



Research article

Construction of Ideal Self in Salman Rushdie's *Victory City*

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Abstract

Indian literature often employs mystic characters to reflect sociopolitical themes. The central narrative of Salman Rushdie's *Victory City* (2023) revolves around Pampa Kampana, a young female protagonist. Through mystical direction, she builds an empire and uses poetry to pass on her cultural legacy. The objective of this research is to demonstrate Pampa's progression using the framework of self-construal theory. Nevertheless, her interaction with diverse personalities and surrounding settings during her 247-year lifespan demonstrates her interdependent construal. Her character arc changes significantly as she goes from being a young orphan who lost her family and experienced tragedy to being a resolute queen and mother of Bisnaga City. Her pursuit of the throne within the societal constraints of gender showcases her resolute nature as an individual. External variables cause her self-construal to become unstable. Her journey, from being a vulnerable orphan who experienced physical abuse to becoming a champion for gender equality in Bisnaga, demonstrates her remarkable resilience. The research highlights how Pampa Kampana eschews independence in favour of interdependence when navigating social dynamics, familial ties, and cultural norms of human civilization. It mirrors the struggles and journey faced by most women.

Keywords: Salman Rushdie, Historical fiction, Narratives, Identity, Power, Self-construal theory



Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, Gender Equality

Introduction

"Words are the only victors". Salman Rushdie (2023, p. 315).

Victory City (2023) by Salman Rushdie is a feminist historical magical realism narrative as Prathyusha states "Every time he speaks of queerness or feminism or secularism or dissent (yes, dissent), it is so boastfully written, as though he is proud of the virtues he has leaked into his fictional world" (Parasuraman, 2023), that incorporates the realms of mythology, imagination, and history. The research identifies the concept of the ideal self that is investigated in this literary work through the protagonist Pampa Kampana's aspirations, desires, and personal mythologies. According to Krippner, "Personal mythologies give meaning to the past, understanding to the present, and direction to the future" (Krippner, 1990

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p.138). Therefore 'personal mythology' refers to Pampa Kampana's stories that provide significance to her existence and interpretation of the world. She explains a story of myth to reveal the meaning and goal of her life. Through the examination of the intricate social structure and power dynamics within the fictitious nation of Bisnaga, as well as the intersection of the protagonist Pampa Kampana's identity, this study interprets the postcolonial nature of the novel. *Victory City* (2023) is structured in the bildungsroman that follows the development of the protagonist Pampa Kampana. The novel also witnessed the rise and fall of the Vijayanagar kingdom which was established by Pampa. Pampa Kampana lived for 247 years, and she wrote a story about her life journey which remains "the immortal masterpiece named the *Jayaparajaya*, meaning "Victory and Defeat," written in the Sanskrit language" (Rushdie, 2023 p.8). From the beginning to the end of the novel, Pampa Kampana herself thrives for power and identity in the patriarchal world. During ancient times, warfare was a frequent occurrence. Unfortunately, Pampa's father lost his life in combat, leaving her mother as a widow. Tragically, her mother chose to participate in a mass suicide. Pampa had a comprehensive understanding of the male dominated society, at the age of nine, following a traumatic incident where she witnessed her mother's resolve to self-immolate. This experience made her realize that her childhood had come to an end, and she must henceforth behave as an adult and avoid repeating her mother's final error. "she understand that her childhood was over and from now on she must conduct herself as an adult and never commit her mother's last mistake...She would not sacrifice her body merely to follow dead men into the afterworld" (Rushdie, 2023 p.11). From that moment Pampa Kampana received miraculous abilities including prodigious longevity, magic, and prophecy, and became a vessel for the deity Parvathi. Though she received the celestial blessing, Pampa Kampana remains as an orphan who seeks refuge in a cave that belongs to the sage Vidyasagar. Pampa remained voiceless and underwent physical turmoil of being molested by him often. These incidents had a strong impact on Pampa Kampana, and she became a founder of the Vijayanagar and fought to become the ruler of her kingdom. The Kingdom was established by two Sangama brothers Hukka and Bukka who established the city by sowing seeds that were provided by Pampa Kampana. Later the city was named 'Bisnaga' by a Portuguese visitor Domingo Nunes. In the framework of postcolonial societies, Bukka, the younger brother feels annoyed by the visit of Domingo Nunes "'The day will come," Bukka said mutinously, "when we will no longer allow foreigners to tell us who we are.'" (Rushdie, 2023 p.36). The narrative begins with the founding of the city of Bisnaga and ends with Pampa Kampana's struggle to overthrow the patriarchal system of power that drove her and her daughters into exile in the wilderness.

