INTRODUCTION

I

Area of Research:

Conflict is the linchpin of literature. Man’s conflict - be it with nature, society, himself or God or with words –has been the muse that has led to much unpremeditated or premeditated art. A Hamlet’s moral dilemma, a Sisyphus’s existential quandary or the centre’s conflict with the periphery or even the debate if we should talk about centres and margins, literature has always portrayed conflicts. There can be no conflict about conflict’s significance to literature.

Amidst these many aspects and overtones of conflict, literature has also depicted armed conflicts battles and war. From the time man began creating settlements, and gradually establishing distinctions, such conflicts and battles have been ongoing issues. Though it is possible to generalize and see all battles, war and strife as conflicts, the divergence of their causes, characteristics, and consequences make the nature of these conflicts distinct from each other. The reasons for these wars have changed over time, becoming increasingly complex and composite from the crusades to dynastic battles, to conflicts between nations, the latter escalating to the two world wars. Conflicts thus have ranged from world wars to anti-colonial struggles to civil wars to large scale communal conflicts to mob violence to international terrorism.

The research’s chosen area of “armed conflicts” is located within the more recent post- Cold War and post- colonial conflicts of Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. The expression “armed conflict” was preferred as it acts as a comprehensive yet specific phraseology that can not only contain different faces of the wars in the said conflict zones, but the phrase is extensive and far-reaching to include the two different zones of conflict. In addition the phraseology was seen as a more neutral term, which objectively incorporates the different perceptions of these armed conflicts, alternately seen as ethnic cleansings, internecine wars, civil wars, separatist wars, insurgency, Islamic terrorism or America’s neo-imperialism.

Though very distinct from each other, the trajectories of these two fields of armed conflicts arch into what political scientist Samuel Huntington in his The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order calls “fault line conflicts” or “civilizational”
conflicts. Huntington and sociologists like Anthony Oberschall have differentiated these conflicts from earlier wars and hostilities. These combats are different from former conflicts in being fought between different ethnic groups, religious communities, and cultural groups. These clashes are fought along, what Huntington calls “the fault lines of culture” and are identity conflicts not ideology conflicts, identities that are not political or economic or national, but identities that are based on language, religion, ancestry, history and institutions(28). He goes on to observe that during the last phase of the Cold War when the communist world collapsed and the Berlin wall fell, it was generally supposed that the end of the Cold War meant the end of all global conflicts and the brave new world was one of harmony and jubilation (31). However, the iron curtain of the Soviet Union and the terror politics of the United States had gagged and curbed minor identities with its high pressure military control. Once the curtain was raised the burgeoning ethnic conflicts, genocides, linguistic cleansings, factional identities rushed centre stage. These were not only anti-assimilative but some of these minor identities were also belligerently anti-west. Hence in these circumstances cultural, religious, ethnic identities become more imperative than political and national identities. “Thus” says, Huntington in the post-Cold War phase “Global politics became multipolar and multi-civilizational” (29). In the Eelam wars in Sri Lanka, or the inter-tribal wars of Afghanistan, like the Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia war or the Rwanda war between the Hutus and the Tutsis or the war between the Mujahedeen, one saw phenomena like ethnic cleansing, increase of religious fundamentalism, return of genocide to name a few faces of these wars. As these were societies that were divided by ethnicities, but united by creed, they came under relentless tension leading to devastating civil wars and rise of fundamentalism.

Sartre in his *Colonialism and Neo-colonialism*, states that when the colonized have nothing but hardship to offer the colonized and since they keep them at a distance and as a bloc that cannot be integrated- this radically negative attitude produces an awakening among the masses and facilitates collective awareness and new structures are born (62). This is true of the Post Independent state as well. Sankaran Krishna in his *Postcolonial Insecurities: India, Sri Lanka and the Question of Nationhood*, observes how the postcolonial elite “attempt to make the recalcitrant clay of plural civilization into clean, uniform, hyper masculine and disciplined nation states”(26). This elite “run roughshod” over the rights and aspirations of peripheral minorities”(27). Catapulted into governance and management after centuries, it disregarded minor social, religious, linguistic or ethnic groups and ruled by fear and
subordination, suppressing, silencing the voices of subaltern groups. Hence in post independent states like Sri Lanka, India, Nigeria and others, we see the rise of militant identities- demanding separatist states based on linguistic and ethnic identities, to name a few,prioritising these identities over the imposed national identity of the state.

Literature’s portraiture of life has changed from being simple reflections to complex refractions, sometimes exaggerating and otherwise downplaying certain portraiture, thereby distorting or highlighting, voicing or silencing varied aspects of life. Commenting on the portrayal of war in literature, Kate Mc Loughlin in her introduction to *The Literature of War* comments that there is something “counterintuitive about literature and war” (xi). She wonders how “armed conflict, a phenomena of destruction, can give rise to - literature, an act of creation” (x). One can add that with the changing nature of armed conflicts literature’s portraiture of these conflicts has also changed. It has moved away from its ancient rhetoric of heroism and sacrifice to challenging structures that cause and facilitate conflicts. In the continual conundrum of twentieth and twenty first century wars, whether it was the representation of the shell shock of the soldier – writers of the First World War or the inability to witness and hence narrate the singular mind-numbing horror of the Shoah or the representation of the dystopian disillusionment of postcolonial ethnic wars, literature and armed conflict have been allies in more ways than one. The use of the turn of phrase “portrayals of armed conflicts” in the chosen texts for study includes these earlier modes of portraiture of other conflicts. For instance like Partition Literature and writings on the Biafra war contexts of production, whether the writer is a first or second generation witness of the partition or whether it is an Achebe or an Adichie who narrates the Biafra becomes important in the present study. Approximating Holocaust writers like Primo Levi, Paul Cehan, for example, the appropriate moral portraiture of unmentionable conflict violence like the Holocaust or any kind of genocide becomes here once again a pertinent point of contention. Kate McLoughlin comments that the literature of armed conflict is a “literature of paradox” for writers of combat bemoan the inexpressible nature of their subject matter, the inability of language to express and the incapacity of the reader to feel (x). The phrase “portrayal of armed conflict” also encompasses other significant angles of representations taking note of the contemporary nature of the selected domains of conflicts.

In the postcolonial and postmodern contexts of these armed conflicts, the word history no longer enjoys the kind of currency and prevalence it enjoyed once. Lyotard for instance, showed in his *The Postmodern Condition*, the collapse of monolithic Grand narratives
through its fragmentation, into a plurality of competing discourses and histories. Along a similar vein, quoting E.L. Doctorow, Tim Woods in his book *Beginning Postmodernism*, notes that history can no longer be viewed as singular or “objective” (54-55). Woods also notes that Doctorow and others like Hayden White comment on history’s universalising discourse and they stress on the need to see and narrate social and cultural differences (55). Literary portraiture have therefore moved away from historical realism or documentation. Lines that divide fiction and facts are increasingly blurred. Linda Hutcheon in her *Historiographic Metafiction: Parody and Intertextuality of History*, states that the Janus-faced nature of postmodern fiction (with regard to the dominant culture), problematizes self-consciously the making of history and the making of fiction (5). If the literary text no longer merely documents dominant historiographies but challenges normative history in complex ways, this complexity is further heightened by Subaltern Studies with its project to uncover what Ranajit Guha calls in the essay of the same name “the small voices of history” (304). To the portraiture of fissures in “Grand Narratives” and the representation of alternate histories must be added the ideology of the writer.

Accordingly writers represent as- critical insiders, or as what Young identifies in his essay “The Holocaust as Vicarious Past: Art Spiegelman’s Maus and the *Afterimage of History*” as “vicarious” participants or sympathetic observers or supposedly unbiased outsiders, and accordingly initiate, destabilize and disturb dichotomised tropes; like the victim and the victimizer, the oppressor and the oppressed and hence the legitimate and the illegitimate. The particular story the writer chooses to recover - the collective memory of an ethnic minority or narratives of hegemonic structures that wage “legitimate” wars, or the annals of armed combatants or unarmed victims also influence the nature of the portrayals.

