

## Patriarchy and the Children's Resistance in *Weed* and *Matilda*

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### Abstract:

*The article makes an assessment how the children in both worlds- East and the West are affected by corrupt social order. While in Weed Paro Anand observes how terrorism, being one of the vilest sort of corruption, ruin the life of the children in affected regions of Kashmir valley, Matilda is an experience of the sufferings of a young female child who attempted to protest the corruption of her father single handedly. There is a callous indifference of the elders to the distress of the tykes in the post colonial society. Its volume is so much that the elders do not dither to accept this to be a part of their civilization to be corrupt, to be violent with the children and misbehave with them which restricts their freedom and whatnot. They are so much hardened by the socio-economic pressure that they can't even differentiate right from the wrong. The children are perturbed by the plight and try out some devices so as to get out of these iniquities. While Roald Dahl has for Matilda some magic ability to resist her corrupt father, Paro Anand sends Umer to the creation of his dreamland where he is allowed to inhabit a life of a human being free from terrorism and from being weeded out.*

**Key words:** Terrorism, Patriarchy, Corruption, Magic world, Resistance

The impact of technological advances, the widening economic gap between the West and the East and socio-economic crisis deepening further in the over populated third world countries have contributed many new themes- often the conventional one in a modified shape and flavour- to the Children's literature in the post-colonial period. The impact of controlling a country for the economic exploitation of the native people and their land for a long spell is also prominently felt in the literature of the post-colonial period. This has led to Post-colonialism questioning the traditional modes of cultural perception. Some wealthy men of both the colonised countries and the colony have become greedy how to inflate their individual capital by evil means. This way of deceiving commoners for personal gains is not new in the post-colonial period but the intensity and methods of chiselling have been modified with the advances of technology. The intensifying socio-economic crisis has given birth to a new ill especially in the third world countries – the rise of terrorism.

What is the point in writing a children's novel? One of the intentions, as Reynolds has pointed out, is that children literature prepares 'its readers to become the next generation of adults by introducing ideas about how the society around them is organised , how that society fits into national and global perspectives, and how it might function in the future.' (96) Further, the picture of the family narrated in the children's novels is an important source of information about the operative socio- economic and political forces shaping the family and how the mechanism of adjustment works regulating the understanding of what families are and their mode of functioning. To these features may be added the point that in children's literature, there is a 'friendly adult- storyteller who knows how to entertain children'. (Reynolds 52) It should also be taken into cognizance that historically 'children have not written what had been published as children's literature because they have little access to the equipment necessary to do so- - - (Reynolds 24) Therefore 'it is adults who create children's

literature, and they do so according to their expectations of what childhood should be like.'(Reynolds30) The author Paro Anand , herself was fifty plus when she published her novel, *Weed* , holding several key positions on child welfare under the government of India. Like Anand, Roald Dahl has been referred to as one of the greatest storytellers for children of the 20th century. He was seventy two when his novel *Matilda* was published.

So, a study of children literature presumes that an adult litterateur who is sensitive towards the child psychology and is unhappy with the ongoing socio-economic affairs of the world portrays a patriarch accountable for all the ills of the society in general and that of the individual in particular and seeks resolution to the conflict through magic that ensures a better world for the common man symbolised in the child. In other words, children's literature is by and large a critique of the existing society.

The relationship between the child and the patriarch in a bourgeois society is often found to be a relation between the coloniser and the colonised. In a male dominated society, a patriarch is the powerful father image who is responsible for all the wickedness in the society. To counter this villainous patriarch, an image of a threatened child is portrayed who carry on its resistance against this in its own way until the child is benefitted through magic. As regards the term 'resistance', Stephen Slemon quotes Cudjoe and Harlow and explains 'resistance is an act, or a set of acts, that is designed to rid a people of its oppressors, and it so thoroughly infuses the experience of living under oppression that it becomes an almost autonomous aesthetic principle. Literary resistance, under these conditions, can be seen as a form of contractual understanding between text and reader, one which is embedded in an experiential dimension and buttressed by a political and cultural aesthetic at work in the culture.' (Mongia75-77)

