

## **A Comparative Study on the similarities between isolation of Covid-19 victims's and war time victims of Michael Ondaatje's novel "The English Patient"**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study is to compare the similarities between isolation of covid-19 victims and war time victims in the novel "The English Patient". Comparative Literature focuses on the study of literature from different cultures, nations, and genres, and explores relationships between literature and other forms of cultural expression. Isolation of human being is the state of being in a place or situation that is separated, isolated, isolating something or someone from others or things to avoid of any harmful things to be spread or shared among people. During war many people used to lose lives and will be harmed in many aspects a lot. In other side people forced to live in isolation or in separation to prevent themselves/family from the harm things which happen around them. Michael Ondaatje's novel "The English Patient" also sparks on how the characters are undergoing in the state of isolation, detached from the society/crowd for protection and find comfort for lives during World War-II. Thus the research examines the similarities between isolation of covid-19 victims and war time victims of the novel "The English Patient".

**Key words:** Isolation, War, War victims, Covid-19 victims and comparison.

## INTRODUCTION

A comparative study: following a classic dictionary definition, comparison is presented as the act to observe two or more things to discover their relationships or to estimate their differences and similarities. In epistemological language, it is defined as an intellectual operation through which the states of one (or more) objects are checked on the basis of at least one common property (Fideli, 1998; Marradi, 1991)1, 2. Therefore, from the logical point of view, an act of comparison implies: objects (which can obviously be subjects, groups, institutions, cities, countries etc.), at least one property of objects, and the state of objects in this property and the point of time in which they were relieved. People who are positive or affected with COVID 19 can be called as COVID 19 Victims and they will be isolated in a room, in a house to stop spreading others and to protect fellow beings from the infection of COVID 19. COVID Isolation is a state of being separated from others, stop physical engagement with others, alienated from the society.

In both World War I and II many people were affected, injured, lost lives. During war people lose their living place, shelter, home and they will be moved to a new place to protect themselves from harm things happen around them. Perhaps during war people will be remained inside their house, stop physical engagement, stop movement in public places. Thus people who are affected by war can be called as wartime victims. Michael Ondaatje writing has no less sparks on war themes. Many of Ondaatje's books talks about war and post war setting. Also his novels predominantly talks about lives of people who actively participated in war and wartime livings. There is much evidence for his characters who engaged with war, isolated themselves during war and many characters have great lose in life because of war. There are many similarities between COVID 19 victims and Ondaatje's wartime victims of "The English Patient" which this study will be highlighting.

## DISCUSSION

We are living during difficult times because of the coronavirus pandemic. Those challenges can affect us both physically and emotionally. It's hard to keep the same routine when you have to physically distance from others, especially if you're at higher risk of getting really sick from the virus. That makes preparing meals a special challenge. Here are some tips that can support you and your household both physically and mentally. Do your best to eat nourishing meals, like those rich in fruits and vegetables, lean protein, and whole grains. Those foods can help keep your body and mind healthy during stressful times. Having daily schedules and routines can ease anxieties and help you stay grounded. This applies to meals, too! Try to eat at regular meal times and avoid snacking in between. If you're staying at home with other people, try to eat at least one meal together each day. It can help dampen feelings of isolation, and help you practice mindful eating. Cooking together can also help you connect with others and ease the stress. (Department of Mental Health) 3. People who are affected by COVID 19 also be given treatment in hospitals. On the process of treatment COVID patient will be given enough protein food in order to provide good health. In "English Patient", the character Almasy was given treatment and food in a hospital after the flight accident during World War-II. Here, the researcher found a way to compare treatment for COVID 19 affected people and treatment for Wartime affected people. It is evident in the book;

"During this time with these people, he could not remember where he was from. He could have been, for all he knew, the enemy he had been fighting from the air. Later, at the hospital in Pisa, he thought he saw beside him the face that had come each night and chewed and softened the dates and passed them down into his mouth" (pg-6)