Carolyn R.C. Wilson in her thesis *Writing the War: the Literary Effects of World War One* observes that the “study of war literature cannot be limited to victims and veterans....” and stresses the need to consider post war traumas in war literature (3). By portrayals the title therefore includes there presentation of the composite fallouts of these conflicts- dislocation, exile, persecution of women, PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), the use of child soldiers as a site and weapon of war. These are the many nuances and approaches the phrase “portrayal of armed conflict” in the title of the research encompasses.
Choice of Primary Texts:

Afghanistan and Sri Lanka as conflict zones are the focal points of this research, as they have, till very recently, witnessed significant religious persecutions, ethnic cleansing and many years of civil war. With particular focus on the exile perspective within this space, the primary texts for study -Shobasakthi’s Gorilla and Traitor; Michael Ondaatje’s Anil’s Ghost; Khaled Hosseini’s The Kite Runner and A Thousand Splendid Suns and Atiq Rahimi’s Earth and Ashes and The Patience Stone were selected, from an array of literary works that portray conflicts in different spaces. In order to acquire a substantial comprehension of this area which will enhance the research of the primary texts, works that document other contemporary South Asian conflicts were also reviewed.

Some of these include: From Pakistan Sara Suleri’s Meatless Days, Fatima Bhutto’s Songs of Blood and Sword, a Daughter’s Memoir and Mohsin Hamid’s The Reluctant Fundamentalist, From India M.J.Vassanji’s The Assassin’s song, Omair Ahmed Jimmy the terrorist, Timeri.N. Murari’s The Taliban Cricket Club, Basharat Peer’s Curfewed Night, poetry of the Tibetan writer Tenzin Tsundue, Jhumpa Lahiri’s The Lowland, Reema Moudgil’s Perfect Eight, Shashi Tharoor ‘s The Riot and Temsuanla Ao’s short stories were also considered.

Compared to Afghan writings on the conflict, Sri Lankan writings written by Sinhala, Sri Lankan Tamils, Tamil Muslims and Burghers were easier to access. While all Afghan writings were written in exile, writings on the decades of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka could be traced within and without Sri Lanka. Such texts enabled the researcher to compare the exile perspective with different indigenous perspectives. Kaleidoscope an Anthology of Sri Lankan English Literature edited by Goonetilleke, Terror and Reconciliation edited by Maryse Jayasurya, The Norton Anthology of Sri Lankan Literature were invaluable to the research as they provided an exposure to the different perspectives of the conflict. An Anthology of Tamil poetry written by three Eelam poets – R.Charan, V.I.S. Jayapalan, and Puthuvai Ratnaturai, titled Wilting Laughter enhanced the researcher’s exile perspective of the conflict. Some significant major texts that were analysed before the selection of the primary text include Tamil Tigress, the autobiography of an LTTE woman soldier, Niromi de Soyza, A. Sivanandan’s When Memory Dies, Sarika Thiranagama’s In My Mother’s House, Malaravan’s War Journey: Diary of a Tamil Tiger. Afghan works were primarily available in the form of autobiographies like Latifa’s My Forbidden Face, Behind the Burqa: Salimaand
Hala an oral tale, as narrated to Batya Swift Yasgur and other writings by non-Afghans. Some poems by Afghan women writers like Zaheda Ghani, Sahar Murad were also reviewed.

While the writers Shobasakthi, Michael Ondaatje, Khaled Hosseini and Atiq Rahimi share the common space of being writers in exile and record these newer conflicts, they are yet distinct in their national, regional, linguistic, religious identity and exilic identity. Anthony Dasan, who writes under the pseudonym, Shobasakthi is a Tamil Eelam writer of Sri Lanka and a former LTTE child soldier left Sri Lanka to escape the hegemonic Buddhist Sinhala state as well as militant Tamil groups. He, at present, lives in France. Michael Ondaatje is of the Sri Lankan Burgher Diaspora and moved to Canada owing to issues within his family. Khaled Hosseini and Atiq Rahimi are both Afghan writers who exiled themselves during the Soviet occupancy. They now reside in The United States and France respectively. The choice of two authors from each location of the conflict must be explicated here. The research hopes to counterpoint the location of Shobasakthi who writes in Tamil with the location of Ondaatje who writes in English. In a similar vein it hopes to juxtapose Hosseini who also writes in English with Rahimi who writes in Dari and French.

The contemporaneity and the immediacy of the issues in these writings and the nature of representations of these newer conflicts was one of the reasons for this choice. The multiple alternate exilic perspectives of these writings, the exilic subject there-in, the recovery of alternate histories, the collected memories of such conflicts, the varied subaltern silenced subjects that emerge in such contexts, also led the researcher to choose this area for study. Further, the unexplored nature of this domain of literature was a driving force to undertake this adventure that has straddled between two conflict zones. Some of the authors like Michael Ondaatje and Khaled Hosseini have been explored in research papers and studies however the writings of Shobasakthi and Rahimi have not yet been researched extensively. The cross-cultural comparative study of the representation of the armed conflicts of Afghanistan and Sri Lanka that this research attempts is a new endeavour.

During the ongoing process of this research Khaled Hosseini’s latest book And the Mountains Echoed was published in 2013. This book has not been included as the primary text for two reasons: its focus is not merely the armed conflict in Afghanistan - further the inclusion would have made the thesis unwieldy. However concerns in the book that are of significance to the research have been examined in some detail in the thesis, to understand the author’s continued liaison with the simmering armed conflicts in Afghanistan.
The thesis takes a multifaceted approach and understanding of the word “exile”. The word “exile”, Sophia McClennen notes in *The Dialectics of Exile: Nation, Time, Language and Space in Hispanic Literatures*, stems from the Latin word “exilium” where the prefix “ex” means “out” and the root “solem” refers to “ground, land or soil”. The Latin etymology therefore suggests a rooting out from one’s roots. She also notes that the word exile is often contrasted with the word “expatriate”, a term that also comes from the Latin “ex” but is combined with “patria” (fatherland or native land) (14-15). In the past critics like C. Vijayasree in “Survival as an Ethic: South Asian Immigrant Women’s Writing”, Makarand Paranjape in “Introduction” in *Diaspora: Theories, Histories, Texts* and others have seen the two terms “exile” and “expatriate” as distinct; the former suggesting enforced separation from the homeland and the latter a voluntary departure. However, the thesis uses the term-exile as a more extensive term to include different types of dislocations. For instance, as McClennen points out when “expatriate” is used as a verb – “to expatriate someone”- it suggests the forcible removal of a citizen from his or her country (15). Quoting Paul Tabori’s *The Anatomy of Exile*, McClennen notes that “exile” and “expatriate” are political and ethical terms not legal terms. Legally the term “exile” will be used to refer to a refugee- originating in the Latin “refugiare” meaning to flee, runaway, to escape. Refugee refers to a necessary territorial displacement and consequently relates to the term “Diaspora” (15-16).