Upon her repatriation, she witnessed King Krishnadevaraya's rule ushering in a prosperous era for the Bisnaga kingdom. Pampa Kampana assumes the role of a queen and is regarded as the mother of the city during the reign of Krishnadevaraya. However, she still wishes to become a monarch of her city Bisnaga. The research highlights the political turmoil, portrayed in the novel, as evidenced by Pampa Kampana's struggle for authority and the oppressive power hierarchy that suppresses her solely based on her gender. Additionally, it explores Pampa's ability to promote gender equality in a male-dominated society. To pinpoint Pampa Kampana's self-construction in the narrative, the study incorporates the Self-construal theory. Pampa Kampana's identity changes from independence to interdependent due to external pressures like cultural, political, and familial situations. In the final chapter of the book, power disputes force Pampa to lose her vision.

Literature Review

A selection of scholarly articles, theses, books, and reviews pertaining to the theory of self-construal and its diverse societal and behavioural impacts are incorporated into the literature review. Furthermore, it comprises critical evaluations and discourse pertaining to the recently published *Victory City* (2023) by Salman Rushdie.

In their research article titled "'I' Value Freedom, But 'We' Value Relationships: Self-Construal Priming Mirrors Cultural Differences in Judgement," (1999), Wendi L. Gardner, Shira Gabriel, and Angela Y. Lee conducted two experiments. The first experiment involved European-American students, while the second experiment involved students from Hong Kong and the United States. The paper examines the impact of culture, social values, and judgment on students' self-construal. This study examines the transition from an individualistic to a collectivistic self-perception.

The dissertation, titled "The Effects of Revolution on the Advancement of Women's Capabilities and Freedom" (2012), examines The Hunger Games Trilogy to evaluate the impact of revolution on women's abilities and liberties. It specifically analyses the physical, marital, socio-economic, and political circumstances that influence women's societal standing and their level of equality. The text delves into the enduring aspects of patriarchal culture and the impact on women's life after the uprising. This dissertation investigates the circumstances of women inside a capitalist economy by employing the theoretical perspectives of Marxist feminism.

"Cognitive Poetics: Blending Narrative Mental Spaces. Self-Construal and Identity in Short Literary Fiction" (2013) examines several prominent hypotheses put forth by cognitive linguists regarding language with the intention of ascertaining the potential influence of distinct linguistic processes on the construction of literary significance. The paper illustrates how the narrative mental spaces are conceptualised in these two short stories, *Soldier's House* and *Big Two-Hearted River* in light of the advantageous mental resource of counter factuality. Furthermore, it illustrates the critical role of characters' construction of their own identities in the play through blending theory.

Lynn E. Alden, Leili Plasencia, and Karen W. Auyeung's research paper "Social Anxiety and the Self" (2014) examines the self-repercussions of social anxiety. Social anxiety disorder is characterised by an extreme aversion to group settings. Individuals who suffer from social anxiety endure anguish due to their apprehension of being judged or humiliated by others. This has the potential to influence an individual's social interactions, overall quality of life, and perception of self. The complexity and diversity of empirical data concerning the self and cognitive processes associated with the self are highlighted in this work.

Aleksandra Pilarska's "Self-Construal as a Mediator Between Identity Structure and Subjective Well-Being" (2014) identifies self-concepts that are based on distinct self-perceptions. Individuals who possessed a highly interconnected self-construal exhibited less robust associations between various facets of identity structure and subjective well-being in comparison to those who possessed a highly independent self-construal. Additionally, the results illustrated that the mediating function of interdependent and independent self-construals can yield both favourable and unfavourable consequences.

"Construals of self and group: How Racial Nominalism can Promote Positive Intergroup Outcomes for Interdependent Selves" (2018) by John Tawa et al. focuses primarily on interdependent self-construal in terms of comfort in numerical minority situations (also known

as outgroup comfort). Additionally, the moderating effects of racial essentialism and nominalism are examined. Higher levels of outgroup familiarity were associated with interconnected self-construals in a sample that was racially diverse. The findings are assessed in light of the theory of individual and collective interpretations and the impact of multicultural education on the development of sociopolitical attitudes towards race.

