both physically and metaphorically, Lara undergoes a profound inner transformation, emerging on the other side as a changed individual, reflecting the post-liminal phase. The novel beautifully illustrates how the theory of liminality is applicable to Lara Blaine's character development and her journey towards self-discovery.

In a nutshell, in the first phase of liminality, Lara's life is relatively stable and predictable. She is unaware of her illness and is leading a routine, albeit unfulfilling, life. This phase represents a state of normalcy and routine, which is disrupted when she receives her cancer diagnosis. The liminal phase begins with Lara's cancer diagnosis. At this point, she enters a state of ambiguity, uncertainty, and transition. Her life is turned upside down as she confronts the harsh reality of her illness and embarks on a challenging and transformative journey through treatment and recovery.

During this phase, Lara experiences a profound sense of disorientation, as her identity and priorities are reshaped by her battle with cancer. She is neither completely healthy nor terminally ill, existing in a state of in-betweenness. The post-liminal phase in Lara's cancer journey comes when she reaches a point of recovery or acceptance. This phase represents a return to a new sense of normalcy, but it is not a return to her pre-diagnosis life. Lara has been profoundly changed by her experience with cancer and her priorities, relationships, and outlook on life have all been altered. This phase reflects her reintegration into society with a transformed sense of self. Lara's cancer journey, as portrayed in the novel, exemplifies the theory of liminality is applicable to understand the emotional and psychological shifts that individuals undergo when faced with a life altering diagnosis. It underscores the idea that such journeys can be seen as rites of passage, with distinct phases of transformation and reintegration.

Threshold is an integral phenomena in all the selected cancer narratives. It is experienced by all the characters suffering from cancer. Mary Ann Caws has talked at length about the threshold. She claims that, 'the present awareness of liminality and its applications is of far reach. This broad threshold includes at once the multiple notions of

border, hinge, and articulation—Jacques Derrida’s concept of brisure or the joining break neatly resuming those meanings— of beginning and exit, of the place for crossing-over, and of the link between inside and out’ (Caws 15). Brisure means broken or fragment and it is clearly visible as to how a person breaks away from the past identities, experiences, relations and ideas about life itself and faces the current situation that demands some decisions on the part of the sufferers. In all the texts taken for the study, it was found that the characters have to break away from all the past experiences and evolve a new meaning of life. They had to break the mental shackles created by society.

Denis Hollier in *Against Architecture* mentions Janus, god of the threshold, ‘who presided over beginnings and the one who watched over passages’ (62). In *The Prophetic Moment*, Angus Fletcher observes: ‘Roman religion associated the oracular threshold with the deity, Janus. He is a god of gates’ (48). Of specific interest to this study is the attention given to the threshold in Janine Carrel’s *L’expérience du seuil dans l’oeuvre de Julien Green* in which she discusses Green’s work as a threshold itinerary - ‘itinéraire du seuil’ (85). Victor Turner in *The Anthropology of Performance* points out that the English word ‘threshold’ ‘is derived from a Germanic base which means ‘thresh’ or ‘thresh,’ a place where grain is beaten out from its husk, where what has been hidden is thus manifested’ (Anthology 92). So in those terms, the threshold brings about the real self through spiritual awakening by the third stage i.e. post-liminal stage.

The outcome of the study shows that liminality is highly applicable in case of cancer narratives. The moment the characters come to know about their condition they automatically become the other, the people who are now carrying lethal cells inside them. They act like, the initiand who has to go through the same process of separation through hospitalization, doubtful doctors, chemotherapies, radioactive materials etc. While others around them carry on with their day to day life like going to school and office, all they are left with is rounds of check up, discussion with doctors, dilly dallying between hope and despair. Pain, suffering, anxiety and chaos mark their days and nights. ‘Liminality is such a concept - a prism through which it is easy to understand the transformation in the contemporary world’ (Horvath 1). Hence the transformation of cancer sufferers studied through the lens of liminality gives deep insight into their lives.

The formative and transformative significance of liminality is proved through the current study of cancer narratives. The lived experience of cancer transforms the sufferer irreversibly. The sudden eruptions, the change in the cultural and social dimensions because of, 'the sudden existential crisis in people's lives, loss of meaning, ambivalence and disorientation' (Hovarth 1) acts as a fundamental and basic experience of liminality in cancer. The set boundaries be it social, cultural or legal or mental are broken by the liminal beings as, 'you can see a person's whole life in the cancer they get' (Murakami 1).

Thus the study comes to the analysis that liminality has proved as a powerful tool of analysis for understanding cancer narratives. The tenets of liminality as suggested by Victor Turner and Van Gennep aptly help in analyzing the liminal experience in the five selected Cancer Narratives. The cancer sufferers are liminal beings who can neither claim to be living nor can claim that they are completely among the dead. Since their doctors are also not ready to give them clean chit all they can do is to wait for death. But their pain and suffering and waiting incessantly for death allows them to ponder about life, living, death and dying. Human relations help them in overcoming their dilemma. Their fellow sufferers help them in alleviating their suffering through an attempt of decoding the meaning of life. Liminal phases of the cancer sufferers are well evident in the narratives.