Comparing “exile”, “Diaspora”, “refugee” and “expatriate” with “immigrant “and “emigrant”, McClennen states how the immigrant and emigrant “migrate”. The words have their origin in the Latin word “migrare” (“to transport, move, depart, and remove”). She further states that etymologically these words are not associated with choice but with movement. However, she adds that the common ground for all these terminologies is the physical separation of an individual from home, land, culture and roots (16). Even when the exile seems to have faced a choice between staying in his/her homeland and leaving the actual homeland; departure from the nation represents a painful departure. Peter Isaac Rose in his essay “The Dispossessed” further notes how the terms overlap, for he comments though there is a difference between being ordered out and opting to flee yet banishment cannot be seen as involuntary and flight as voluntary, since root causes of both are related. He further adds that those who have been compelled to flee and those who choose to flee share a common fate and a common reality – they are strangers on a foreign soil (2-3). In his essay “Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals”, Edward Said comments that while exile is an actual condition it is also a metaphorical condition, a position or lack of position an
“intellectual” takes, who need not be in exile at all. Exile is the condition that characterizes, Said states, the intellectual, as someone who stands as a marginal figure outside the “comforts of power, privilege and being-at-homeness”. This intellectual exile is at odds with society, the “nay-sayer” hence “restless, constantly unsettled and unsettling” others (8-10). To this view one can add McClennen’s comment, “A number of key elements of postmodern theory are particularly compelling for exile writers. Postmodernism’s critique of master-narratives relates to the exile’s critique of authoritarian discourses” (20). She further adds that exiles and their displacement from repressive centres of power and their corresponding “de-centring” and “disempowerment is grounded in the particularities of the experience” (20-21). Thus according to McClennen the affinities between postmodern and the exile writer are heavily grounded in the writer’s “anti-authoritarian discourse” (21). The thesis’ usage of the term includes these many complex strands of the word “exile” as the exilic positions interestingly and complexly vary within the chosen primary texts. In interweaving these many implications of the word “exile” the thesis hopes to achieve a complex and plural viewing of the different conflict zones.

As noted above, the writers chosen for study chose to exile themselves from their countries of origin for different reasons. With the exception of Michael Ondaatje, the other authors were compelled and coerced by political changes and wars to expatriate themselves to different hostlands. Similarly the exilic subject’s education, social class varied the nature of assimilation into the host culture. Despite these differences, their significant spatio-temporal literary returns to their homeland demonstrate some of the distinguishing characteristics that Paranjape quoting William Safran locates as features of the exile. Paranjape in “Introduction” in Diaspora: Theories, Histories, Texts observes these characteristics, i.e., they retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland and its physical locations and history and they relate personally or vicariously to that homeland creating a strong ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity (4-5).

Correspondingly, the “perspective of the exile” from which these writers view the conflicts encompasses Said’s comment in his “Reflections on Exile”. He calls it a “plurality of vision” and adds how this awareness is “contrapuntal” where both the worlds are vivid, actually occurring together “contrapuntally” (186). Sophia McClennen adds the dimension of “dialectical” to this perspective of the exile and offers “dialectical” as a “more loaded term” than Said’s counterpoint (31). She sees the exile’s vision as “dialectical”-concerned with opposing forces. She comments that the state of exile creates a “series of oppositions,
antinomies and contradictions”; hence the perspective holds these opposites in an irresolvable tension (33). Apart from the “contrapuntal” and “dialectical” perspective, Said’s suggestion in his essay “Michel Foucault”, that the exilic position is “ex-centric” is also suggested in this perspective (188). By this Said stresses the exile's viewpoint as peripheral, as they see themselves as marginal subjects, resistant to assimilation and outside the mainstream. The phrase “perspective of the exile” in the title amalgamates these different standpoints to understand the exilic perspective.

II

Research Objective:

- In order to achieve a wide representation within this framework and in order to intra-textually and inter-textually read the chosen spaces and the texts therein, the researcher selected two writers from each space.
- Even as the contexts of these texts vary, the position of these writers- as exiles and their ideological standpoints - vary. Therefore the research aims to contrast the writings of Shobasakthi, a former child terrorist, who believed in the ideology of the Eelam War, the critical insider, with the writing of Ondaatje, who writes from what Homi Bhabha calls “interstitial space” (qtd. in Paranjape, 4) of a voluntary exile.
- Both Hosseini and Rahimi's narratives are about the many victims of the conflict. Written by those - (like Ondaatje) - who did not remain to suffer the perpetual trials and trauma of war torn Afghanistan, the research explores the anxieties of these exiles to write about a homeland they did not stay back to defend. It further hopes to enquire how the space of exile allows them to write about spaces and silences, hitherto unrepresented.
- What are the myriad perceptions of the conflict zones, when viewed by different exilic subjects in the texts? What are the complexities that emerge in such perceptions? How do these exiled writers construct and reconstruct the history of the armed conflict?
- What are the different ways in which they approach the lines that demarcate binaries like right and wrong, victim and victimizer? What are the “grey zones” where such polarities become impossible? On the other hand, when and why does it become necessary to see a watertight black and white?
• The research studies the different memory sites - collective, individual and cultural from which these stories are recovered. The choice of these stories and the subversive function their recovery has achieved is another fecund area to explore. Through such recoveries what characteristics of dominant historiographies are commented upon and challenged?

• Despite the different genres of the Sri Lankan and the Afghan conflicts, the research aims to perceive the reason the minority group (be it a gendered or an ethnic minority) becomes a common site of war, in both these domains.

• The research will analyse the representation of different sites of trauma-physical, socio-cultural- as a possible comparative framework within which the two conflict zones can be compared.

• The choice of genres like first person narratives, testimonial narration, Historiographic Metafiction, Autofiction, second person narrations, varied focalizers, narrators, and spatio-temporal shifts would be comparatively analysed. The writers' choice of language to narrativize the armed conflict- Tamil (Shobasakthi), Dari and French (Rahimi) and English (Hosseini and Ondaatje) -and hence the readership they address, would also be studied.

III

Literature Review:

The literature review of some of the texts and theoretical perspectives of the thesis were interlaced with the “Introduction”. What follows is an overview of most of the secondary and other sources perused in this research.

Michael Ondaatje’s Anil’s Ghost has generated many papers and publications and to some degree the novels of Khaled Hosseini have also been studied and examined. But as the other chosen texts are very recent publications, the terrains and nuances of these texts have not yet been explored to a great extent. On account of this lack of secondary works on the works of Shobasakthi and Rahimi, through a close study of these texts, the researcher retrieved possible areas, concepts and issues that could be explored. Based on these findings, studies and enquiries that have emerged in the relevant areas and issues were then reviewed.

A number of writings and critical essays on literary texts that have represented other conflicts were also reviewed. This was undertaken to understand the different portraiture and

In order to understand the history of the Sri Lankan and Afghan conflicts several books and scholarly papers were reviewed. Some of these include: D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke’s Sri Lankan English Literature and the Sri Lankan People( 1917-2003), The Struggle for Tamil Eelam by Stokke and Rynveit, John Richardson’s selected chapters from Paradise Poisoned: Learning about Conflict, Terrorism and Development from Sri Lanka’s Civil Ears., A.R.M. Imtiyaz and Ben Stavis ‘s Ethno-political Conflict in Sri Lanka K.M. de Silva’s A History of Sri Lanka, Neil Devotta’s Blowback: Linguistic Nationalism, Institutional Decay and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka, Stephen Tanner’s A Military History from Alexander the Great to the War Against the Taliban, selected chapters of Amin Saikal’s Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival, Amin Saikal’s “Islam and the West”, Scott Atran’s “Question of Honour: Why the Taliban fight and What to do about it?” and Patricia Gossman’s “Afghanistan in the balance”.

The need to comprehend the particular nature, contexts and the fall outs of post- Cold War conflicts led the researcher to study Samuel Huntington’s The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order and Edward Said’s “The Clash of Definitions” The main concerns of these texts had been highlighted in the introduction to the area of research.

Said’s essay also enabled the researcher to think about a discourse between two cultures and hence a possible comparative frame work to compare the two different conflict domains the researcher has chosen. Though the researcher’s perusal of Huntington was to understand politics and ideologies in this space, Said’s criticism of the west-centric position of Huntington led the researcher to explore Said’s Covering Islam.
Both Hosseini and Rahimi try to dismantle the West’s perception of Afghanistan and by extension Islam, as synonymous with terrorism and hysteria, therefore the researcher felt that reading *Covering Islam* was vital. The work examines how world politics dominated by the West have generated monolithic images of Islam, especially owing to America’s preoccupation with Iran in the 1990s (constructing Iran as its foreign devil). He argues that Islam is not a natural fact but a composite structure and is critical of the West and western media that have propagated a negative image of Islam.