The article is a study of the two novels *Weed* and *Matilda* - taken as samples from India and Britain- to examine how some of the major themes like terrorism and corruption that are prevalent in the post colonial society are dealt with and how the child protagonists get rid of their oppressors- the corrupt authoritative patriarch. Thus this review may be better termed as a sharing of political and cultural experiences with the children. There is a feeling in both the novels that despite their best efforts, this resistance against the patriarchs goes ineffectual unless s/he is backed by a magic-spell assuring the additional power crucial to confront the patriarchal authority. The child-heroes enter their magic-world after they encounter frightening figures and experience hostility in their daily lives. They try to tackle these appalling challenges with the help of magic. This world of magic plays a crucial role in the psychological development of the children too. A critical reading may further corroborate that both the novels, like any other children's novel, are camouflaged criticism of the ills of the post colonial society.

South Asia being the most populated in the whole world remains one of the most vibrant areas in this modern world. Because of the unusual pressure of population, the number of problems is spiralling up almost every day. The literature of this zone represents these ills of the society meticulously and artistically. These evils include terrorism which is in its worst form these days in this part of the globe. Common people are doubly affected by terrorism. They are the victims of terrorism; they are also threatened and tortured by the anti-terrorist groups or the government forces. Children are no less affected. They are the real victims if anybody in their family is found involved in the terrorist activities. This issue has been incorporated by authors in this part of the globe as a theme for their children literature. *Weed* by Paro Anand is one such novel giving a poignant picture of an affected family and how the

children of the family are treated as weed after their father joins the *Jihadis*<sup>1</sup> in Kashmir.

Based on the problem of insurgency in Kashmir, *Weed* evolves a theme stating the precarious condition of the children for their father becoming a *jihadi*. The patriarchal world – both within the family and outside- creates a frightening atmosphere for the child, which the child encounters devising several methods of resistance and ultimately takes the help of magic to resolve the crisis. But as he goes through these physical and mental adversities, he constructs an identity of his own.

The novel *Weed* begins with the status of weed in social life. The narration is carried on in a rather Dickensian way- the older *Umer* is looking back at his childhood days. ‘ - - - I don't clearly remember now.’ (Weed13) *Weed* records the distress of the child when his father leaves home one night to join the *jehadis*<sup>1</sup> - to fight against the Indian force for *Azad* Kashmir. The women and the children are the worst sufferers in this tumultuous situation. As a child, *Umer* is treated socially as weed because his father joined the *jehadis*. He protests, though not publicly, against this unmerited social treatment, ‘But why? I didn't do anything!’(Weed1) He is fearfully curious about the whereabouts of his father because a child has no right to know about the movements of its father in a patriarchal society. The worried child asks to himself, ‘I wonder where he sleeps at night? Does he have a place to take a refreshing bath, a place to eat a meal served with chilled water and hot pickle on the side?’(Weed2) He follows his father unnoticed as the father leaves his home finally in the dark night. One of the customs in a patriarchal society for the sons is ‘And aren't sons forever following in their father's footsteps? Even if those footsteps are blighted? So, this weed, filled with bitter bad blood, was cast

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<sup>1</sup> *Jehadi*- The term originates from *Jihad* meaning "struggle". This is an Islamic term. It is a religious duty of Muslims. Kashmiri rebels who fight against the Indian force to establish an independent Kashmir are called *Jehadis* by them.

out. (Weed3) This curiosity and his disobedience of his father is a sort of resistance that the child inherits from his father who too is breaking the law although for a different purpose. And in the process, the construction of his identity has also begun. Within a set of contradictions, Umer seeks to discover himself- what are his preferences and areas of disliking. The child is taken aback when he finds his own father breaking the law- the same father who advises 'us to be good, always to listen to our teachers, obey our parents. (Weed 7)

In a patriarchal society, the child grows up ruled by the father image both within home and outside in the society. This is the known meaning for the child and the direction too. Now with the departure of his father from home and his joining the *jehadis* is a new experience for the children at home. This has led the mother to shoulder a new assignment at the absence of the customary patriarch. The mother takes up the charge of the family trying to protect her sons from the ills of society but both her sons mistake her to be another punitive patriarch within the family restraining them to do what they like, and forbids them to follow their father's footsteps. Both to the children and to their mother, this new experience carries different meanings. This new cultural experience entails drifting away from the set-tradition. Raymond Williams states