Besides liminal experience during treatment, the liminality of survivorship is also a crucial aspect of their journey. The transition of the characters of the selected novels from active treatment to survivorship represents a liminal threshold where individuals grapple with the reintegration into a semblance of normalcy. Survivorship is not a return to the pre-diagnosis state in the novels but it is a renegotiation of identity and life by the characters. The liminal space lies in the ambiguity of what survivorship actually entails, as individuals the sufferers and survivors like Hazel, Lara, Alan and Eric navigate the unknown territory of post-cancer existence. Liminality in the selected texts is also deeply interwoven with the psychological and emotional dimensions of the cancer patients. The emotional liminality is conspicuous in the oscillation between hope and despair, courage and fear, resilience and vulnerability. The liminal spaces visible in the novels becomes a

crucible for emotional transformation where the characters confront the fragility of life and the profundity of human resilience.

Emotionally, the threshold is a constant companion and the ever-present specter of mortality loom large. Relationships undergo a transformation as well. The dynamics with family and friends shift, as loved ones grapple with their own emotions and struggle to provide support. For cancer sufferers, the emotional threshold is not a one-time crossing but a continuous navigation through a landscape of highs and lows, hope and despair. Hazel confesses, 'Who am I to say that these things might not be forever? Who is Peter Van Houten to assert as fact the conjecture that our labor is temporary?' (TFOS 308). She accepts the fact that, 'All I know of heaven and all I know of death is in this park: an elegant universe in ceaseless motion, teeming with ruined ruins and screaming children' (*The Fault in Our Stars* 308). Lara experiences in the end as if she has, 'stepped out of my chains, and into the sunshine' (HTCET 311). So they become conscious of the power of the present moment.

Existentially, the threshold experience is deeply profound. Questions about the meaning and purpose of life take center stage. Facing mortality head-on forces a reevaluation of priorities, values and life goals. The existential threshold becomes a crucible for personal growth, a space where individuals grapple with their identity and the legacy they wish to leave behind. Tessa Scott while counting her last breathes on her death bed in the hospital broods about, 'a little bird moves a mountain of sand one grain every million years and when the mountain has been moved the bird puts it all back again and that's how long eternity is and that's a very long time to be dead for' (*Before I Die* 311). She knows that she is a part of the life cycle of the universe and the universe has its own time clock and its own plans. Beyond the threshold she understands that the humans are just a small grain in the large scheme of the universe.

In the midst of the journey, the support system plays a crucial role. Caregivers, medical professionals and support groups become guides through this unfamiliar terrain. Their presence helps cancer sufferers navigate the complex emotions and challenges, making the threshold experience less isolating. Like Landon Carter is not a cancer sufferer but he falls in love with Jamie. He is entirely different from Jammie Sullivan, an antagonist of the protagonist. When suddenly he gets to know that such an angelic soul is

suffering from Leukemia, the news shatters him and shakes him to the core. As he sinks into the information, care giving time acts as a threshold, and proves to be a point of no return. Even after forty years of her death he recalls, 'It is now forty years later, and I can still remember everything from that day. I may be older and wiser, I may have lived another life since then, but I know that when my time (death) eventually comes, the memories of that day will be the final images that float through my mind' (*A Walk to Remember* 169).

Remission can be a threshold of hope, a light at the end of the tunnel. However, the fear of recurrence in some narratives like *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower* lingers, creating a delicate balance between optimism and the pragmatic acknowledgment of the uncertainties that lie ahead. Lara's fellow cancer sufferer Jane advises Lara to enjoy her life to the fullest. She implores upon her, 'to live the whole experience, not just the hard parts' (*How to Climb the Eiffel Tower* 315). Beyond the physical and emotional thresholds, the journey involves reconciling with the scars—both visible and invisible as in case of Lara Blaine. The physical scars left by surgeries become tangible reminders of resilience and survival. Emotionally, the scars run deep, impacting mental health and challenging one's sense of self. The process of healing becomes a metaphorical crossing of thresholds, a gradual reclaiming of one's life and identity. The threshold experience extends beyond the individual to encompass the broader social and cultural context. Stigmas surrounding cancer persist, adding an additional layer of complexity to the journey. Breaking through societal expectations and stereotypes becomes a societal threshold that cancer sufferers often find themselves navigating.

In conclusion, the liminal experience of cancer sufferers is a complex and multifaceted journey. It involves navigating physical, emotional and existential thresholds that shape and redefine the individual. The support system, personal resilience and societal attitudes all play crucial roles in this transformative process. Ultimately, the threshold experience becomes a narrative of survival and the human capacity to find meaning in adverse circumstances.

CONCLUSION

The thorough study of the selected Cancer Narratives through the lens of liminality comes to a final conclusion that the protagonists in each novel pass through the three phases of liminality and the transformations that they go through are permanent and irreversible. Liminal experiences though do not cure cancer but it helps them in coping with it, that too with a renewed understanding of life. It does not bring a superficial change; it acts upon the inner metamorphosis of the personality of the characters by breaking down the old held belief systems that are actually ingrained in one's personality by the society in which one lives. It includes a person's identity, knowledge of the self, hi/her wishes, desires, dreams, aspirations, relations, goals, jobs, image of the self, body, above all one's existence as a whole. The onslaught of cancer and the course of liminality breaks all the existing shelves, webs, cocoons and delusions in which an individual lives throughout their lives.