Civil War being the other context of the research, the researcher attempted to understand the nature of civil war, its marked distinction from other wars by studying a paper published by James Fearon and David Laitin, professors of political science at Stanford University, titled “Civil War Narratives”. In this project the political scientists seek to discover the factors that differentiate countries that have experienced civil war onsets in the second half of the twentieth century and those who have not. They also posit newer theories why civil wars rage in some places and not in some others, thus attempting to discredit older well entrenched theories. Other papers reviewed, to better understand the socio-political slant of this domain include A.Oberschall’s “Conflict Theory”, Martha Crenshaw’s “The Psychology of Terrorism “Ralph.W. Hood, Peter.C.Hill and Paul Williamson: “Religious Fundamentalism as a search for identity: The Psychology of Religious Fundamentalism”.

As the chosen area involves the portraiture of histories through fictional narratives and the dismantling of generic lines between fiction and fact, the researcher felt the need to examine the role of narrative in history, the historical method of inquiry and the domain of historical knowledge. Towards this inquiry, the researcher studied Hayden White’s *The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory*, and his influential work, *Metahistory, the Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe*. White distinguishes between narrative and dissertative modes of address in history, stating that dissertation is an interpretation while narration is a representation.

Since the study was based on literature and the portrayal of conflicts in the postmodern space and further since most of the chosen texts contest dominant historiographies (that record these conflicts ) through narratives that are self-reflexive, studies that have emerged in the space of postmodern fiction and history were explored. Within this large space the researcher began with an understanding of the postmodern and literature through a reading of Tim Woods’ *Beginning Postmodernism*, with specific focus on
the chapters “Postmodernism and the literary arts” and “Postmodernism and the Visual Arts”. Some of the key concerns of this area were briefly highlighted in the introduction to the area of research. What Linda Hutcheon understands of the term ‘Historiographic Metafiction’ would be germane in understanding some of the chosen texts like the fiction of Shobasakthi, Michael Ondaatje and Atiq Rahimi. In her essay “Historiographic Metafiction: Parody and Intertextuality of History”, Hutcheon differentiates between traditional historical fiction and Historiographic Metaphiction and points out how the latter situates itself within historical discourse without surrendering its autonomy as fiction. Thus both history and literature are human constructs, human illusions. The researcher also reviewed one Ph.D. thesis in this area - The Struggle of Memory and Forgetting: Contemporary Fiction and the Rewriting of Histories, by Sheenadevi Patchay, a Rhode University Scholar (Dec 2007). An article by Marta Szidona Darvasi “Fragmentation in Historical Metafiction” and the book by James.E. Young: Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation were perused. The book focuses on how the interpretations of both the texts on the Holocaust and the historical events of the Holocaust are intertwined, thus emphasizing that literary “truths” and historical truths of the Holocaust are inseparable. Young further emphasizes how violent events and massive human suffering of the kind exemplified in wars and massacres, revolutions and counter-revolutions seem always to have stimulated what Young calls “factually insistent” narratives. In these testimonial narratives we see a further collapse of the dividing line between fiction and fact, history and narrative, especially through the style of documentary realism.

The perception that History with a capital ‘H’ is the narrative of the hegemony has led to the interpreting of events from one dominant point of view, silencing others. As a consequence of such dismantling of old dominant structures its possible for alternative histories to emerge. Through these fissures small histories can gain a foot hold. In her “Circling the Downspout of Empire: Postcolonialism and Postmodemism” Hutcheon states how despite some major difference between “postcolonialism and postmodernism”, there is considerable overlap between these in their concerns “with history, marginality, the state of ex-centricity, the granting of value to the margin and the challenging of the hegemonic centre and the need to respect the particular and the local” (73-74).

All the writers chosen for study write as exiles and since one of the principal impacts of conflict in the texts is exile, it was important to understand issues, writings in this area. The significance of these studies to research has been highlighted in the earlier part of the
introduction. The books reviewed include Sophia McClennen’s *The Dialectics of Exile*, Edward Said’s *Reflections on Exile*, Rushdie’s *Imaginary Homelands*, *In Diaspora: Theories, Histories, Texts* (ed by Makarand Paranjape), Jana Evans Braziel’s *Diaspora: an Introduction* and two essays “Forced Out” by Peter Isaac Rose and “Visions of Home: Exiles and Immigrants” by Orm Overland published in *The Dispossessed* ed. Peter Isaac Rose. Further essays like Vijay Mishra’s “New Lamps for Old: Diaspora, Migrancy, Border”, C. Vijayasree’s “The Politics and Poetics of Expatriation: The Indian Version(s)” were studied. Some of the predominant concerns of these writers include exile and the exile’s position, home/homelessness, memory/nostalgia, identity, belonging/unbelonging alienation, name/namelessness, multiculturalism, history, causes that lead to displacement like war, persecution, economic advancement and so on and so forth. The essays also differentiate between voluntary and involuntary Diasporas, first and second generation Diaspora and Diasporic hybrid identities.

Memory, remembering, reminiscing are central to all the chosen texts, whether it’s the collective socio-cultural memory that informs Shobasakthi and Rahimi’s narratives or the individual selective recalling that is decisive in Ondaatje and Hosseini’s narratives. Hence critical theories that have emerged in Memory Studies, a contemporary interdisciplinary field were also delved into. Varied concepts dealt with in this area comprise Collective Memory Studies, Cultural Memory Studies and Conflict Memory Studies. Gabriel Moshenka’s “Working with Memory in the Archaeology of Modern Conflict”, published in the *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, Vol 20, Issue 01, Feb 2010-discusses conflict memories and issues of representation. In the struggle for representation three consistent elements emerge-narratives of articulation, arenas of articulation and agencies of articulation.

Jeffrey K. Olick’s “Collective Memory: The Two Cultures” raises the question of what is “collective” about collective memory? Collective memory of anything (he especially stresses on socio-political memories), whether it’s the Vietnam War, the Nazi Period, plays an important role in politics and society. He also studies the relationship between individual and collective memory differentiating between Collected Memory and Collective Memory.

Dario Paez and James H. Liu’s “Collective Memory of Conflicts” examines the process by which remembering of past conflicts affects the course of current conflict. Memory of collective violence that has been experienced in the past, often burden present
conflicts, leading to generalized hatred and duty of retaliation. They also describe factors related to the creation, maintenance and reactivation of collective memories of past conflicts.

Astrid Erll’s “Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction”, defines the term “cultural memory” as including several phenomena ranging from individual memory in social context, group memory or national memory. He also interrogates modes of remembering and rejects the usual binary between history and memory. Birgit Neumann’s “The Literary Representation of Memory” analyses ways in which memory is represented in literature in “Fictions of Memory “using the reminiscing narrator, the retrospective ‘I’ whose narrative becomes a quest for identity in his/her attempt to understand the past in order to grapple with the present.

The chosen primary texts are about conflicts from the perspective of the marginalized, marginalized on account of varied factors. In addition the thesis also aims to explore the alternate narratives silenced by dominant histories. Therefore the area of Subaltern Studies would be of great significance to the research.

Ranajit Guha’s lecture delivered in Hyderabad in January 1993, (which was later published in the Subaltern Studies), “The Small Voices of History “interrogates what the adjective historic means. He questions: Who nominates certain events as history? What are these unspecified values and unstated criteria that make certain events historic and not others? The ideology that determines this he calls statism, which is what, authorizes the dominant values of the state to determine the criteria of the historic. Though Guha speaks about Indian historiography and its statism, Guha’s observations are immediate to the Sri Lankan and the Afghan context as well. The post independent Sri Lankan state “silenced myriad voices in civil society. These are the small voices which are drowned in the noise of statist commands” (305).