A culture has two aspects: the known meanings and directions, which its members are trained to; the new observations and meanings, which are offered and tested. (Badmington83)

As is the case, this change of guard in the family brings in another shock for the children. As his *jehadi* father departs and the child Umer sits outside the house in a chilly night, he experiences a shocking experience- the changed behaviour of his mother. His mother did not come to him as usual to request him to go inside. He feels she might have forgotten about her child as she is disturbed. And then, all on a sudden, he reads an authoritarian patriarch reverberating in his mother's voice-

“We will survive this,” she said suddenly, in a low voice. So different I had to turn to look at her to confirm it was my mother who spoke these unusual words, said with a determination I didn't know she had. (14)

This cultural shift makes *Umer* bewildered. He searches for meanings to such conduct of his mother. Shouldering all the responsibilities of the family, she wants to set a new family culture. So ‘she has wiped out every trace that he ever existed, that he was ever a husband and father here.’(Weed 29) This new state of affairs gives *Umer* and his mother a new meaning of life. A new role has been assigned by the society and they are now to be tested to what extent they can survive so far as their social and financial subsistence is concerned.

The child too wants to break the law set by his father. But he finds his mother dissenting against such a sycophantic decision of his father.

I hate what you've become- can't you see that? Don't you even care that your wife can't stand you? Does it not matter that you can't look your sons in the eye? You can't answer their innocent questions - you hide behind lies and deceit--- (Weed6)

This patriarchal world has quite a few levels of relationship with its children. At one level patriarchy limits to father - child relation within a family. Then, at another level, it is his mother in the absence of the father, to take the responsibility of the family.

At one point of time, the child *Umer* too wants to take over the charge of the family to combat the patriarchy within and outside his home. ‘So, suddenly, in a space of a few hours of one night, my childhood was gone. Gobbled up by the departing back of my father. And I was man of the house. Ready or not, here I come.’(Weed 23) But there too, he smells his mother stands in between vying for power within the family. ‘You'll not drop out of school, son. We'll find a way. I want you to study, to get ahead (Weed 23)

Apparently, this advice is anticipated from a mother to her son. But beyond these caring words, lies an innate craving of the mother to take the reins of the family and be the sole bread-earner - whatever be her job. The child has to surrender to the aspirations of his mother after a brief exchange of words with her. But he can't be stopped altogether by his mother. When, one day, he finds his younger brother sharing with one of his friends the family secret, that of his father joining the *jehadis* and his leaving home, *Umer* intercepts *Umed*.

Suddenly, quite unexpectedly, I felt like a father to him. Knew I'd have to protect him, no matter what. Knew I'd do anything for him. 'I'm sorry', my little brother, it just, it hurts me that he won't talk to you anymore. That he treats you like something dirty. I can't stand that, d'you understand why I do this? (Weed25)

The social-patriarch, the patriarch outside, relentlessly attacks *Umer's* family in the name of discipline, assistance and what not. Even within the close relatives of *Umer*, the treatment changes. The relatives try to inculcate a beggar's culture upon the beleaguered family. They are provided with old clothes from *Khalla's* family. But *Umer* 'hated getting old clothes'. (Weed30) He felt it to be abuses heaped upon the crestfallen family. Not only this, *Umer* feels shocked and agitated to find his mother forced to work as a servant for their livelihood. Thus there is a persistent attempt from the hostile patriarchs to demean the family's social status from a bourgeoisie to a lower middle class family so that the family has no other alternative but to accept either servant's culture or the beggar's

'You mean -- -

- - - cooking.'