Lethal disease takes the characters on the threshold of life and death and the choices that they make at the verge of whether to live or be like a dead person while still being alive; the characters make a conscious decision of accepting life, minute- by-minute: day-by-day as it comes to them. They start living in the present moment and try to draw the best out of it. The conscious awareness of time and space acts as a teacher for them that makes them understand the value of each passing minute, otherwise cancer or no cancer, the body is going to perish one day.

The research comes to the conclusion that the dominant component is obviously liminality that keeps the cancer sufferers of the select cancer narratives in a neither here nor their state. They are caught in-between life and death although life is itself transitory in nature. All human beings go through liminality, it is conspicuous in people's lives. People are never the same, what they were yesterday and every day individuals add something new to their personality and delete that is obsolete. But in cancer patients, liminality enters with a force, it is strongly conspicuous, it is strongly visible and observable too. Humans as a community, and as individuals go through liminality. Without fluidity, without dynamism, without change humans cannot move further.

Change is the law of nature. Change is the only constant feature in the lives of the living

beings. Earth as a planet is also constantly moving thus bringing seasonal changes.

The cyclical change in nature and the rituals that were in sync with nature were the things noticed by anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep, the guru of the theory of Liminality and as a true disciple Victor Turner further elaborated upon the theory of liminality, he elaborated upon the middle phase of the liminality. The nature of liminality is well expressed through Cancer narratives studied, in fact it is more evident in the chosen novels as compared to other areas or disciplines. The individuals find themselves in liminal situations when they first time reach the hospitals due to some minor sickness. When they are examined and the doubts are raised by the doctors, that very moment they are pushed into a chaotic circle. What will happen next? Why am I the only one who got cancer? How can it happen to me? Why me? are the common questions that first appear in the minds of the characters.

Victor Turner's theory of Liminality also leads to the conclusion that the oscillation between living and the doubt of being about to be extinct; being normal yet being abnormal at times is very painful for the sufferer. Physical pain is accompanied with mental trauma, doubts and uncertainty about everything inside and around. The cancer sufferers often become unconscious due to the impact of the disease which makes their position as a person who belongs to the in-between stage. So the oscillation between binary oppositions is very much present in all the texts that were under study and even the cancer texts that are beyond the domain of this study. Since life itself is not stable but yet a so-called normal course of life is not that much painful, the common incidents and the changes in life do not destabilize a person to the extent cancer does. The key element in cancer narratives clearly reveals that the destabilization of the ongoing course of life and liminal experience helps as a coping mechanism to understand what's going on in the life of the cancer sufferer.

The common course of actions and reactions that the characters go through in all the five selected Cancer narratives corresponds to the redefined transitions that bring an internal permanent change in their outlook about life and about themselves. Liminality is gaining ground day by day in other disciplines as well. It is not restricted to culture and literature. The present study is helpful in developing an understanding of the obvious

presence of Liminality in cancer sufferers. The identity transition is highly visible along with the chaos, disorientation, anxiety, ambiguity and hanging in-between life and death. The level of human interaction also changes and there is a huge difference between what it was before cancer and what it is after cancer.

The study of liminal journey of the characters proves that these characters in the select cancer narratives go through the three phases of liminality viz. pre-liminal, liminal and post- liminal. The major changes, transformations, transgressions and ultimately internal metamorphosis that is observed in the characters, occurs in the middle phase of their disease. Victor Turners tenets about the middle phase are perfectly in the middle phase of liminality in cancer sufferers. Uncertainty accompanied by pain adds a new dimension to liminal experience; otherwise in Turner's study of liminality on Cultural practices and rituals, the liminal phase is not accompanied by severe pain. In the case of cancer sufferers, the liminal phase is highly conspicuous and the threshold that they face is the threshold of life and death. So the study of cancer narratives through the lens of liminality adds a new dimension to liminality itself.

The present research thesis comes to the conclusion that the theory of liminality as proposed by Victor Turner is very applicable, in fact, it is forcefully visible in the select cancer narratives. The five cancer narratives viz., John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars*, Jenny Downham's *Before I Die*, Elizabeth Hein's *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower*, Stevie Turner's *A Rather Unusual Romance* and Nicholas Sparks' *A Walk to Remember*, are based on fictional stories of cancer suffering and is written by five different authors at five different point of times yet the undercurrent of liminality is running parallel through all the novels. The tripartite structure of liminality also runs its course like the infinite lines that are equal and parallel. The characters pass through stability to ambiguity, from normality to disorientation, from being here to neither here nor there state. Besides the main characters, the caretakers also experience pain, chaos, frustration and finally redemption in the face of cancer.

The current research work encompasses the conclusive study of exploration of the three phases of liminality in *The Fault in Our Stars* (John Green), *A Walk to Remember* (Nicholas Sparks), *Before I Die* (Jenny Downham), *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower*

(Elizabeth Hein) and *A Rather Unusual Romance* (Stevie Turner). The five novels talk about different characters but the sword of cancer hanging on their minds is common in all the novels thus their journeys, small triumphs and trials are similar in nature. In the first chapter a thorough background of life and voluminous contribution of the authors in English literature is given in detail. The chosen novels are very popular and three of the novels have been adopted into films. The films based on *The Fault in Our Stars*, *A Walk to Remember* and *Before I Die* has broken box office records also.