Based on this initial study the researcher expanded her search to include other books and essays. These include the essay titled “Voices from the Edge: The Struggle to Write Subaltern Histories” by Gyanendra Pandey in Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial (Ed. Vinayak Chaturvedi). Dipesh Chakrabarth’s articles titled “Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts ,Subaltern Studies and Postcolonial Historiography” in Position Papers, published by Duke University Press and Gyan Prakash’s “Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism”. The papers focus on questions of whose point of view does history portray and what does history leave out? How to narrate these alternative histories?
also explore the relationship between the fragment and the whole. They thus point to the loss of objectivity in history and see a scope in postmodernism which allows for multiple narratives, making possible heterogeneities to emerge. Differentiating between dominance and hegemony, they also focus on the denial of the agency of the subaltern. Victoria Hefler’s paper “The Future of the Subaltern Past: Toward a Cosmopolitan History From Below”, presented to the society for Socialist Discourses at the Learned Societies Conference in Newfoundland, Canada, enhanced the researcher’s comparative perspective. Her suggestion in the essay is that “in the place of subaltern histories which are narrowly national or disconcertingly fragmented, we might present a pastness of subaltern cosmopolitanism, whereby the most crucial boundary for critique is that between dominator, dominated, oppressor, oppressed, wherever they maybe” (4). Thus Hefler’s phrase transgresses other classifications such as nation, gender, race etc. By bringing together two varied locations in her coinage “subaltern cosmopolitanism”, she attempts to study the global experience of subordination under this umbrella term. This perspective of Hefler enabled the researcher to juxtapose stories of those marginalized and hence displaced, to compare historical experiences across nations and contexts. Following this broad survey of subaltern studies, the researcher looked at the subaltern within the specific spaces of research.

_Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities_, ed. by Tessa. J. Bartholomewsz and Chandra R. De Silva examines Sinhala Buddhist Fundamentalism from the vantage point of the minorities namely: Tamil Hindus, Tamil Muslims, Tamil Christians and Burghers. It also presents how Sinhala Buddhist Fundamentalism shapes the identity of the minorities. This it does through religion, by identifying the land as “dhammadipa” (the island of Buddhist teachings), through boundary setting, using especially a reading of the fifth century Sri Lankan myth history _Mahavamsa_ thus determining who belongs and who does not and the politics of homogenization and racial superiority. Not only the Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism but Tamil Nationalism also tends to lump Tamils into one group thus undermining separate identities of the Tamils. Pradeep Jeganathan’s “A Space for Violence: Anthropology, Politics and the Location of a Sinhala Practice of Masculinity” in _Community, Gender and Violence: Subaltern Studies (XI)_ Ed by Partha Chatterjee attempts to anthropologically understand the violence perpetrated by the Sinhala majority state on the Tamils during the July pogroms. He locates the violence of July 1983 in the Sinhala binary of Lajja–Bhaya, loss of self-esteem and Bhaya-nethi, fearlessness. The latter characteristic of the “chandy” (the prototypical Sinhala thug), thus legitimizing the former as characterizing
Jeganathan points out how Sinhala mainstream through its prose of counterinsurgency glosses violence of the eighties by characterizing Sinhala violence as the former and Tamil violence as terrorism, though the “chandy” is a part of the Sinhala anthropology.

Anthony Hyman in “Nationalism in Afghanistan”, comments on the loss of a national identity in Afghanistan owing especially to the Pashtun dominance and the internal colonialism of this elite group. As a consequence several minor identities have emerged that hold on to identities based on race, language and region- like the Hazaras, the Heratis, the Tajiks to name a few. The Taliban furthered this with their xenophobic mission to create a pure Islamic State of Afghanistan. The Taliban were mainly Pashtuns and thus the very unity of Afghanistan as a multi-ethnic state was destroyed marginalizing the non-Pashtuns.

War has had profound and unique effects on women. Women seen as spoils of war, from ancient times to our own, have been abducted and raped during times of violence. As combat has become more deadly and disastrous, the impact of conflict on women has also increased. Miranda Alison’s article “Wartime Sexual Violence: Woman’s Human Rights and Questions of Masculinity “and Joyce. P.Kaufman and Kristen P.Williams’ book, Women and War: Gender, Identity and Activism in Times of Conflict discuss how women are perceived by a patriarchal society as biological reproducers of collectivity, transmitters of its culture and signifiers of ethno national difference. They are therefore likely to be targeted in any attempt to destroy a collectivity and assert dominance over it. As the woman symbolically represents the community, the rape of the woman is the rape of the community and defiling the woman is an act of domination over the male of the community. Alison, Kaufman and Williams note that in recent conflict zones, whether Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Rwanda conflict, the Eelam War, the Afghan conflict or the Bangladeshi war, examples of sexual violence is a central instrument of terror especially in campaigns that involve fratricide or nationalist war.

While this emerged through a general reading with regard to women and war, the impact of conflict on women vary within the Sri Lankan and the Afghan contexts. Though the selected Sri Lankan texts do not deal with the women contingent of the LTTE and focus more on women as victims of war, the researcher nevertheless felt the need to explore this space since this would enhance the comparative analysis. Miranda Alison’s article “Uncovering the Girls in “The Boys: Female Combatants in the LTTE”, published in Vol 10 of Nivedin: a
Journal on Gender Studies examines women’s involvement and motivation in the guerrilla warfare. The article challenges the gendered description of the combatants as ‘boys’ or ‘our boys’. Drawing on field work, qualitative interviews with 14 LTTE combatants and ex-combatants, Alison points out how women were driven by nationalist fervour and not simply a gender war seeking liberation from domestic spaces.

Gayatri Chakravarthy Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?” was influential to address the speech-silence dichotomy of the Afghan women; how benevolent representations’ attempts at giving voice to the subaltern can in fact appropriate the voice of the subaltern. Even as sati became the cultural site for the munificent white man to establish the brown man’s barbarity, in the bargain immolating the voice of the widow, the veil in the Afghan context is a contested sign for the West to establish Islam as an oppressive religion, thereby stifling the Afghan woman’s voice. In order to understand this gendered subaltern space, the researcher surveyed writings by varied feminist critics. Elaheh Rostami-Povey’s Afghan Women: Identity and Invasion and Rosemarie Skaine’s The Women of Afghanistan under the Taliban and Anastasia Telesetky in “In the Shadows and Behind the Veil: Women in Afghanistan under the Taliban rule”, were studied to understand the lives of Afghan women in their geopolitical, social, religious, national identity. The books speak, of their courage and achievement, their position in ancient Afghan culture and compare it to their lives in a war torn nation.

Ratna Kapur’s “Unveiling Women’s Rights in the War on Terrorism” (Published in the Duke Journal of Gender, Law and Policy. Vol.9, 2002) interrogates the veil as a chief symbol to define the civilized and the barbaric and how America veiled its war on terror as the white man saving the Afghan woman from the Taliban. The saviour she notes had arrived in the semblance of U.S. B-52 Bombers and dugout blasters. She states that the real problem is not the veil but the full spectrum of human rights denied to the Afghan women. In coding the veil as an oppressive symbol, the complex Afghan cultural and historical contexts of the veil are erased and subsumed. This overrides such interpretations of the veil as representing honour, as an exclusive cultural space and a rejection of assimilation and as a private space in which no one can intrude. Commenting in a similar vein Saba Mahood and Charles Hirschkind in “Feminism, the Taliban and the Politics of Counter-insurgency” also highlight the role of the US in aiding the policy of promoting extremist Islamic groups in the region, in the production of opium, equipping them with the most sophisticated military and intelligence equipment. Thus creating a political climate in which the emergence of the
Taliban was a practical outcome. In the bargain the supposed women who they were to save are erased out of the discourse. Of special relevance was Theresa O’Keefe’s “Menstrual Blood as a Weapon of Resistance” to understand the subversive strategies women employ during war to fight back. The paper was very relevant to explore some key issues in Rahimi’s *The Patience Stone*.