'You mean you're going to work in some one's house? Clean someone's dirty dishes? Be- - - be a servant?' The hateful word tasted bitter on my tongue. I was standing. I was shaking. This was impossible. (32)

The son is suspicious if his mother gets her due honour from her employers: '[- - -] Did they set aside food for her before they ate, or did they give her leftovers, or did they not feed her at all? - - - but even in my mind's eye I couldn't bear the images and shut down on it.' (37)- *Umer* articulates his hatred against the social patriarch as the housewife was demoted to housemaid with the departure of the father-figure from the house. As though, it indicates the importance of having a man in the family. Even *Umer's* mother has to admit that her man was a necessary evil in the family. Their father has joined the *jehadi* camp with a noble cause- to change the present social set up but the social- patriarch is too strong to be uprooted. *Umer's* mother is apprehensive that 'there are plenty of vultures who'll smell a person's hunger, sense his wanting, his longing. And they will consume him. Like vultures on a carcass, they'll strip him down to nothingness. (35) So, his mother advises him to abandon his father's path. But *Umer* makes a desperate and passionate appeal to his father who is away in a *jehadi* camp:

Abbuhelpmoneyabbuhelpmoneyabbuhelpmoneyabbuhel  
pmoney. . .(35)

The appeal is repeated four times and so closely one sentence is set against the other that it looks like a word. This is a technique for the child to raise engrossingly his/her demands without any hiatus lest a pause in-between may subside the force of passion and his intensity may not be counted properly.

Both their, social as well as emotional, standing worsens when *Umer* and his mother together go to an NGO whose job is to provide assistance to the half-orphans and half-widows. Their identity has been transformed into numbers. The social patriarchs effectively prove that both the mother and the son are liars. The dream of the mother for *Umer* to carry on with his schooling comes to an end.

Soon after, financial assistance comes from *Umer's* father from his terrorist camp through a young boy but it has

been rejected forthwith by the mother. This action of their mother makes both the sons upset. The younger one, *Umed*, wants to go to his father along with Hameed who has come from the camp of *Umer's* father but the mother, in a tone of the family patriarch, warns that she won't allow him to come back. But the adamant child leaves his home along with Hameed for his father. Soon after, the family receives the body of their father killed in a clash with the social patriarch, either the security force or another extremist group. The military officer comes in and tries to find out his terrorist connections but both the mother and her child cannot help him in this regard. The mother tightens her security for her only child, which, for *Umer*, seems to be a noose. He wants to escape this patriarchal grip. At one point of time, his mother realises *Umer* is in a stage of suffocation. So she skips her duties and takes *Umer* to Nishad Bagh for a day's outing. From the stingy environment of the tailor's shop throughout the day to the world of flowers with his mother playing a different role – it appears he is transported to the world of fairies where his mother herself is a fairy-personified. This is the world that *Umer* so much yearns for.

But this world too is interrupted by the social patriarch. A member of the extremist group to which his father belongs, comes down to *Umer* eluding his mother's eyes and gives him an envelope containing money and a letter giving him direction how to meet the extremists. *Umer* realises that even in this land of flowers, they are under constant watch by the extremists who have assured his meeting with his younger brother. The presence of extremists is juxtaposed with the flowers that symbolise innocence, purity and vigour. It's incredible that any fiendish activity can take place in such a divine ambience. But all these developments are kept secret by *Umer* as he considers his mother to be an impediment to realize his dream of meeting his brother and enjoy unrestrained freedom. Their presence is marked by a blast in that area of

which the extremists have already informed *Umer*. But he cannot escape injury. He has to lie down in a hospital-bed unconscious for fourteen days. This blast, his injuries and his lying down in a hospital bed makes his mother more and more worried and his freedom is further curtailed. He feels he won't be able to meet his brother in the rebel camp. Still, one evening he manages to escape her eyes. He has taken care of his movement and walks for a long time until he reaches *Dal* Lake, another icon of fairy-land- first one being Nishad Bagh. He passes a long, cold and strenuous night in a rejected boat. But next morning, he wakes up in a new environment which he has sincerely aspired after for such a long time. He gets good friends, a handsome salary and his most desired freedom. This fairy land defends his freedom against the social patriarch as well as family patriarch.