As early as 1988, House and his colleagues published a landmark prospective epidemiological review of social isolation on human health 4. It was particularly surprising that social isolation was also an important risk factor for morbidity and mortality, similar to smoking, obesity, a sedentary lifestyle, and high blood pressure 5. Social isolation is a powerful source of stress both for animals and humans 6, 7. Researchers have suggested that social isolation-induced stress in

rats exhibits similar signs and symptoms as human mental illnesses (such as anxiety, depression, and schizophrenia) 8. A systematic review found relatively consistent evidence that social isolation was associated with the deterioration of mental health 9. In “English Patient” Hana and Almasy (English Patient) lived alone in an abandoned Italian villa, San Girolamo at the end of Second World War. They were socially isolated themselves in the villa. They did not have any communication with people. They had a life of isolation. Hana, the 20 year old nurse wanted to take care a man called English Patient/Almasy who was burned in the flight accident during the end of World War II. They had only way to escape from the sense of lonesomeness is reading books. It is evident in the book;

“The book lay on her lap. She realized that for more than five minutes she had been looking at the porousness of the paper, the crease at the corner of page 17 which someone had folded over as a mark. A scurry in her mind like a mouse in the ceiling, a moth on the night window. She looked down the hall, though there was no one else living there now, no one except the English Patient and herself in the Villa San Girolamo” (pg-7)

The truth is, no single preventative action holds the golden key in disease prevention within the context of proper infection control. Each action contributes significantly to the process and complements the other in disease containment. The lack of protection of face masks is actually a notion touted in part by the World Health Organization (WHO) but with all due respect, the WHO has gotten it wrong more than once 10. In “The English Patient” also the author Michael Ondaatje has described the Almasy wearing face mask (oasis reeds) knitted together. After the flight accident the desert tribes found Almasy, The English Patient’s burned body and they found wearing face mask (oasis reeds) knitted together around his face. Here the researcher compared face mask used for COVID 19 and face reeds mask wore by Almasy.

“Those who could catch a man out of the sky, who covered his face with a mask of oasis reeds knitted together. He had now a bearing of grass. His favourite garden in the world had been the grass garden at kew, the colours so delicate and various, like levels of ash on a hill” (pg-9)

Nurses have critical roles and responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. They will continue to be at the front line of patient care in hospitals and actively involved with evaluation and monitoring in the community. Nurses have to ensure that all patients acquire personalized, high-quality services irrespective of their infectious condition. They will also engage in planning for anticipated COVID-19-related outbreaks, which increase the demand for nursing and healthcare services that might overload systems 11. In “The English Patient” also Hana, a 20 year old professional nurse did not let the patient even though she was compelled to move the place by Almasy, The English Patient. And even Hana’s father’s friend Caravaggio forced her to leave the patient, she refused. Here one can understand Hana’s professional ethics and personal desire as a woman’s mother heart on taking care of sick persons. It is evident in the book;

“Coming out of what had happened to her during the war, she drew her own few rules to herself. She would not be ordered again or carry out duties for the greater good. She would care only for the burned patient. She would read to him and bathe him and give him his doses of morphine – her only communication was with him” (pg-15)

“Those men in the desert were smarter than you. They assumed he could be useful. So they saved him, but when he was no longer useful they left him. Leave me alone” (pg-47)

## **CONCLUSION:**

COVID 19 patients are supposed to be isolated, cared by someone, scheduled for medicine, regular diet food, Physical and mental health and stress free. In Michael Ondaatje’s novel “The English Patient” there are people who are affected by war. Almasy, The English Patient terribly burned, isolated in a villa, cared by Hana, scheduled for medicine, regular food feeds by Hana, Hana tried to give him both physical and mental health, Hana used to read books to him to get relieve of his stress. The researcher compared COVID 19 practices and Michael Ondaatje’s Wartime characters practices and exposed the similarities of both practices. This study further tells that Michael Ondaatje’s character Almasy, The English Patient becomes a global character

who represents all injured people of wartime of this world. Michael Ondaatje has created a very strong unique character to make withstand before all wartime affected and COVID 19 positive people. Thus the character Almásy (The English Patient) justified as an equal worthy creation to stand, accepted and faced the challenges like all COVID positive patient. Michael Ondaatje has proved his ability of creativity most remembering character, global character and one of the evidence is Almásy. Michael Ondaatje seems best in creating characters. Michael Ondaatje's 20<sup>th</sup> century wartime character Almásy uniquely remembered in 21<sup>st</sup> century battle COVID19. Thus the research compared the similarities between isolation of COVID - 19 victims's and war time victims of Michael Ondaatje's novel "The English Patient" in a bright manner.

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