

Emotional Imbalance: The Facet of Past in Kim Edward's *The Memory Keeper's Daughter*

Padmavathi. R

Ph.D. Research scholar

Department of English

Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women

Coimbatore 641043

&

Dr. Sreeja Balakrishnan

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women

Coimbatore 641043

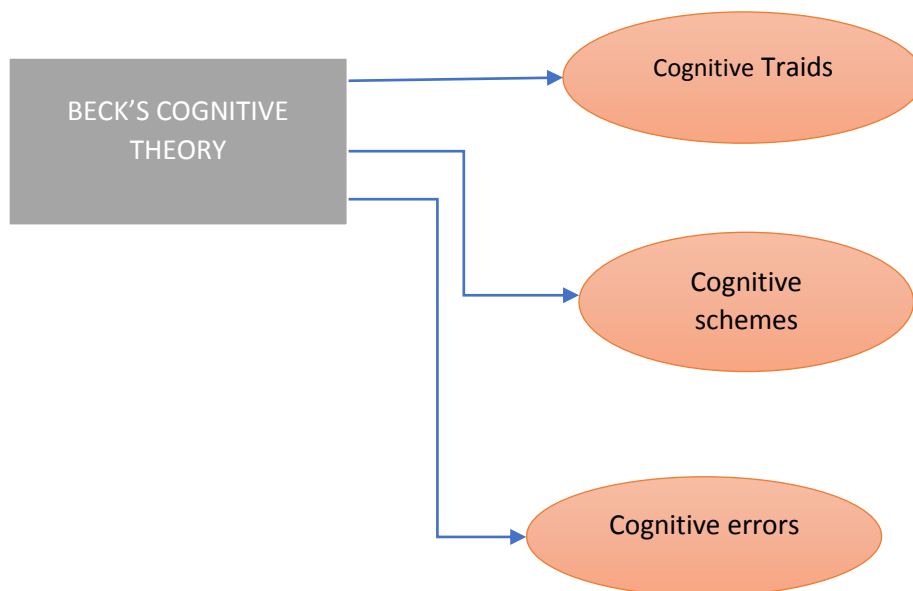
ABSTRACT:

Depression is one of the psychiatric ailments, inclined by several aspects and the specific bitter events in an individual's life. Depression is usually long lasting due to the stimulation of adverse thoughts. Commonly, the depressed individuals prefer not to indulge or involve less in the social happenings and ultimately, they prefer to isolate themselves from others. Aaron Beck's theory considered depression in cognitive aspects. Most of his works discuss the concept of 'Cognitive Revolution' and it has a strong impact in the studies of psychopathology and psychotherapy of depression. *The Memory Keeper's Daughter*, unveils the torment and the lack of constructive support in the life of the protagonist (David). Almost all the characters in the novel grieves, either due to depression or due to discontent, in spite of their concrete struggle against the odds. This research paper makes an attempt to examine an individual in the state of depression on various grounds of cognitive approach.

Keywords: Depressive States, Negative Thoughts, Cognitive Revolution, Psychopathology, Memory, Relationships.

Every single individual endures both positive and negative phase of feelings. Anxiety to some degree is experienced by everyone when a person undergoes a startling situation. Some may encounter bitter incidents, yet few endure the bitter events and continue in that state of anxiety for their remaining life. Typically, the dread stimulates the lamentation and thus results in disappointment, void, hopelessness, which remain in their life, forever. During the fourth century B.C, the Tolerant philosophers initiated the philosophical cognitive therapy. The Eastern Philosophies paved way for the growth of human thoughts. The Psychiatrist Aaron Beck progressed the cognitive therapy of depression, which is mainly used for examining an individual's negative form of thoughts. His cognitive method endures many supplementary methods in alternative sectors of psychopathology and psychotherapy. In his hypothesis, he remarks that the dysfunctional opinions of an individual perform the vital part

in the aspect of depression. Beck (1967) remarks about the lack of systematic study on depression, and his cognitive model (developed from methodical observation and experimental traits) guarantees the real examination of the thought process.



Beck's cognitive theory describes the three concrete concepts for the reason of depression. This paper focuses on the cognitive aspects of depression in an individual based on Kim Edward's debut novel *The Memory Keeper's Daughter*. The novel is all about the facts of living and the ups and downs of life with regard to decision making.