The relationship between patriarchs and children is not new in the children's literature but what adds in the postcolonial perspective is the presence of extremist activities and its impact on a family. How the children, in particular, are affected as a consequence of their father's involvement in extremist activities is a matter of chief concern for novelists like Paro Anand, which she tries to present from a child's perspective. Interestingly, the age of child *Umer* is not there clearly stated – not even the class wherein he has been reading. May be, it is premeditated as it is a common phenomenon to all the children in terrorist-ridden families of South Asia. But under the semblance of a children's literature, Paro Anand makes a scathing attack on the *jehadis*, the government as well as the NGOs involved in relief and rehabilitation of the distressed families, whose irresponsible deeds are causing colossal damage to the future of a country. Women have a positive role here in this otherwise ruined family. The mother of *Umer* and *Umed* tries her best to keep her sons away from their father's footsteps for she feels the path chosen by their father will help neither the family nor the society to live a healthy life

with dignity. So, instead of welcoming cash from her husband earned in a dubious manner, she prefers the hard life of a housemaid and tries to set a new cultural trend for her children. She has the faith in hard but honest living which ultimately generates happiness.

Paro Ananad creates a mother-image who upholds the tradition of honesty and sacrifice, although compassionate simultaneously to her husband as her spouse but not his activities, trying her best to protect her siblings from the external dangers personified in the extremists and in the Indian army and on the other hand resisting the temptation of herself and her sons from accepting the monetary assistance from her spouse despite their unendurable crisis. By doing so, Anand have carried on the prominence of women in the Indian culture and her role in cultivating the mind of her children.

Not so is the mother-figure in *Matilda*. Roald Dahl's novel offers an image of parents who are downright dishonest. By dint of corrupt practices, the father of Matilda earns a ton and her mother is proud to be a rich man's wife. His means are not her concern at all. It is rather Matilda who protests against the corrupt practices of her father. And so disliked by her parents, Matilda grows up in a new cultural environment wherein nobody appreciates or supports her cause. An identity of her own has thus been constructed as she pursues her fight against corruption both within the house and outside in the school.

The first part of the novel is concerned with Matilda's handling of the family patriarch and her resistance against their atrocities. Her ideas always collide with her elders. At home, it is her parents who do not like her because she has little interest in the petty worldly-affairs like watching TV, cooking, going to parties regularly, etc. Her tastes differ. She loves reading books and is always engaged in intellectual activities. Corruption and greed for money have made her parents so much apathetic that the patriarch is in no mood to

nourish the dream of his own sibling especially when Matilda cultivates a good habit of reading books. The novel shows how technological advancement has been used by Matilda's father to befool his customers and profit a huge amount. What is his business? Miss Honey tells Matilda

People brought stolen cars to your father's workshop where he changed the number plates and resprayed the bodies a different colour and all the rest of it. (228-229)

Earlier in the novel, the father shares with his son his technique of earning profit. He buys old motor cars at a cheap price and sells the same at the price of a new car using gloss and a minimum maintenance.

Sawdust in the gearboxes, the electric drill on the speedometer cables, a splash of paint here and there and a few other clever tricks and the idiots were all falling over themselves to buy. (44)

How much is the profit from selling a car? The father tells his son 'Car number one was bought by me for two hundred and seventy-eight pounds and sold for one thousand four hundred and twenty five.'(45)

Roald Dahl understands that there is a general feature in the post colonial world where a good number of the parents want to be rich by any means and force their children to follow their footsteps even if it is a corrupt one. He must be worried about the degeneration that has taken place with the advancement of science and technology in the post colonial period when greedy fathers don't hesitate to share with their own siblings their experience about the immoral means of their profits.

'Listen boy,' he said, addressing the son and ignoring Matilda,' seeing as you'll be going into this business with me one day, you've got to know how to add up the profits you make at the end of each day. (44)

There is no pricking of conscience in him about his deceitful dealings. His wife, unlike *Umer's* mother, too is proud of her

husband- the way he cheats his customers and accumulates his wealth. Only Matilda disapproves of her father's corrupt practices. The father teaches his son how to profit more deceiving the customers. For him, arithmetic learning is necessary to that extent to cheat his customers. Learning arithmetic for its own sake is what he hates. And so he does not encourage his daughter when she calculates quite perfectly because what Matilda has done is for Arithmetic's sake- widening the sphere of her knowledge.