Michael Gora provided a critique of Salman Rushdie's novel *Victory City* (2023), referring to it as *Miracle City*. In his review, Gora draws comparisons between *Victory City* and Rushdie's earlier work, *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1996). The review analyses Salman Rushdie's narrative technique and explores the historical events depicted in the narrative. In addition, he draws parallels between Rushdie's recent assault and the protagonist's blindness.

The literature review follows a chronological structure, starting with the past and progressing to the present. The publications and dissertation investigated the impact of social anxiety on an individual's sense of self and individualistic or collectivistic self-construal. Hence, the literature evaluation assists in identification of study gaps addressing self-construal in fantasy narratives that emphasise the dichotomies between the self and interpersonal connections, as well as the interdependent self-construal of the individual.

Methodology

The primary objective of self-construal theory, as formulated by psychologists Markus and Kitayama (1991), is to comprehend individuals' perception and manifestation of their self-identity within the context of their cultural and social environment. The two main classifications of self-construal that are delineated are independent and interdependent. The notion of self-construal refers to individuals' perceptions and definitions of themselves in relation to others. It encompasses their beliefs regarding the connection or separation between the self and others, "what they believe about the relationship between the self and others and, especially, the degree to which they see themselves as separate from others or as connected with others" (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 226). Fantasy novels often have protagonists who portray their own experiences and shape the narrative by accentuating their personal aspirations and challenges. The notion of independent self-construal is employed to examine this attribute. Occasionally, the characters may experience a combination of independent and interdependent construal. The narrative trajectory of Pampa Kampana's life in *Victory City* (2023) explores the intersection of various themes, including the human condition, power dynamics, and mythological elements. This study places significant emphasis on the intricate nature of the self and its interactions within the broader societal context, encompassing spiritual, political, and cultural dimensions. The individual's life is characterised by a perpetual state of challenge and adversity. The life of a young girl, aged nine, who witnessed her mother's demise and harboured thoughts of her own demise, has been marked by profound suffering. Concurrently, the individual undergoes fluctuations in her perceptions of self that encompass both independent and interdependent aspects, influenced by a multitude of internal and external circumstances.

Overview of the plot

The narrative of *Victory City* (2023) commences with an unidentified narrator translating poetry that has endured for 140 years beneath the surface, conveying a profound historical

significance of fictional Bisnaga city and a foreboding message for the forthcoming era. In Sanskrit, the epic poem *Jayaparajaya* was composed and "the blind poet, miracle worker, and prophetess Pampa Kampana completed her immense narrative poem about Bisnaga and buried it in a clay pot sealed with wax in the heart of the ruined Royal Enclosure, as a message to the future" (Rushdie, 2023 p. 8). This act of burying the poem served as a symbolic message to future generations. The term "Jayaparajaya," which translates to "Victory and Defeat," symbolises the triumph and downfall of the fictional Bisnaga dynasty and Pampa Kampana, the queen, prophetess, and mother of that lineage.

The narrative unveiled the tragic occurrence that was observed by the young girl, her mother, and several women who were also entombed in the funerary pyre in remembrance of their deceased husbands in the war. As they assembled on the riverbank and marched towards the bonfire, her mother, "Radha Kampafna gently detached her hand and very slowly but with absolute conviction walked forward to join the bonfire of the dead, without even saying goodbye" (Rushdie, 2023 p. 10-11). Following their incineration, which emanated sandalwood and clove aromas, Pampa was permanently deprived of meat consumption. Pampa believed that the goddess's bestowed longevity was not a favour, but rather that "'The story of a life,' she told herself, 'has a beginning, a middle, and an end. But if the middle is unnaturally prolonged then the story is no longer a pleasure. It's a curse'" (Rushdie, 2023 p. 67). She felt as though her life had been betrayed by the fact that she was still young and an orphan when she witnessed the demise of the loved ones and her children ageing and passing away before her. As Pampa and the monarch Krishnadevaraya were embroiled in a dispute, he dispatched courtiers intending to blind her, "'The king is not blind. The king sees very well what is in front of his eyes to see. But these two will see no more. Seize them! Blind them both!'" (Rushdie 2023 p.264). The novel foreshadows Pampa's ultimate blindness "blindness had erased the boundary between waking and sleeping, they felt like the same thing, and there were no dreams. Blindness erased time as well, and she quickly lost count of the days" (Rushdie 2023 p.266).