The Cognitive Triads:

In the perception of cognitive triads, Beck portrays the negative cognitive patterns which causes an individual to struggle over the problems. Whereas the negative thinking leads the depressed people to complication. The dysfunctional aspect is stimulated when an individual is trapped in unbearable state of affairs in his/her life. Depression is more confusing when it comes to the matter of its indications. It combines distinctive behavior which may include gloomy attitude, delayed movement, absence of responsiveness, low confidence level, misery, weakness, and negative perception of the world. The adaptation of these elements regarding depression stimulates an adverse self-pattern, well-defined by the negative intentional and interpretational biases. These preconception leads towards negative cognitive triad and other signs of depression. The Triads involves automatic, spontaneous and seemingly uncontrollable negative thoughts.

- a. The first factor in cognitive traits emphasizes on the negative construal of oneself, depressed individuals very often sees himself as defective or inadequate, in simple words, they underestimate themselves. This element happens due to their bitter past. Kim Edward introduces the protagonist of the novel, Dr David Henry as a successful doctor but still due to his bitter experience occurred in childhood days (death of his sister, June) makes him to sustain in the state of depression, which may be a reason as to why he separates his daughter from his wife "His love for her was so deeply woven with resentment that he could not untangle the two. She was sick all the time, from

her weak heart and from the colds she got in every season, which made her wheeze and gasp for breath” (120).

These words prompt the agony of him and the miserable state of his family members condition who couldn't save his sister. This unpleasant event (which is termed to be a negative pattern) is functioning once again when he discovers his twin child Phoebe have the symptoms of Down Syndrome. Despite being a doctor, he fails to give a better life to his child. Beck states that an individual in a depressed state will always have a negative view about themselves, here David also failed to recognize the possibilities to protect his girl because he was in dejected state and thus, it shows the negative aspect and his incapability.

- b. The next element of the cognitive traits explains about the anticipation of negative view (the future). The depressed people predict their future in a negative manner, and he end with the idea that his present miseries will continue in his future as well. When David finds the health disorder of Phoebe, he decides to separate her from the family and through that he tries to escape from the sufferings (sorrows to be continued in future). He allocates the nurse Caroline to do that job ‘There’s a place,’ he said, writing the name and address on the back of envelope. “I’d like you to take her there. When it’s light, I mean. I’ll issue the birth certificate, and I’ll call to say you’re coming” (18).

David makes sure that expect Caroline none could grasp the hidden mysteries of him (disorder of his child and separating her from them). David chose the profession of a doctor, when his mother advised him to obtain the knowledge which could help the world. He accepts the complexity in undertaking the particular job (holding his daughter along with him) because of the past (death of June). However, for external world his success is probable but the truth is, he is not ready to tolerate the same kind of agony at any cost in his future life.

- c. The final element of this trait, describes the proximity of the depressed people as they possess the mentality to interpret their current situation in a negative manner. They deliberately think that the world brands irrational anxieties upon them and there are too many impediments in their lives to accomplish the goal. Beck states that “he misinterprets his interactions with his animate and inanimate environment as representing defeat or deprivation” (Beck et al, 1967, 11).