Nobody in her family loves Matilda as she builds up a resistance against her father. So , 'Matilda is such a child whom her parents looked forward enormously to the time when they could pick their little daughter off and flick her away, preferably into the next country or even further than that.'(4) Her father is least interested to spend money on buying books for her. They hate to find their children pursuing good habits like reading books. A cultural clash is imminent. Matilda's resistance at one level is against her parents' indifference to her interest. So, in the absence of her mother, she goes to the nearby library to read books and within a short span of time completed reading all the books there. So, set in a different location, the postcolonial child has the similar experience that Umer has- the constraints to realise the dreams. Mrs. Phelps, the librarian, gives Matilda *Great Expectations* to read and notices her eagerness to complete reading the same. Matilda shares her distastes for her mother with the librarian.

I'd rather not,' Matilda said. 'She doesn't encourage reading books. Nor does my father.'

'But what do they expect you to do every afternoon in an empty house?'

'Just mooch around and watch the telly.'

'I see.'

'She doesn't really care what I do,' Matilda said a little sadly.

(10)

Her grievances and the resistance that she builds up against her parents are articulated in her remarks. The postcolonial society has many other reservoirs for entertainment. And affluent people with little education find those sources more attractive than the book. So, when the children go against the standard set by their parents, the parents harshly treat these innocent children without considering the fact that those set up disciplines may become derogatory to the child's future. But Matilda is there to resist these punitive measures which curtail her independence. Deliberately, she creates nuisance to shake off the existing patriarchal set up within the house. Whenever, there is an attack by her father on her independency, she retorts quite intelligently causing some harm to her father. She handles the matter so skilfully that it appears often that her parents are just puppets at her hands.

Matilda has been admitted late in the school. Why?

Most children begin Primary School at five or even just before, but Matilda's parents, who weren't very concerned one way or the other about their daughter's education, had forgotten to make proper arrangements in advance. She was five and a half when she entered school for the first time. (60)

Is this laxity since she is a girl child or is she very much vocal against the shoddy policies of her father? In her school too, there is the head teacher, Miss Trunchbull who appears to be a tyrant for Matilda. This social patriarch comes in clash with Matilda oft and on. And Matilda is very much unhappy with this head teacher. Matilda takes recourse to supernatural power to resist the atrocities of the head teacher. While the students like very much the presence of Miss Honey in the classroom, Miss Trunchbull is a repugnant terror for any student in the school. So, students retort in their own way. One of Matilda's classmates Hortentia says about the Headmistress:

The Trunchbull has a nasty habit of guessing. When she doesn't know who the culprit is, she makes a guess at it, and the trouble is she's often right. - - 'It's like a war,' Matilda

said, overawed. - - We are the crusaders , the gallant army fighting for our lives with hardly any weapons at all and the Trunchbull is the Prince of Darkness , the foul serpent, the Fiery dragon with all the weapons at her command. It's a tough life. We try to support each other. (102-103)

The adjectives used to explain the nature of the headmistress and their defence mechanism evidently gives the reader an idea of the amount of hatred the students share about their headmistress. Pages one after another are full of the description how Miss Trunchbull, the social patriarch she is, goes on treating the small kids viciously.

At school, students like Bruce Bogtrotter, Lavender etc. are there to reciprocate the torturous Head teacher- each in his/her own way. But ultimately, it is Matilda who, possessing a supernatural power, treats the headmistress with miracles one after another in such a way that she has to quit her job and leave the school. Of course, the novelist attempts to rationalise Matilda's miracles. Matilda has practised how to concentrate her energy in her eyes. This resulted in doing the miracles. Firstly, Matilda concentrates her will power from a ten-foot distance on a glass kept in front of Miss Trunchbull and tilts the same on the head teacher. But Matilda does not know how she has done it.