In the second chapter, a detailed analytical study of the theory of liminality has been done. Besides the contributions of Arthur Van Gennep and Victor Turner, numerous theorists of liminality have been studied. The other theorists like Homi Bhabha, Mihai Saparsiou, Sandor Klapcsik, BojrnThomassberg, Brunswick, Karl Jaspers, A. Szokolczai, Carl Rogers, Les Roberts, Hazel Andrews and Graham John have added different dimensions to the theory. Some of the critics and scholars have widened the scope of the theory by applying it to different areas and disciplines like Kenneth Olwig, Timothy Carlson, Naoko Takiguchi, Isabel Berenguer, Hugh Mathews, Babak Taheri, Jesse Peters, Vanessa Rutherford and with the passage of each day this theory is being applied to areas that witness transition, separation, space (like the balcony, hotels), threshold and places that belong to neither this nor that(like the beaches). So by now liminality has achieved multidimensionality across cultures, locations, axiological values and epistemological understanding.

As a theory, it was found that liminality and its valuation has far more implications in both the concrete and abstract world of existence. Especially with regards to its methods, validity and scope, it covers all aspects of human and non- human life (like architecture, corridors, lounge areas, seashores etc). During the course of research, the theory found its application to refugees who are in neither here nor their situation, to the war affected people of Ukraine and the most glaring examples of Covid. During covid the scenario was such that once if somebody is taken to the hospital, the family members and the sufferer felt the clouds of uncertainty of moving out alive. Many people died just because of the thought that they have Covid and it has no sure shot cure, they gave up, they were not able to cope up with their pre-liminal, uncertain condition because of the fear of death.

When a theory is applied, it is not necessary that all the tenets of the selected theory may be applicable to the selected works but yes the preliminary study of the works and the theory itself exposed the possibility of many aspects that were applied in the selected works. Moreover literature is not Mathematics where one has to follow a formula strictly. Literature is fluid, literature is dynamic in nature and its interpretation changes with every new reader. Cancer narratives provide a fertile ground for the applicability of liminality. The study is successful in exploring the dilemma and evolution of cancer sufferers very well synchronizes with the three phases of liminality.

The elements of liminality have been well extracted in the study titled, **‘Bewilderment and Liminality: An Analysis of Selected Post-2000 Cancer Narratives.’** The characters Hazel Grace, Augustus Waters, Issac, Patrick, Caroline Mathers, (*The Fault in Our Stars*) Tessa Scott (*Before I Die*) Lara Blaine (*How to Climb the Eiffel Tower*), Alan and Erin Mason (*A Rather Unusual Romance*) and Jamie Sullivan (*A Walk to Remember*) face bewilderment and go through the three liminal phases in various degrees according to their age, gender and circumstances. Too much bewilderment, chaos, confusion, disorientation and ambiguity forces them to come to a consensus with life and the passing time. They gather courage with the help of *communitas* and cross the threshold to reach a consensus and come to terms with the time and space left to them by nature, time and space. Liminal experiences mark the most revolutionary and irreversible changes in their lives.

During the course of the study, the first Chapter was dedicated to the life and contributions of all the five brilliant authors viz. John Green, Nicholas Sparks and Jenny Downham, all the three of them have remained New York’s bestsellers and have an in-depth understanding of the human psyche. John Green and Sparks are a rage among young readers across the world and most of their novels have been adapted into films which have in turn earned billions of dollars. Green and Sparks are male American authors. It was a good decision to select such widely read and acclaimed authors. *How to Climb the Eiffel Tower* is written by Elizabeth Hein, an American female author. The popularity of the selected novels also reveals how many people identify themselves with their works.

The thesis added variety to the study by not only taking American authors but

British authors as well. Jenny Downham and Stevie Turner are female British authors thus both the gender voices are included in this thesis because it was found that body image and fertility in case of cancer is more pathetic in case of women cancer sufferers. The bewilderment that women face is grosser than the male sufferers. So diverse voices were encompassed in the present study to make it versatile in nature. Besides, the select five authors, portray a sensitive portrayal of the painful liminal journey of the characters suffering from cancer. The author's detailed life span and contribution to society through literature has also been given in detail. It will be of great help to the scholars in future who will take up these authors for study through some different theory or idea. So, a lot of new and analytical information is added for further studies on the selected authors.

Chapter two of the thesis extensively explored the historical and theoretical Framework of Liminality. The wide study of the theory and the theorist comes to the conclusion that human life and the ecosystem around him/her is under constant liminal changes. Liminality is associated with the evolution of humans and the cyclical natural changes are also an integral part of it. Life -death-birth-marriage- childbirth-before life rituals-after life rituals across the continents have some common undercurrent. The human consciousness, its innate behavior, instincts have some universal elements no matter whether the person is born in Africa, Asia or in America. Certain responses, certain ethos, certain experiences are universal in nature irrespective of where a person was brought up.