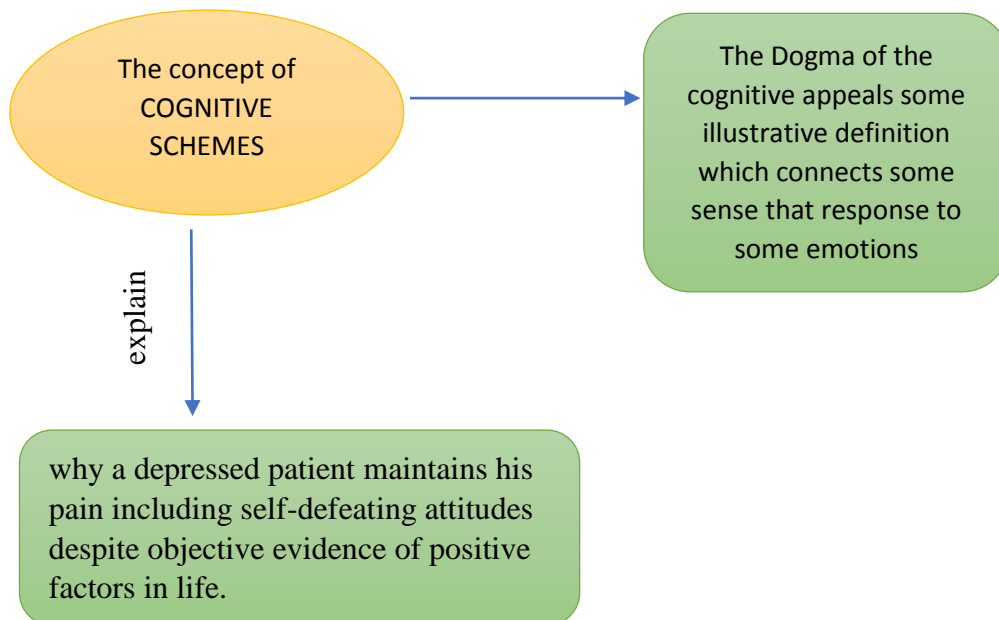
David from his childhood encounters the continues death of people who were intimate to him and the apathetic state of his mother who couldn't get through herself from the miseries. The idea of separating a child from the family is a selfish act, but due to David's negative pattern of thinking, he picturizes that his daughter would become an obstacle for a peaceful life. When his wife and others would come to know about Phoebe's disorder then that would lead him to face all the miseries once again in his lifetime, so he is firm in his idea that the absence of baby in the family could help him to get rid of all worries in his life.

Even when another depressed individual encounters similar situations he might fail to find the solution for the problems. He retains the same thinking process that his remaining days are not going to be smooth because of the present circumstance. He might conclude that

he cannot overcome from the troubles. The nondepressed people might handle the problem in a different manner. David, experiences the cognitive traits of a depressed person and in the depressed state he longs to escape from the problematic situations, so he comes out with a solution of giving his daughter away. He never let himself to be stuck in a particular point, he is quite sure that his decisions could give him the chances to lead a normal life. In one perspective the readers can also think that David has taken the practical decision. On the contrary, David tries to save him from the miseries.

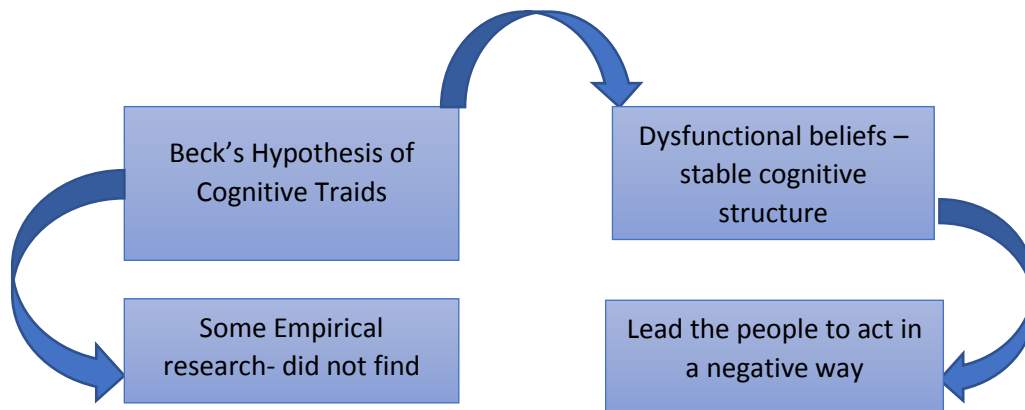
According to the theory, past (unpleasant experience) takes momentous role in the thinking process of a depressed individuals and it results in their decision making regarding some comparable events that happen in their lives. Many researches have been conducted to justify the hypothesis of Beck. He states that negative thoughts are the solid reason for people to undergo depression. Haaga, Dyck and Ernst in their research (empirical status of cognitive theory of depression) mention that people with negative thoughts regarding themselves, their present and future develop more negative ideas than the nondepressed people.