Victory City (2023), the narrative is firmly rooted in historical occurrences of "Jauhar performed by Rajput women in Chittor when it was attacked by Alauddin Khilji (1303), Bahadur Shah of Gujarat (1535) and the great Akbar (1568). It was thus a woman's self-devised way of fleeing male atrocities" (Sarkar & Adhikary, 2017). The collective suicide that occurred in the 14th century was fictionalised by Salman Rushdie, whereas the Sangama brothers existed in actual Indian history. Rushdie often portrays characters who exhibit a combination of independent and interdependent self-construal. In his novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1991), the protagonist Haroun is an independent individual whose life centers upon his family. He fervently desires to restore his father Rashid's ability to tell stories, which he has unfortunately lost. By immersing himself in the realm of mythical maritime tales, he underwent a transformation, becoming reliant, and therefore dedicated to preserving both the freedom of speech and the social welfare. In *Victory City* (2023), characters exhibit a notable level of self-awareness, emphasizing their individuality, needs, and accomplishments. Initially, the characters have individual identities, but gradually their connections, affiliations, and associations with others transform them into interdependent individuals. Nevertheless, they struggle to find equilibrium between their independent and interdependent identities. The study demonstrates how Pampa Kampana's self-perception is influenced by external elements like cultural norms, familial connections, and historical events, resulting in internal conflicts and the need for negotiation of personal identity.

The Self: Independent self-construal

The self-construal theory highlights that individuals understand and interpret their own identity based on their social surroundings, with the primary categories being independent and interdependent self-construal. The traits of an individual who values their own uniqueness over conformity are encompassed by an independent self-construal. Pampa Kampana, a character in the story, is portrayed as a mysterious individual with celestial abilities who strives to rule over Bisnaga. However, Pampa Kampana exhibits a complex and variable identity. The death of her mother had caused profound sadness to her. As a nine-year-old orphan, she experienced the physical distress of being seduced in the cage by the sage Vidyasagar, which ignited her indomitable spirit. Pampa Kampana harbours an unspoken desire for her identity to be unveiled to the prospective reader in due course.

'I am the mother of Bisnaga,' she said. 'Everything that has happened here, happened because of me. My seeds gave birth to the people, my art caused the walls to rise. I have sat upon the throne beside both the founding kings. What do I want? I want my true nature to be recognized. I don't want to be invisible. I want to be seen.' (Rushdie, 2023 p.226)

Pampa Kampana strongly desires to be recognized by both the public and those in power because of her unwavering independence. She exerted much effort to distinguish herself from others and showcase her unique qualities. This demonstrates her resilient and self-reliant nature. Pampa Kampana faces challenges in a culture or society that highly values dependency. As an independent individual, Pampa strongly dislikes the superstitious beliefs of her first husband, Hukka Raya I, from a religious standpoint. Vidyasagar, the sage, strategically employed religion as a tool to strengthen his political power: thus he,

[P]erforming the duties of the senior lord of Hukka Raya II's bedchamber. He was the first person to see Hukka every morning because the king was obsessed with astrology and needed Vidyasagar to read the stars and tell him what the day held in store, even before he had breakfast. It was Vidyasagar who told the king what the stars said he should think about each day. (Rushdie, 2023 p.74)

Pampa was not pleased with the religion that restricted her as an independent interpreter, even though she possessed the goddess gift of prophecy. These issues give rise to disputes, both internal and external in nature to Pampa. The narrative is propelled by the aforementioned conflict and its subsequent resolution. The bestowed longevity by the goddess is not truly a gift; instead, Pampa perceived that "'The story of a life,' she told herself, 'has a beginning, a middle, and an end. But if the middle is unnaturally prolonged then the story is no longer a pleasure. It's a curse'" (Rushdie, 2023 p. 67). Pampa, who had a projected lifespan of 247 years, experienced personal distress as a result. The individual demonstrated a deep predilection towards mortality, which led to considerable psychological anguish stemming from her recurring exposure to the demise of her spouses, lovers, and offspring. Ultimately, she experiences the unfortunate incident of losing her great-granddaughter right before her eyes. The preoccupation with the goddess' blessing, which simultaneously functioned as a curse, is hereby delineated. According to Markus and Kitayama (1991), self-construals can be understood as a "part of a repertoire of self-relevant schemata used to evaluate, organize, and regulate one's experience and action" (p. 229).

As an independent being, Pampa Kampana is an individual who exhibits forward-thinking tendencies or a propensity for anticipating the future. She possesses the autonomy to exercise her agency in matters of religion and cultural conventions "As a central part of her program as

culture minister, she told the great man, she proposed to build a spectacular new temple within the city walls, dedicated to a deity" (Rushdie, 2023 p.86). Unlike her husband Hukka Raya, Pampa gives importance to the cultural aspects and aesthetic arts instead of superstition beliefs.