The detailed study of this theory reveals that it is most suitable for the study of cancer narratives. In fact, since 2019 when this theory was chosen there were not enough research studies available on cancer narratives but due to covid pandemic a renewed interest in the study of illness narratives has gained ground and now many studies are available from different perspectives on this theory on the internet. The study also found that the study of illness narratives, pain narratives, healing and pain management is also becoming popular. Similarly, the theory of liminality has become very popular in so many other diverse fields recently. Academia is now studying it from a geographical perspective besides psycho-social perspective. It is no longer restricted to art, culture and tribal studies only. The study also concludes that liminality was always there in the society and among individuals because change is the only constant thing that has been

happening since human existence. The formation of structure and anti-structure is still conspicuous. The creation of the World Wide Web followed by the creation of its anti-structure; the dark web is the latest example. The tik-tok community, the twitter community, the influencers, the facebook community, the Insta fans, the Telegram groups and likewise there are so many new communities that are forming with each new invention visible around us. The corporate community is another glaring example and it is not a secret anymore how this corporate illuminate community is monitoring, controlling (the online data) and deciding the future of the rest of the community in the world at large. Bewilderment, chaos and uncertainty due to new emerging scenarios is also visible. Formation of new political orders, breaking of old political order at the global level is another example. The under current liminal dynamics are the same. The desire for experience, change, transformation and metamorphosis irrespective of whether it is good or bad is inherently part of human existence as well as part of the mother earth that is always moving, changing, evolving and progressing. Thus, the analytical study of the theory of liminality revealed the multifaceted aspects of Liminality in diverse areas and fields.

Chapter three, four and five are based on the content analysis of the select novels. The focus was on the life expectancies and final revelations through the lens of liminality. It was found that just like in rituals the *initiands* when he/she goes through some life changing phases initially is bewildered by the rituals that he/she has to go through and uncertainty and ambiguity marks this stage. Similarly, in case of cancer sufferers this stage is prominently visible and uncertainty and ambiguity is accompanied by shock also. It is traumatic for a person because cancer is still painful, mysterious and its treatment involves a lot of difficult phases. The medical fraternity has not come up with its cure and final explanation about why cancer happens at all. The cure for many other lethal diseases has been found out but not cancer. The cure for cancer is still at the stage of trial and error. Radiations leave permanent scars on the body as well as the psyche. So the very word cancer for a patient brings horror till date.

So, cancer stories move a step further, compared to the rituals of an *initiand* where he/she is separated from the society for a while, here the separation occurs at the mental level and at the physical level the characters in the novel like Tessa, Jamie, Hazel and

Augustus had to drop out from schools. Parents had to be extra careful, amputations is another danger, wearing cannula, frequent absence from job, draining of finances, insecurity, frequent visits to hospitals, doubtful faces of doctors, nurses and examiners, sympathetic faces of neighbors, separation from friends and a big question mark over one's survival is what the initiands face in the pre-liminal phase. So we can call it heightened liminality. The pre-liminal phase of an initiands under some cultural practice or ritual is not accompanied with danger on life while in cancer narratives, the cancer sufferer is separated from normal routine of life. The pre-liminal phase is accompanied by shock, trauma, chaos, confusion and doubt about one's survival. It is shrouded with the possibility of impending death. Extreme pain causes agony and suffering.

In all the five texts, the common response of the initiands was, 'Me and cancer? Why me? What's the reason? What did I do to get Cancer? What's my fault? What about my dreams? I won't be able to do what others are doing? I'll not be able to enjoy life, no sex, no marriage and no love life? I'll leave this world without leaving any mark? etc and along with this their predicament is heightened by no confirmed answers from the doctors. It was found that the dilemma of a cancer initiands is greater than the dilemma of the initiands under some cultural ritual. Slowly and gradually they become liminal entities.

The content analysis of all the five texts reveals that after the initial shock in the pre-liminal phase, the characters come to terms with the onslaught of growing cancer. Their frequent visits to the cancer hospital makes them understand that they are not the only ones who are facing cancer. Initially, they abhor making friends with other cancer patients because initially they didn't even want to accept their own cancer. As they evolve and accept their condition like the initiands in other cultural rituals, they form a *communitas* by befriending people like them, like Hazel befriends Augustus and other cancer patients in the Cancer Support Group, Alan befriends Erin Mason, Tessa is comforted by Adam and Zoey (they can be called as pain pals), Lara Blaine is given unconditional support by Jane who herself has severe cancer problem whereas Jamie Sullivan is given unconditional love by her bitter rival and classmate Landon Carter. The blend of unequal, homogeneous and status-less cancer sufferers finds equal partners in *communitas* that offers comradeship, support in the transient phase and the courage to

face the broken social structure due to cancer. Human inter-relatedness is broken in structured society due to cancer but the same human-interrelatedness is felt in the *communitas*. Thus the study concludes that the formation of *communitas* of cancer sufferers acts as the anti-structure. The formation of anti-structure comforts them from the maltreatment and over-sympathetic attitude of the structured society.

It is clearly established in the third and fourth chapter that the formation of *communitas* helps the characters in moving towards the liminal phase. Together they develop an understanding of their own conditions and find out the coping mechanisms. After trials and errors; after troubles and tribulations; after painful ordeals and nightmares they arrive at inner peace despite the rising physical pain. After a very long process of ups and downs, hopes and desperation, and a lot of mental churning; after breaking the boundaries of constructed identities and established norms about life, they arrive at the understanding of life and move into the post-liminal phase as an evolved personality. It is also found that in the post-liminal stage, they arrive by overcoming the threshold of the fear of life and death. The liminal process gives them the ultimate spiritual understanding and they evolve as calm and composed personalities.