The feeling was mostly in the eyes. A kind of electricity seemed to be gathering inside them. A sense of power was brewing in those eyes of hers, a feeling of great strength was settling itself deep inside her eyes.(158-159)

Later, she lifts a piece of chalk from the table with her will power sitting in the same distance and writes something on the blackboard which frightens Miss Trunchbull so much that she leaves forever the school and the house she forcefully has occupied. But prior to this, she makes some practices in her bedroom in front of small dressing table. 'She settled herself and began to concentrate, and very quickly this time she felt

the electricity beginning to flow inside her head, gathering itself behind the eyes, and the eyes became hot and millions of tiny invisible hands began pushing out like sparks towards the cigar. (204-205) In her fight against the patriarchs – both at home and in school, she finds a friend in Miss Honey who has suffered in the same manner as Matilda. It is because of Matilda, Miss Honey gets back her own property from Miss Trunchbull.

On the second morning, Miss Honey received by registered post a letter from a firm of local solicitors informing her that the last will and testament of her late father, Dr. Honey, had suddenly and mysteriously turned up. This document revealed that ever since her father's death, Miss Honey had in fact been the rightful owner of a property on the edge of the village known as The Red House, which until recently had been occupied by a Miss Agatha Trunchbull.(222)

Towards the end of the novel we find, Matilda's father is afraid of being arrested for his cheating business and the parents with their children want to flee to another country to escape arrest. But Matilda does not accompany her parents. Instead, she stays along with Miss Honey who becomes her dearest friend. Simultaneously, there is a change noticed in Matilda. She has lost her magical power. Miss Honey tries to rationalise this incident:

While you were in my class you had nothing to do, nothing to make you struggle. Your fairly enormous brain was going crazy with frustration. It was bubbling and boiling away like mad inside your head. There was tremendous energy bottled up in there with nowhere to go, and somehow or other you were able to shoot that energy out through your eyes and make objects move. But now things are different. You are in the top form competing against children more than twice your age and all that mental energy is being used up in class. Your brain for the first time has to struggle and strive and keep really busy, which is great. - - -

'I'm glad it's happened,' Matilda said. 'I wouldn't want to go through life as a miracle –worker.' (224)

Earlier in the novel, Matilda tries to explain how she has acquired this miraculous power. At first, her anger against Miss Trunchbull leads her to concentrate her will power and the concentrated power helps her to overturn the glass on the table from a distance. Matilda now practises in order to concentrate more and has succeeded to frighten Miss Trunchbull by lifting the chalk from a distance and write on the blackboard something which frightens the head teacher so much that she becomes unconscious.

The children are opposed to the corrupt practices, harsh manners and cruelty within the family and outside. But it seems the elders are least bothered with this. There is a callous indifference of the elders to the suffering of the children in the post colonial society and the intensity is so much that it has become a part of their culture to be involved in corruption, to be violent with the children and misbehave with them restricting their freedom and what not. They are so much hardened by the socio-economic pressure that they can't even differentiate right from the wrong. But the children are perturbed by the predicament and try out some devices so as to come out of these evils. In *Weed*, *Umer* gets that desired haven in a boat man's family while in *Matilda*, the child gets refuge in her teacher's residence. Both the children have to suffer through out until they reach their dreamland. This dreamland is in reality the future world congenial for the children to live blissfully. For *Umer*, there is no miraculous power while *Matilda* depends much on her miracles to overcome her crisis. For *Umer* and for all the children like him, it is mostly the external patriarch who is to blame for the miseries, and curtailment of their freedom. In case of *Matilda*, both her parents and Miss Trunchbull, the Head teacher, are liable for her plight. Both her parents and Miss Trunchbull have accumulated money and property through ill means. In case of *Umer* too, extremists have a single

mission behind their demand for *Azad* Kashmir- to loot money and other belongings and to kill innocent people. But *Umer's* age is not clearly stated nor is the class where he is reading although there is no ambiguity with the class and age Matilda. Thus in one case the child is individualised and in the other case, it is generalised. *Umer* is any other children in a terrorist prone zone. Therefore, a sensitive reader of the two novels painfully observes how the life of a child is precarious in this corrupt, authoritarian world, the intensity and dimension of which have expanded in the postcolonial world, and the resistance mechanism put up by the children. Like all other children's novels these two impress us with the hope that our gen. next will hopefully reform the world corruption-free as these children have come out like a phoenix from the ashes of awful experiences to reach their coveted homes finally in the two novels.

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