Pampa believes that eroticism has consistently been a component of primordial Indian art in terms of culture. For instance, in India, temple walls and pillars have erotic sculptures which still remain in the contemporary era.

[T]he Chandelas, who ruled over 1000 years ago built these monuments which represent love and lust in various forms. And it is not just the Chandelas. Let's revisit India during the 9th- 12th centuries – from North to South, there are many temples with erotic sculptures. The Chalukyas and the Hoysala temples have carved them on their walls, even if they are not as explicit as those in Khajuraho or Konark. (Sharath, 2020)

Indian literature also embraces eroticism, recognizing it as an inherent aspect of human nature. Pavan K. Varma and Sandhya Mulchandani discuss erotic literature from India and Hindu mythologies in *Love & Lust: An Anthology of Erotic Literature from Ancient and Medieval India* (2004). It also addresses gender equality, specifically in relation to men, in the pursuit of pleasure. In the novel *Victory City* (2023), Rushdie explores the connection between eroticism in ancient Indian literature, Vedas, and art. He suggests that fictional stories can be just as influential as historical accounts, helping individuals gain self-awareness and understand the nature of themselves and others, ultimately bringing them to life. "Fictions could be as powerful as histories, revealing the new people to themselves, allowing them to understand their own natures and the natures of those around them, and making them real" (Rushdie 2023, p. 47). Pampa Kampana illustrates these points for the sage Vidyasagar using instances from Puranic and Vedic narratives.

'[E]rotic figures of the *maithuna* type are symbols of *moksha*, the transcendent condition which, when attained by human beings, releases them from the cycle of rebirth. "A man closely embraced by a woman knows nothing more of a *without* or a *within*," she quoted the Upanishad. " 'So also a man embraced by the spirit no longer separates the *within* and the *without*. His desire is satisfied, and his spirit. He has no desire anymore, nor pain." As for *mithuna* sculptures,' she went on, 'these represent the reunion of the Essence. In the very beginning, the Upanishad tells us, the Essence, the *Purusha*, desired a second entity, and divided itself into two. Thus began man and wife, and so, when these are reunited, the Essence is once again whole and complete. And as is known it was by the union of the two parts that the whole universe itself came into being.' (Rushdie, 2023 p.88)

In modern times, religious extremists display a discerning disposition towards the ideas and viewpoints of others. The Muslim invasion and British imperial control altered the societal framework of ancient India. Historically, individuals in ancient Indian society have embraced aesthetic elements through many forms of art and literature. Subsequently, the regulations enforced by the British colonizers distorted the perspectives of readers and viewers, rendering them unable to recognize and admire the artistic merit, instead labelling it as obscenity. Consequently, they transformed into religious fundamentalists and political extremists, posing as threats to poets and authors who employ eroticism in their writing, even in the present era. The actions of those who possess extreme authority and religiosity pose a threat to free

speech. Pampa Kampana defines eroticism as an aesthetic attribute. As an individual of profound religiosity, Vidyasagar lacks the capacity to appreciate the aesthetic qualities present in literature and art. In his response to Pampa he says,

Your attempt to justify obscenity by calling upon the ancient wisdoms is ingenious, if tortuous, but, to say the least, misguided. It is well known to us here in the south that those pornographic sculptures in such faraway places as Konarak are little more than attempts to portray the lives of the *devadasis*, who, in the north, are little better than prostitutes, and are willing to contort themselves into many filthy postures in return for a few coins. I will allow no such display upon the pristine sites of our Bisnaga.' (Rushdie, 2023 p.89)

Meanwhile, the novel depicts the prevailing situation where Pampa Kampana is compelled to live in exile due to the influence of the religious extremist named "Vidyasagar". The city is now under the strict religious control of a new senate, which has effectively deconstructed the philosophies of Buddhists, Jains, and Muslims. Instead, they promote a new orthodoxy established by the intellectuals of the time (Rushdie, 2023, p.146). Rushdie utilized the cultural clash between Pampa and Vidyasagar to illustrate the misuse of power, sectarianism, and the negative consequences of religious supremacist tyrants and fundamentalists in India.