An exploration of the impact of war on women also exposed the researcher to other relevant gender issues, especially issues of masculinity. In most of the chosen texts masculinities and war coalesce. Acts of assertion and violence are also ways of climbing a gender hierarchy that establishes the military-male as the hegemonic male figure. Miranda Alison’s earlier referred to article “Wartime Sexual Violence: Woman’s Human Rights and Questions of Masculinity” was very pertinent to the research. Apart from the earlier addressed areas the article also sees ways in which masculinities intersect with construction of ethnicities in war time sexual violence. In war time, male-female rape or male-male rape or male-male violence is a highly masculinised act for the perpetrator and his audience, while the victim is feminized. Thus through the logic of the systematic genocidal rape policy, the soldier rapist asserts his hegemonic national/ethnic masculinity as superior and different from that of the victim, whose masculinity and hence ethnicity is feminized and subordinated. John Beynon’s *Masculinities and Culture* interrogates how the warrior is depicted with particular reference to Vietnam War movies. Quoting Donald, he identifies a number of phases-inductions, absent women, homophobia, being tough and emotionless. He also discusses the factors that have led to the male crisis. In this context Beynon states that much of the violence perpetrated by men is the result of wanting to be seen as machismo, wanting to be seen as the “macho man”. Killing, violence therefore arises from a defence of male honour, “a deeply felt cultural imperative to defend male status” (81). Bernt Glatzer’s paper “Being Pashtun – Being Muslim: Concepts of Person and War in Afghanistan”, aided the understanding of Pashtun codes of war. Key notions like shame, revenge and restoration of dignity were understood through this essay. Denise Philips’ “Wounded Memory of Hazara Refugees from Afghanistan” was an important source to study the subaltern space in Hosseini’s work.

Trauma Studies allowed a close comparative framework between the two domains of conflict to emerge. The literature review therefore first perused Elissa Marder’s “Trauma and Literary Studies”, Laurie Vickroy’s chapter, “Representing Trauma”, to name a few to understand the concept of trauma. Many contemporary scholars and theoreticians like Victoria Burrows, Stef Craps, Buelen and IreneVisser note that much trauma theory grew out
of Holocaust studies which sought ways to narrate particularized forms of historical trauma. However they state that the focus of early trauma studies scholars like Shoshanna Felman, Dori Laub and Lawrence Langer has remained Eurocentric. Burrows, Craps and others suggest a breaking away from this Eurocentrism and broaden the usual focus of trauma theory to include and acknowledge traumas of non-western minority populations. They also suggest considering alternate models to consider these alternate experiences. In order to “postcolonialize trauma theory”, (Visser) they underscore the need to locate and record the specific social, historical contexts in which trauma narratives are produced and received. The earlier mentioned secondary sources on masculinities, reviews on Sri Lankan and Afghan subaltern studies were significant resources that enabled the researcher to locate the many particular contexts of trauma and arrive at a common yet distinct structure that would facilitate a comparison of the Sri Lankan and Afghan writings.

The interdisciplinary nature of the study led to consider other important contexts within these armed conflicts that produced traumatic subjects. Essays published in the *Comparative Literature and Culture Web*, series 9.1, a thematic issue were very crucial to understand the use of torture in contemporary warfare. Carolina Rocha’s “Bearing Witness through Fiction”, Julie Gerk Hernandez’s “The Tortured Body, the Photograph and the U.S. War on Terror”, Jonathan H.Marks “The Logic and Language of Torture” were some of the essays reviewed. These essays explore and reconsider the boundaries that blur torture and permissible interrogational tactics; they define the inhumanity and degrading effects of torture that led to abuse of detainees and sometimes their deaths. Some of these essays also discuss particular acts of dehumanising violence like the torture of detainees at Abu Ghraib. Other essays explored in this space include David Sussman’s “What’s Wrong with Torture?”, and Statis N.Kalyvas’ “The Paradox of Terrorism in Civil War.”

Since the chosen texts use different narratives and narrative devices to narrate the conflict, reviewing contemporary and significant writings in this area was seen as crucial to the research. The 2013 edition of *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, David Lodge’s *The Art of Fiction* and A.V. Ashok’s *Narrative* added important dimensions to explore key concepts within narrative like the use of focalizers, types of narrators, spatio-temporal dislocations and the exploration of the different genres of the primary texts.

Some of the papers published on Michael Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost* that were surveyed were: Manav Ratti’s “Michael Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost* and the Aestheticization of Human

The papers focus on Ondaatje’s location as an expatriate writer, the hybrid nature of his Diasporic protagonist Anil, the plurality of his representation, the role of Buddhism in the civil war, the centrality of the netramangal to the novel and the trauma of war. One paper published on Hosseini was also reviewed “Expatriate Literature and the Problem of Contested Representation: The case of Khaled Hosseini’s The Kite Runner” by Janette Edwards. The paper challenges the representation of the Hazaras in the novel and the controversy the novel and its subsequent celluloid adaptation produced in Afghanistan. A paper presented by Philippe Frison at a conference on Central Asian Studies on Rahimi’s Earth and Ashes was also reviewed.

IV

Research Methodology:

Edward Said, Sophia McClennen, De Santis’ explication of the exilic position and the discourses it narrates will be critical in understanding the exilic position of the chosen authors. The theoretical usage of their key terms has already been explicated in the first part of the introduction.

The Historiographic Metafictional genre and its tenets will enable the researcher to query how Shobasakthi, Ondaatje and Rahimi (to some extent) simultaneously use and abuse, assert and deny, install and subvert conventions of both history and fiction. This inquiry will also help analyse the subversive use of myth in Rahimi’s and Hosseini’s novels (like the Sang-e-Saboor myth and the Sohrab and Rostum myth) and the use of cultural and religious rituals (like the kite flying in Hosseini’s novel and the netramangal in Ondaatje’s) to narrate and represent aspects of the conflict.

Subaltern Studies will enable the researcher to interrogate the silenced voices within these texts. Both Shobasakthi and Ondaatje’s narratives are similar and yet distinct in their
attempts to retrieve the small voices of history, interact with them and above all “cultivate the disposition to hear these voices”. Hosseini and Rahimi’s narratives similarly highlight what Guha sees as constitutive discourse—“hearing”. In the “small voices” of the women in their narratives we see them pitted against the “private mode of statist discourse, a commanding noise characteristically male” (305). Therefore subaltern theory is relevant to this research which aims to read these primary texts as not just critiques of statist discourse but as alternative literary historiographies that move beyond “conceptualization into the next stage: the practice of re-writing that history” (305).

Feminist and Gender studies will also provide important data in the analysis of gender constructs and facilitate the study of the impact of conflict on women. As the texts explore different type of masculinities in the context of war and further some of the texts use subversive strategies to arm their women against patriarchy these theories will be very central to the research.

A significant aspect of the postmodern is the collapsing of boundaries between different fields of study. Since the area of research is complex and the texts to be studied are multifaceted, the rationale of an interdisciplinary method will enable the bringing together of studies from other areas like sociology, psychology, history, political and human rights treatises. For instance, perusal of treatises on torture, and women’s resistance in Ireland will enhance the analysis of the texts considerably. Further sociological and ethnographic studies on Afghan tribal codes like honour, valour and so on will be relevant to the study.