Through numerous examples from the five texts it has been established that the characters go through the three important liminal phases as laid down by Arnold Van Gennep and the detailed focus on the middle phase i.e. liminal phase has been done in the third chapter and fourth chapter of this thesis as postulated by Victor Turner. The texts on cancer narratives are strewn with the complexities, ambiguities, and in-between position. They neither consider themselves as completely alive because the doctors deny any assurance and nor are they dead because the breath and the consciousness is still there. In fact they often face near death experiences before actually dying. The fear of the dark unknown world after death haunts them in the liminal phase. The existential crisis while living is brought out in this research work.

To be precise, the objectives of the current research study have been achieved by detailed qualitative study and content analysis of the cancer narratives. The following are the Research Outcomes of the current study: The qualitative study of the five select texts establishes the applicability of liminality though it appears in varying degrees in the five texts. The thread of liminality stitches the select cancer narratives and hems it into one

liminal experience. The study confidently claims that cancer narratives are a step further than the cultural rituals on which the theory was first established. There is an obvious, natural and forceful presence of liminality in cancer narratives. Liminality in the end comes as an empowering tool for the cancer sufferers. The initial acute phase of liminality witnesses' disorientation, despair, a sense of loss, loss of control over oneself and a sense of uncertainty enters into life. The middle phase i.e. the liminal phase acts as an adaptive phase where one develops the endurance to face the ongoing threatening cancer condition.

The period of suspended liminality dominates and during this period the cancer sufferer constructs and reconstructs meaning of their experience by means of liminal experience. This phase makes the person move into the post liminal phase that causes irreversible changes in the life of the characters suffering from cancer in the selected novels. The experience of liminality sticks to the person throughout the rest of the period and the attitude of a person towards his body and his image of self and thus giving the will power to deal with the disease. The attitude towards death and the fear of entering into some dark unknown world is also brushed aside and the focus is kept on living in the present with each passing minute that is available at one's disposal.

The study found that the theory of Liminality has swept the imagination of the academia in recent times to a greater extent so much so that even Bungee Jumping, which was considered just a sport for adrenaline rush, is being studied deeply through liminality. It has its roots in Victor Turner's study on African tribes. Bungee Jumping is African tribal sports in which the tribal adults actually make a teenager do this sport. The boys of the tribe at the puberty stage are tied with a tree's elastic rope from the feet and later the fellow is dropped from a great height. This sport externally looks like a sport for fun but actually it is meant to test the hormonal level of the male teenager entering into adulthood. It was also meant to push the young teenage boys into adulthood. In terms of liminality it marked the ceremony of pushing a young boy into limbo when he is neither on the land nor completely in the air. He is thrown in nether land for a brief few seconds with an intention of moving him into the world of adulthood that requires courage to deal with greater responsibilities of life. It is one of the numerous examples that were discovered during the study. In fact, it is difficult to mention where one can not apply

liminality. It can be observed on land, on the seashores, the balcony, the main gate of the house, the borders, the Diaspora, the twilight and many other new areas are being explored by researchers.

Besides important revelation, it was found that liminality is an integral part of human existence. Everything that is in this universe is in the state of flux, fluidity and fluctuation. The moving time, the moving space, the moving planet brings change, transition and thus cause evolution of the universe and individuals are a miniscule part of the whole gamut of the scheme. Their thinking, their rituals and rites are an expression of making a balance with nature. The study of the theory also revealed that unconsciously, human societies across the continents have developed the customs and traditions that mark the major milestones of one's existence. For example the birth ceremonies, welcoming of a baby into the new world (community), *annaprashana* (offering food for the first time), tonsuring of head (*mundan* ceremony), *upnayana* (going to school for the first time) the *janeyu* ceremony (Gennep mentions about it in his treatise *Rites de Passage*), puberty rituals, marriage rituals, fertility rituals, death rituals, after death rituals (like *Masak*/monthly ceremony after death and *Chaubarsi* ceremony held after four years of death) etc. All these and other innumerable ceremonies are an expression of various human societies and their coping mechanisms for dealing with the internal and external changes that they experience.

Important theorists have joined the bandwagon of liminality studies from other domains of theories as well, for example Homi J Bhabha is very well known as post-colonial theorist but he has also taken the help of liminality to define the hybrid existence of the Diaspora. He also elucidates the condition of immigrants through liminality that the Diaspora experiences, 'neither here nor there,' condition when he/she has to settle in a foreign country. His famous book *Nation and Narration* discusses the in-between state of the Diaspora at length. Similarly, the studies on Transgenders, the mythological figures like Ardhnarishwara, Narsimha (half lion- half man), the amphibians, the Cyborgs, the people who live on the borders, the refugees, the cross roads, the hotels, the spiritual people in trance etc has added multi-dimensionality to the theory of liminality. Even sleeping, which is the state of being neither alive nor dead, is also seen intriguingly from the point of view of liminality. Schiller's Theory of Art as a third reality is being

studied under liminality. Death has generated a renewed interest because it is the threshold of existence and non-existence in terms of the physical sense. Ghosts are also being looked at as the spirits that belong to nowhere. Thus, liminality as a theory is becoming popular day by day and it is touching wider areas of study through academia.