Derry and Kuiper conducted a research about depressed people and processed their personal information. They examined the issue with regard to context of an experiment on memory for self-relevant analysis. They allotted depressed and nondepressed persons and rated the progression of adjectives for their self- descriptiveness. They mentioned positive as well as negative attributes. When the participants were asked to recall the words, the results showed that the depressed persons recollected of negative attributes than positive self-distinct attributes compared to the nondepressed persons. These results support Beck’s hypothesis.



The dogma of the cognitive appeals to some illustrative definition which always connects some sense that respond to some emotions. When a person overcomes a circumstance, the schema related to that context is stimulated. In case, if a person incorrectly thinks that he cannot overcome a problem, surely through his actions he proves his organized negative cognitive pattern.

Rehm (2015) mentions that when the negative distorted cognition is in process, that person endures a condition which can be termed as “automatic thoughts”. The cognition process is intended to be automatic in the sense as the person is not aware of those interpretive process but there occurs some emotional cognition. The thoughts can be categorized from assumptions, which are different from the automatic thoughts. In the concept of depression, the motif of the automatic thought is termed as perception of loss which is assumed. In the cognitive process, the loss results in depression, on the other hand, perception of danger is anxiety and offense in anger.



Criticism:

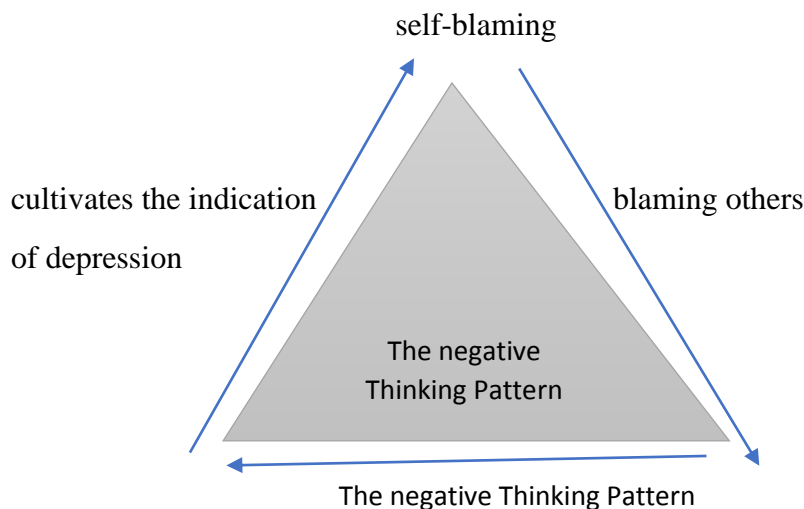
Corey assesses the cognitive therapy developed by Beck for concentrating more on technique-oriented methods, thereby not maximizing the therapeutic connection between patient and therapist. It emphasizes more on eliminating symptom without analyzing the root cause of the patient’s depression causing syndrome. Ken Sun also states the draw back in this cognitive therapy, the theorist has explained that dysfunctional belief triggers the negative pattern of thinking and he emphasis on analyzing the connection between these two processes, but he fails to explain the reason why for depressed people focus on their negative attributes when the positive evaluation of the self is more accurate. ‘He future continues by stating the neither the cognitive model adequately reconciles the two types of finding: self-blame bias and self- service bias. Research has shown that people have the motivation to see the self-concept, self-exhibiting a self- serving bias (including blaming failures on the situation while taking credit for success)’. (Ken Sun, 2009) Beck’s Cognitive therapy also have certain limits like other therapeutic models yet proves to be functional in most cases of depression.

G.W. Brown and Harris claim that the negative life events play a significant role in the development of depression from the childhood through the adulthood. Almost all the depressed individuals experience at least one major negative event in their lifespan. David encounters numerous worries in his childhood and that automatically develops the depression in his life from the childhood. ‘Depression does not refer to a single response class; at least, as it has traditionally been defined, its primary symptom is a state of subjective distress.’ (Coyne,140). When he faces the similar situations of pain once again, he decides to unlock himself from the sorrows by finding a solution to it. He executes his plan and whether he succeeds in his idea or not, it would expand the plot to next stage.