The research aims to do a close comparative study in order to record its findings about the writers from different spaces. In using the comparative framework the research would not merely be studying a hierarchy but rather as Stephen Totosy points out it would attempt a movement and a dialogue between cultures and conflicts of the said spaces. Trauma studies will provide a frame within which the conflict zones and the different postcolonial contexts of trauma could be compared.

Cultural Memory Studies will facilitate the study of narratology and the interplay of present and past in historical, socio-cultural contexts, individuals’ memories that narrate forgotten national memories and transnational memories of places and trauma in the chosen area and the primary texts.
Plan of the thesis:

In addition to the introduction and conclusion the main body of the thesis would include four chapters, structured as follows. Each chapter commences by laying down the framework of the chapter followed by subdivisions in the chapter. The chapters have been divided according to certain delineating aspects.

Chapter One: Of Arms and the Wo/man

The first section - **The Many Faces/ Phases of Armed Conflict**- would try to understand the wide-ranging overtones of innumerable natures of conflicts in literature and move on to define the term’ armedconflicts’ within that. Moreover it would consider the changing nature of armed conflict set against the teeming conflict-ridden twentieth century, especially in the Post-Cold War period. It attempts to locate the primary texts as portraiture of “fault-line conflicts”. This section would close with a concise review of the diverse fallouts of these conflicts like alienation and exile, posttraumatic stress disorders, the exploitation of the woman’s body as a site of conflict, the development of a new phenomenon like the recruitment of child soldiers and so on.

The second section - **Perceiving, Presenting and Re-presenting Armed Conflict**- is a succinct reconsideration of the relationship between literature and armed conflict from ancient writings to the writings of the Twentieth century. It interrogates some of the disputes and problems such literary depictions come across and using a comparative framework it analyses portraiture of armed conflict from the second half of the Twentieth Century to the post-Cold War period. The intention of this packed study is to position the literatures of the conflict zones, chosen for study, i.e. Sri Lanka and Afghanistan within this realm of literature and armed conflict.

As exile is an important perspective to the research - the scrutiny would also endeavour to demonstrate the distinction in portraiture written from thepressingmilieu of the conflict as against those displaced from it whether temporally, spatially or ideologically. The final section- **Contested Renderings**- analyses contemporary literary representations of more recent armed conflicts, that challenge, undermine and destabilise different structures, stereotypes and paradigms.
Chapter Two: Tear Drop in the Indian Ocean

The first section—**The Many Faces of the Sri Lankan War**—examines the pluralistic nature of the history of the armed conflict in Sri Lanka and writings from within and without Sri Lanka on the conflict. The second section first looks at **The Dispossessed Exile: Anthony Dasan, Rocky Raj and Nesakumaran**. It studies the different exilic subjects in Shobasakthi’s *Gorilla* and *Traitor*, as representatives of the million homeless Sri Lankan Tamils, displaced on account of the war. Focusing on different types of de- and re-territorialisation the section looks at the problematic location of the displaced guerrilla combatant, multiply dislocated, cast out by different spaces and structures. From this perspective of the insider the chapter moves to the point of view of the rank outsider in the section—**The Voluntarily-displaced exile: Anil Tissera**. This section examines the representation of the Diasporic subject of Ondaatje’s novel *Anil’s Ghost* who is not the dislocated-dispossessed trying to affix her roots in the land of her birth but rejects any connections with that land. The research also analyses the novel’s self-critical scrutiny of her western gaze and exposes the hollowness of univocal western absolutisms in strife torn Sri Lanka.

The third section—**From the Frontlines of Conflict—Shobasakthi’s Gorilla and Traitor**—investigates the representation of the armed conflict, originating in combatants’ active participation in different phases of the Civil War, though the position of the perceiver of the conflict is the exiled outsider. Hence the novels are an exposure of a political history that has stayed unrecorded or has been written over by overriding narratives of official history. The section comparatively notes that if Dasan’s is an undocumented account of the 1980’s, Rocky Raj’s account is a third person narration of a previously untold story— the lived experience of a child soldier, hence a tale based on Shobasakthi’s personal memories and experiences. The micro-history of Rocky gains a foothold in mainstream historiography and opens the gaps and crevices in what was one of the world’s tightest insurgent networks, the LTTE. It thus destabilizes its Grand narratives of being the sole representatives of the Tamils of Sri Lanka leading them to their promised Eelam. *Traitor*, based on first-hand accounts oral testimonies of survivors of the massacre, narrates the escalating events that led to the conflagration of 1983 through the particular story of an insurgent subject—an armed combatant. Not to let his narrative fall into unproblematic sappiness, Shobasakthi employs a tortured traumatized paedophile as his central protagonist. If *Gorilla* uses Autofiction to narrate other stories, *Traitor* uses fractures in collective society to narrate other conflicts that
complicate the ethnic conflict. In the plural discourse of *Traitor*, through the entrenched account of Rajendran, Srikanthamalar and the caste politics of the Vellalars, Shobasakthi not only demystifies the monological Tamil identity that conjectures itself as the disempowered, wronged in opposition to an tyrannical Sinhala state, but demonstrates how the concentric circles of exploiter vs. exploited, terrorist vs. torturer, oppressor vs. oppressed, the legitimate and the illegitimate perpetually orbit and reorder in his novel.

The fourth section—*To the Burial Sites of Conflict: Ondaatje’s Anil’s Ghost*—examines the shift in the perspective of the conflict from the armed combatant of Shobasakthi’s works to the unarmed civilian of Ondaatje’s work, set not against carnage fields but interment sites and hospices. The analysis studies Ondaatje’s novel as a troubling relation of what it means to live in a society in which terrorist violence, committed both by the state and the insurgents not just fractures but annihilates history. Through the eyes of the Geneva human rights representative, the novel focuses on the outcome of barbarity than on barbarity itself. By reconstructing the skeleton of Sailor it attempts to reconstruct those stories concealed and mutilated by the State. Like contemporary historians, the novel points out the interpretative nature of the conflict, that accuracy cannot be absolute and it can be manoeuvred by the dominant to suit their purposes. By juxtaposing Anil’s position with perspectives from within Sri Lanka, the novel self-reflexively comments on the Diasporic outlook that witnesses the debacle and then abandons the victims to their inexorable and ruthless doom. While often seen by critics as pro- Buddhist and Sinhala, the research argues how the anxieties of exile causes Ondaatje to make Buddhist Sri Lankan identity coexist in an irreconcilable antithesis— as the perpetrator of violence and as the victim of violence, as the creator of conflict and as the possible site of reconciliation— in the eye painting ritual with which the novel ends. The chapter in the last section—*Conclusion: Conflict and the Contrapuntal Exiles*— draws conclusions about the ideology of the two writers and comparatively studies their different perceptions of the conflict.

**Chapter Three: Kite less Afghan Skies**

Following a similar structure as the Sri Lankan chapter, this chapter would move from tracing the history and phases of the Afghan conflicts and the exile writings therein in the section *The Many Phases of the Afghan Wars*—to the portrayal of the exiled subjects in Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner* and Rahimi’s *Earth and Ashes* in the second section titled—*The immigrant-emigrant and the Extra-territorial: Amir and Dastaguir*. This section analyses Amir, the exiled protagonist of Hosseini’s novel as a hyphenated immigrant—
emigrant, as one caught between entry - going into and settling in another country - and, departure- from the homeland. It also studies Amir’s attempts on the one hand to reclaim through his imagination and nostalgia a lost patria and on the other hand his almost servile construct of his host land as a utopian cornucopia in his exiled present. If Hosseini’s novel depicts a journey from one place to another Atiq Rahimi’s Dari novella Earth and Ashes (Khaestar –o-Khak), the thesis argues begins in media res of a journey. Dastaguir is Steiner’s version of the extraterritorial- “rendered homeless by quasi-barbarism” (qtd in Said, “Reflections of Exile”, 181) of the Russians. The study comments how for Dastaguir there are no “homelands” to cling to only the shards of memory of one that wound and lacerate a remorseful exilic imagination. The third section titled - The exiled-others and the intellectual- exile: Mariam, Laila and the unnamed woman, looks at the “metaphorical exile”, the Afghan women, who have been alienated and dislocated from centres of power and agency from the beginnings of time. Similar to the peripheral Dasan, Rocky and Nesakumaran, who are marginalized within and by a hegemonic state, Mariam, Laila in A Thousand Splendid Suns and the female protagonist of Rahimi’s The Patience Stone are estranged individuals, the antithesis to being citizens, as they are defenceless, not approved rights by their states, enduring to be perpetual foreigners to a disowning nation state ruled by theocratic patriarchs. The section goes on to locate the different structures that displace these women in the context of war concluding with a brief look at the different exilic locations in Hosseini’s latest book And the Mountains Echoed.