The present study also observed that liminality has enriched the understanding of cancer narratives. Cancer forces change in one's personality forcefully and vigorously. Liminality shows its dynamic presence in the characters suffering from cancer. The neither here (alive) and nor there (dead) state brings irreversible changes. The liminal phase of the cancer sufferers in the select texts clearly shows their disorientation, in-betweenness and ambiguous state of being. The threshold allows them to reach a point of maturity. With each passing day, new research studies in different disciplines, be it management, architecture or even higher education are adding volumes and new dimensions to the understanding of liminality. A research scholar is also now called a liminal being. Until and unless he/she is offered the degree he/she remains in a state of limbo.

Authors in high demand are often those that touch the inner chords of millions of people. When readers identify themselves with the characters of the texts then only an author becomes popular or acceptable. Along with this, when the readers observe that the text touches the universal ethos and deeply reflects the common human predicament of existence like death, birth, pain, separation, love, loss, friendship, loyalty, compassion etc then only the author gets wider readership and attention. Besides there are so many inner desires of human beings for romance, fantasy and imaginary love that may not exist in reality or allowed by tight knit societies but people do desire for the same if that is reflected in the texts that phenomena result in wider readership. The authors studied in the thesis are one of the most popular authors in the present times. John Green and Nicholas Sparks, both American authors have broken all records of being successful authors. The adaptations of their novels into films also broke box office collection records. It was a good decision to select the cancer narratives written by these authors. Their stories are inspired by real life cancer sufferers though they have added fiction which is actually a forte of a good author.

Similarly, Jenny Downham's *Before I Die* also became a rage after its publication

and its adaptation into a movie brought a lot of fame and money to the author. Although it received criticism because her story showed teenager Tessa taking drugs, it was part of a dying person's wish to experiment with all the popular things that were meant for a teenager in contemporary western society. The critics didn't notice the experience in finding the hollowness of those contemporary practices. Her spiritual awakening at such a tender age comes only due to her experimentation under the cloud of impending death due to cancer. The ideology and contextual understanding of the text reaches to a conclusion that cancer breaks the illusions about the self. The study reveals that people consider the image given by contemporary society as the image of the self. Like in India, in recent years, the middle-class society started following a one child norm so slowly and gradually most of the couples started following the same norm whereas two generations ago every couple used to produce at least a dozen children.

So individuals normally follow the course of action that the structured society and the ecosystem around them teaches although with a little variation in sparse cases. The entry of cancer breaks the chains of those constructed norms. The study of the texts reveals that the characters had to break the structures of the ideologies, hopes, aspirations and even dreams which were given by their families, friends and society, during their liminal phase and come out as a phoenix. Liminality helps them in coming out of the web of the false ideas that are constructed by societies and nature, the body, the cells inside the body have nothing to do with it. The body follows the rules that are still not fully discovered. It is perishable and that is the ultimate truth that the characters accept at the threshold of life and death.

Elizabeth Hein, the American woman author and Stevie Turner are also popular authors and their cancer narratives have also gained ground in recent times. They are certainly not record breakers but the study is not focusing on the commercial angle. Elizabeth Hein is a cancer survivor and her novel is a fictional account of a woman suffering from cancer. Stevie Turner is also a cancer survivor and she has also taken the help of fiction to tell her cancer story. Thus, the texts are either the fictional stories of cancer of the self or the story of someone close to the authors like Sparks' real sister died of cancer and John Green looked after teenage cancer sufferers in the hospital in his early years.

Though the stories of cancer are written by five different authors yet the string of progress is uniform except a minor difference due to age (teenage have different notions about life while Lara, twenty-nine has different notions and Erin and Alan are quite mature but the worries are same) and the differences due to gender but the universal ethos about life are same. The narratives can be studied in continuity starting with Tessa's (16) cancer journey followed by Hazel and Augustus's, (16 & 17) Jamie and Landon (17) then Lara Blaine (29) and concluding with Alan and Erin who represent the age group of 40 and 50. All the narratives follow, to a great extent, the same course of actions, responses, experiences and final evolution. The content, the tripartite structure and the in-between state shows striking similarity. The content analysis of the texts reaches to a conclusion that the narratives are inter-related and follow a common pattern because cancer gives the same experience it is only the response of the sufferer that may be either succumbing to the pressure or come out as a phoenix facing cancer with courage, determination and new found wisdom due to liminal experience.

In all the texts, the sufferers enter as neophytes and initiands then after the initial shock communitas is formed and after a great deal of mental churning during the liminal phase the characters face the in-betweenness state. They remain the same for the rest of the society. Their physical condition limits the possibility of following the ordinary daily routine. So, it was found that the characters change in each novel but the context remains the same: how crossing over the threshold under the impending existential fear of being extinct due to rising uncontrolled cancer cells in the body.

In the selected cancer narratives all the characters grapple with bewilderment and situational complexities during their cancer journey. The initial diagnosis itself acts as a bewildering and disorienting experience. The characters have to confront the sudden onslaught of a life-altering illness. The uncertainty surrounding treatment options, potential outcomes and the impact on daily life intensifies bewilderment, chaos and ambiguity. Situational complexities arise as the characters have to navigate the impending challenges associated with cancer. Treatment decisions pose dilemmas because of the harsh side effects on the body internally as well as externally. Financial burdens, strained relationships and changing roles within families add layers of complexity. The emotional toll is also profound, with characters experiencing fear, grief

and a sense of loss with their former selves.