The element of experiencing, thought process, feeling and decision making show the characteristics of a man's mind. The behavioral approach helps more in analyzing the mentality of the depressed people. David's decision to separate Phobe from the family makes him undergo the agony, it happens because of his emotional bond towards his daughter and his family which he fails to express properly. The general observed factors in the depressed individuals are low self-esteem, feeling of guilt and other phenomenal changes. The behavioral changes vary from individual to individual. Thus, some depressed individuals have low self-esteem and some other may have other behavioral aspects of depression. This is proved in the case of David; in his depression state he never develops low self-esteem. He experiences other behavioral changes such as guilt feeling and self-blaming.

Mankind and guilt conscience are bounded together. There are chances for the individual to suffer in the state of guilt during their depressed mood. This deep feeling of guilt often experienced by the people who have spoiled the normal lives of others. The feeling of guilt over takes one's life as they automatically start to worry for the outcomes of all results. In the novel, David realizes his guilt when his wife, Norah has arranged a memorial service to their daughter (who is still alive). He continues to maintain his mysteries even at that stage and that naturally makes him to endure even more pain. He does not try to solve the issues instead when he meets Caroline, he expressed his grief as "Please, Caroline, don't do anything without telling me first. That's the only thing I ask. That you give me warning, whatever it is you decide." (66). Humans are much concerned about the things which run in their minds. David also attempts to behave normal despite his guilt. He thinks that it is too late to inform Norah about their child, and he is ready to endure the pain without projecting it to the outer world. He projects himself as a nondepressed person in front of his family and others.

There is a strong connection between guilt and betrayal, the act of guilt shows the manner in which individuals betray others. Here, David suffers guilt because of hiding the truth from his family, which naturally develop the thoughts that he is betraying his dear ones in the minds of readers. He attempts to escape from the sufferings (Phoebe's health disorder) but unknowingly he locks himself in another shot of pains. Hiding things is not to be appreciated in a relationship, but David does it due to his circle for his family concern.



The negative thinking pattern cultivates the indications of depression, the self-blaming is one among that. The depressed individuals think that whatever the misers they come across in their life mainly because of them and they start to self-blame even for the mistakes of others. In the case of David, he fails to fulfill the emotional needs of Norah, 'Yet everything had changed. David had changed. Evenings, when he sat beside her on the couch, browsing through his journals, he was no longer really there.' (79). So, she begins to have more secrets relationships. The human beings are dependent creature, to run a normal life the emotional attachment plays the important role in everyone's life. In the state of depression, David blames himself for Norah's affairs 'He'd kept this silent because his own secrets were darker, more hidden, and because he believed that his secrets had created hers' (203). When he discovers her relationships, he never questions her about the affairs to her; their secrets occupy the central position in the family and caves their lives together. Thus, it results in the loss of emotional attachment in their lives.

The loss of emotional attachment leads the individuals to lose the valuable gift (happiness) in their life. Happiness is a significant part in every one's life. In general, the depressed people fail to concentrate on the positive episodes in their life. The anguish in David's life is like an iceberg that remains underwater, the success in his life is the tip part of the iceberg which is visible to the other character in the novel, 'Life had gone on, it was full and rich; he was, in all visible ways, a success. And yet at odd moments- in the middle of surgery, driving into town, on the very edge of sleep- he'd start suddenly, stricken with guilt. He had given their daughter away' (193). As mentioned in the theory the activation of dysfunctional belief makes him to stick on his depressed episodes and brood over for his guilt and thus all these thoughts pave a way for him not to focus more on the happiness in his life.

The negative thoughts have a strong impact on every one's life and that automatically reflect in their lives. Likewise, one should bear the consequences of the decision taken during the activation of dysfunctional belief. This is what happens in the life of David. When he plans to meet his daughter and then to reveals all his secrets to his family it did not result in success. When he meets the nurse Caroline after so many years, he tells her that "I read them. I first I had to force myself, to be honest. Later I wanted to know what was happening, even though it was painful. You gave me little glimpses of Phoebe. Little scraps from the fabric of your lives. I looked forward to that." (246) through this he admits his feeling for his daughter to the readers.