The fourth section - The Afghan Wars and The Sohrabs and the Rostams – in The Kite Runner and Earth and Ashes - and the fifth section Resisting Wars and Wrenching Powers from inside the home: The Unarmed Women in A Thousand Splendid Suns and The Patience Stone present the Afghan texts as imaginatively excavating annals of the war by inscaping the warscape on the private. The complex experiences of individuals, becomes an outlet to narrativize the composite encounters on the body politic. However the focus in each section required a cross- selection of the works of the two authors. The third section will analyse the common framework the two texts The Kite Runner and Earth and Ashes use- the myth of Sohrab and Rostam in the Persian epic the Shahnama by Ferdusi. The section shows how though the two texts differently interpret the myth, they both use it to observe a distinguishing facet the Afghan wars have attained, wherein father kills the son, kith kills kin and kin kills kind. The section compares how Hosseini uses the myth as allegory to first narrate the political history (from a pre-Russian occupation to the
Talibanisation of Afghanistan), through the personal, while Rahimi pluralizes the allegory in the context of the Russian occupation. The section also interrogates *The Kite Runner* and *Earth and Ashes* as memory texts, which attempt to problematise through their particular remembering-forgetting dichotomy, carefully forgotten historical memories and circulate this memory in the context of the present – whether it is the Taliban persecuting the minority Hazaras or the defense of tribal honour in the face of marauding Russians. The section also compares the rigid stereotypes and the neat conclusions that Hosseini generates in his redemptive tale with the inconclusive cyclical narrative of *Earth and Ashes* that portrays how terror and counter-terror has reduced the earth to ashes and dust.

The fifth section, **Resisting Wars and Wrenching Powers from inside the home: The Unarmed Women in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *The Patience Stone*** through the analysis of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *The Patience Stone* expound that war telling in these texts is no longer a male prerogative. The section studies how *A Thousand Splendid Suns* narrates seminal historical events through the eyes of the marginalized – the women, who are victimized by the war on two fronts in the text - the war as a political war and as a gender war. The section compares this rather direct rendering with the subversive strategy of *The Patience Stone*, wherein the woman has agency, voice and is active, transforming and destabilizing whereas oppressive structures are rendered passive, denied agency, are stagnant, restrained and disintegrating. The segment presents Hosseini, showcasing initially through Rashid and then through the Taliban, that warring groups’ dispute over effecting tradition or modernity on the body politic of the nation, is effectively contested on the body of the woman. It contrasts this with *The Patience Stone’s* disempowering of “his” story and the male world of war and military masculinities by prioritizing “her” story, the story of the unnamed woman. While the country disintegrates, the women assert their identity through different channels - the closeness and amity of the women in Hosseini’s novel, who arm themselves to fight patriarchs within and without home, through courage, cunning and compassion. On the other hand not an archetypal saintly, asexual, maternal figure, the woman in *The Patience Stone* is a complex, brave, resilient nevertheless a flawed human being. Addressing those who dominate her, she arms herself in front of the silenced, paralyzed combatant, erstwhile Jihadist husband, through her speech, her actions, her body, her blood and her religion. In order to authorize her-story and silence his/story she chooses the site of myth as her penultimate act of rebellion. The section finally discusses the use of the myth of the Patience Stone in the novel as a way of writing her story and the collective denied and buried history of other women like her and her aunt into the “cultural capital of her society”
(Assmann). In this final insurgency, the woman meta-fictionally endorses herself as the Authorized Voice, the man’s messenger, his Prophet. The section ends with an analysis of the varied aspects of conflict in Hosseini’s *And the Mountains Echoed*. The final section *Translated Men* compares the exilic position of Hosseini and Rahimi and the influence this has on the portraiture.

**Chapter Four: Terror, Trauma and Reconciliation.**

This chapter attempts a comparative study between the texts from the two spaces. Through a cross-cultural study of the Afghan and Sri Lankan texts as trauma narratives, the chapter examines how these texts uncover different traumatic experiences that are overpowering, amnesiac and often inexplicable, thereby necessitating new methods of recounting these alternate historiographies, witnessing and the consequent anguish. Though the chapter tries to identify and compartmentalise different sites of trauma yet as Laurie Vickroy has observed trauma is multicontextual, hence sometimes these varied sites of trauma traverse and overlap.

The First Section - **Physical and Psychological Wounding: The Trauma of Physical Torture and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder** looks at the trauma on the physical body as the core that unleashes cyclical traumas in the primary texts. The section focuses particularly on physical torture employed by different power structures to either bring victims to betray some cause, or to daunt definite or latent adversary or as an exercise of supremacy or brutality for its own sake or is crystallized in the sodomy of the subaltern. The section goes on to intertextually analyse how physical wounding leads to an undoing of the self owing to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The section compares the rejection of the event at the time and re-enacting it, belatedly with the repeated possession of it leading to different kinds of fracturing in some texts, to an acceptance and understanding leading to an inner healing in other texts. The section also contrasts the very visible trauma of some texts with the profound traumas that accompanies unlocatable death in some others.

The Second section - **Socio-cultural Contexts of Trauma** analyses and takes further what trauma theorists have commented upon that the recollection of human wreaked trauma is a cultural memory and harrowing events are experienced in a cultural milieu. The section examines the collision of the cultural trauma of marginal groups with their gendered locations. It observes especially the function of masculine codes of honour in the novels, drawn from the cultural and anthropological sites of Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. The section
closely compares constructs of hegemonic and subordinate masculinities within the different cultural spaces of Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. The “Chandy” figure in Sri Lankan anthropology and the dichotomy of lajja-bhya and bhaya-nethi are compared with Afghan tribal codes like “nang”, “namus”, and “badal” and so on. Finally the section contrasts the problematic portraiture of different subaltern groups in the texts.

The third section- **Trauma and Silence** – examines the complex relation of trauma and silence in the texts. Silence sometimes functions as a textual strategy to voice the hush that follows trauma- the unrepresentable- however some sites of trauma are unrepresented. This silence is depicted in traumatized children like Yassin, Sohrab and Lakma. The section exemplifies their trauma as the undermining and rejection of communities and even entire cultures. It concludes with a comparison of the different subaltern women and the texts’ politics of empowering or denying them agency.

The last section of this chapter- **Narrating Wounds, Resisting Wounding**- would discuss narrative, which Gerard Genette, Lucy Herman and Bart Vervaeck and others define as the way in which events and characters are represented, communicated by one, two or several narrators to one or more narratees. In its study of the narrative strategies in the primary texts, the section comparatively analyses, spatio-temporal organization, point of view of the narration and genre to understand the choices these texts make in these dimensions to narrate armed conflict and its ensuing or corresponding trauma. The section concludes with a brief examination of the languages the authors use to narrate the trauma of armed conflict.

**Conclusion:**

This moves from drawing together the various key findings based on the study of the primary texts to some suggestions about the location of the research within a larger knowledge discourse. It then goes on to briefly highlight further possible areas of research together with the significance of this research in contemporary society.