Identity crisis is conspicuous during this process that further adds to bewilderment in their lives. The unpredictability of the illness introduces a constant element of surprise, making it difficult for characters to plan for the future or find stability in the present. Societal perceptions and stigmas surrounding cancer contribute to the complexity of characters' experiences. They face judgment, misconceptions and pitied looks of others that adds a layer of challenge to their internal struggles. They not only face the physical manifestations of cancer but also the crisis in relationships and overall their own sense of self. The journey becomes a nuanced exploration of resilience, vulnerability and the human capacity to find meaning amidst chaos. In conclusion, cancer narratives delve into the intricate web of bewilderment and situational complexities that major characters face. Beyond the threshold, the characters try to leave their legacy and seek to make meaning of their experiences. It involves leaving behind a lasting impact on others, finding purpose in care giving and contributing to awareness. They also try to understand and deal with the challenges beyond the threshold. It involves a holistic approach and spiritual outlook towards life.

The current study on cancer narratives offers several benefits to the society. The study of liminal stages of cancer sufferers has added a new angle to the study of selected cancer narratives which are although fictional but are actually inspired by the life of real cancer sufferers. It also raises awareness about cancer, its impact, and the importance of early detection and prevention. Cancer narratives empower patients and survivors by giving them a platform to share their experiences, coping strategies, and insights, which inspire others facing similar challenges.

Each study in this field helps in reducing stigma. It helps in fostering more open conversations about the disease and its effects. Researchers gain valuable insights into the patient experience, treatment preferences, and side effects, which inform medical practices and improve patient care. Narratives highlight gaps in healthcare systems, leading to improved policies and support services for cancer patients and their families.

The sharing of stories provide emotional support and a sense of community for those affected by cancer which help in reducing feelings of isolation. Cancer narratives

educate the public about risk factors, prevention, and the importance of regular screenings. Studies on cancer narratives inspire fundraising efforts, leading to increased funding for cancer research and the development of better treatments. Each study raises awareness and helps in the fight against cancer, benefiting individuals and the society.

Fictional narratives have the power to evoke strong emotions and empathy, helping the public better understand the emotional and psychological aspects of cancer. It also allows for creative exploration of cancer-related themes, providing unique perspectives that can lead to innovative insights and solutions. Fictional portrayals challenge stereotypes thus fostering more compassionate attitudes and behaviors.

Fictional narratives educate the public about cancer, its risk factors, and the importance of early detection, raising awareness on a broader scale. Characters in fictional narratives showcase a range of coping strategies, offering readers or viewers a toolkit for dealing with their own experiences or supporting loved ones. Family members and those who are involved in palliative care get inspiration and examples of support systems and ideas for care giving to cancer sufferers. Fiction also explores complex ethical dilemmas related to cancer, encouraging critical thinking and discussions about topics like treatment decisions, end-of-life care, and genetic testing. Inspirational fictional stories of cancer survivors provide hope and motivation to those facing the disease in real life. Fictional narratives also inspire real-world research by prompting questions and investigations into various aspects of cancer, from medical treatments to societal responses. So, research on fictional cancer narratives enhances public understanding, empathy, and engagement with the complex issues surrounding cancer, contributing to a more informed and supportive society.

The study of cancer narratives gives voice to the silent sufferers of cancer in several ways like cancer narratives fictional or non-fictional allows individuals to share their personal experiences, validating the challenges, emotions, and struggles that they face. This validation is especially important for those who may feel isolated or unheard. Sharing their stories through narratives empowers cancer patients and survivors to assert their experiences and perspectives. It provides them with a platform to express their thoughts, fears, and hopes. Cancer narratives foster a sense of community among those affected by cancer. When individuals read or hear similar stories, they realize they are not

alone in their journey, which acts as a source of comfort and support. Cancer patients and survivors raise awareness about the disease and advocate for better support, research, and policy changes. Their stories inspire action and positive change. Cancer narratives generate humanizing affect. This leads to more open conversations about cancer and its effects, reducing discrimination and misunderstanding. These narratives offer valuable insights into the patient experience, treatment options, side effects, and emotional challenges. Researchers, healthcare providers, and policymakers can use this information to improve care and support services. The present study of cancer narratives amplifies the voices of those affected by cancer, ensuring that their stories are heard and valued. It helps create a more empathetic and supportive environment for cancer sufferers and contributes to a broader understanding of the disease's impact on individuals and society.

Cancer narratives reflect how societal attitudes, beliefs, and approaches to cancer have evolved over time. The narratives document the progression of medical knowledge and treatment options for cancer. Cancer narratives also highlight changes in the emotional and psychological support available to cancer patients. Like in America a number of charitable organizations and fundraising organizations have been established.

This provides insights into the evolving understanding of mental health and emotional well-being in the context of cancer. Research studies on cancer narratives show how the dissemination of information about cancer has evolved, from limited resources in the past to the abundance of information available today due to advancements in communication technology. The study of the narratives offer a window into the changing dynamics of human society, medicine, and culture in response to the challenges posed by cancer within a more limited time frame.

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