According to Beck's hypothesis, the vulnerability of a depression-prone individual results in the negative attributions and their mentality in interpreting their negative thinking patterns in self, world and future. These negative terms naturally make the depressed individuals to question about his being and thus it leads him to commit suicide in the state of depression. On the other hand, one can consider that when an individual start to concentrate on their positive reinforcement that could give them a chance to get some relief from their suffering. In general, people like to repeat some sort of actions which could let them to receive some positive reinforcement.

David carries all those bitter memories in his mind repeatedly, photography and serving others are the two things which he tends to repeat (reinforced). In fact, these two things serve as a remedy for his psychological pain. He confesses that he fails to help his own loved person 'He was pleased- it was good to be able to help people in need, to offer healing-

sometimes he could not seem to do for those he loved the most' (107). He helps other and through wishes it would change him and also regret the feeling for his daughter and family.

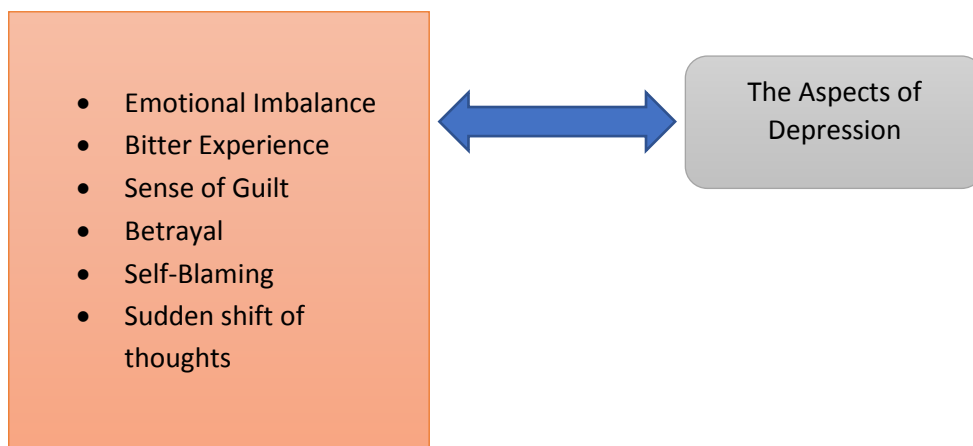
Photography takes an essential role in David's life, to create some semblance of control in his lifetime. The following quotes explain about his feeling in capturing the things around him.

"Put the camera away," she said. "Please. It's party, David."

"These tulips are so beautiful," he began, but he was unable to explain himself, unable to put into words why these images compelled him so. (149).

He starts to observe the belongings around, in his life and those things give him a chance to have some breaks in his depressed thoughts. Throughout the novel, the readers could witness David taking part only in few social mingling and that too he never has a great conversation with others. Instead he observes his surrounding and capture the pictures which reveals his feelings. He repeats doing these two things, but it does not give him a complete satisfaction of life, it acts as a tool for him to get some kind of relief in his life.

In the poem "*We Wear the Mask*" the poet Paul Laurence Dunbar states that people cover their actual sentiments by wearing veils. He goes on to underscore the seriousness of the agony and suffering that these veils attempt to conceal. The suffering of an individual can be understood when others put themselves into the world of depressed people. Edward, creates a situation for Norah to realize the emotional troubles of David which he endures. The reality come to light when she unlocks the dark room where he spends most of his time and preserves all his privileged relics of torment and distress. It shocks to her and she understands the real nature of David and his regrets for their daughter, in her absence. David searched for her everywhere but failed to find her. Norah never realized all these secrets and the silent longing of David for their children. The photos collected by him picturizes the events in his which he cherished every moment. Norah is finally able to empathize for David. On the other hand, Paul contemplates of what his twin sister might have been if she had not been born with Down Syndrome.



The quality of life of the individual is determined by their way of living. It is important for a person to live a life with stability. Depression comes into existence due to with some emotional imbalance, unpleasant experience, sense of guilt, betrayal, and self-blaming. From the psychological point of view, David has a sting feel which cannot be undone. The novel depicts the less joyful side of the characters, hence obviously, torment over-ends one's life when contrasted with the euphoric condition of humankind. On the whole David's life is an after effect of a man who lives in dread of his future because of what has occurred in his past. David dreads his past and loses his future

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