As the sociopolitical unrest persists, she ultimately contends with the conflicting obligations of her leadership role and her personal responsibilities. Pampa's sense of self is profoundly influenced by her position and the collective identity of her realm, necessitating an ongoing equilibrium between her personal aspirations and obligations as a queen. Pampa harboured romantic affections for Domingo Nunes, a Portuguese visitor with whom she was instantly obsessed; the city was given the name Bisnaga due to his mispronunciation. Pampa, on the other hand, enters into matrimony with Hukka, as she is deemed accountable for the governance of the City of Bisnaga, which she constructed. It is impossible for her to marry Domingo Nunes. Nevertheless, as a self-reliant individual, she places importance on her own wishes and thus maintains a relationship with him while being married. Pampa became expectant and subsequently delivered three daughters. Rushdie states, "The three daughters of Pampa Kampana and Domingo Nunes, who were officially considered to be the offspring of Hukka Raya I" (Rushdie, 2023 p.93) are not biologically related to him. Pampa concealed the truth due to societal pressure, despite the clear indications from their looks and race. The remnants of her independent identity have been transformed into an interdependent one due to external social influences. However, she struggles to find a harmonious equilibrium between her reliance on others and her desire for personal autonomy as she tirelessly endeavours to establish a feminist utopia in Bisnaga.

Over the course of her 240-year lifespan, she attempts to create a feminist utopia in Bisnaga in response to her mother's death. After witnessing her mother's death as foolish behaviour, Pampa Kampana vows to herself that she will not repeat the same mistake while upholding individuality. She has grown to strongly believe in the value of female equality and is an advocate for the total elimination of the bonfire system in Bisnaga. Pampa Kampana confidently states that,

'In the Bisnaga Empire,' she said in her address to the council, 'women are not treated as second-class. We are neither veiled nor hidden. Many of our ladies are persons of high education and culture. Consider the marvellous poet Tallapalka T. Consider the exceptional poet Ramabhadramba. Also, women take part in every action of the state.

Consider our beloved friend the noblewoman Lady Akkadevi, who administers a province on our southern border and has even led our armed forces into battle during more than one siege of an enemy fort. (Rushdie, 2023 p.94)

Thus, the research depicts that Pampa Kampana has a remarkably robust, self-sufficient, and unwavering personality. She is not a person with the weak characteristics that women are generally associated with in other novels, as the article "Keeping Myth Memory Alive: The Usual and The Unusual in Sudha Murty's Unusual Tales Series(2023)" indicates,

Therefore, the research illustrates that Pampa Kampana possesses an exceptionally strong, independent, and steadfast personality. Contrary to the portrayal of women in other novels, the article "Keeping Myth Memory Alive: The Usual and The Unusual in Sudha Murty's Unusual Tales Series (2023)" suggests that she does not possess the stereotypical weak traits typically associated with women. In these novels, women are depicted as accepting marriage proposals from men who desire them, fulfilling their desire for children, complying with all their post-marriage demands, and subsequently fading away from the narrative. The ladies in the story serve a functional purpose rather than being developed as independent characters. They are quickly abandoned in order to shift the focus towards the heroic achievements of the legendary men.

[T]he women accept proposals of marriage from the men who make them their object of affection, bear them the children they desire, comply with all their demands after marriage, and then disappear almost entirely from the narrative. Existing less for their own sake than to fulfil some basic requirements of the plot, the women are soon left behind so that the narrative can move on to highlighting the heroic exploits of the mythic men. (Lobo, 2023, p. 11)

Pampa Kampana directs her focus towards her individual autonomy and ambitions in the midst of cultural, religious, and political strife. With the intention of upholding her independent self-construal, Pampa Kampana maintains her romantic partnership with Domingo Nunes, though she is married to the Hukka Raya. She prioritizes her values and safeguards her individuality despite cultural and traditional norms. She achieved her ambition of producing sensual and artistic sculptures and paintings. Instead of relying on religious regulations and prohibitions without question, she espoused the cultivation of individuals' sensibility towards aesthetic pleasure. And, similar to males, advocates for gender equality while pursuing pleasure. Pampa Kampana's aspiration to govern her hometown of Bisnaga intensifies as the narrative progresses. She is determined to obtain recognition and a sense of self, even at the expense of her existence. The lady's ambition to ascend to the throne of Bisnaga serves as further evidence of her determination, notwithstanding the political challenges she encounters over the course of her lifetime.

In my life (she tells us in her book, the book of which this book is but a pale shadow), I have wanted many things I could not have. I have wanted my mother to walk out of the fire unharmed. I have wanted a companion for life even though I knew that I would outlive any companion who came my way. I wanted a dynasty of girls who would rule the world. I wanted a certain way of life even though I knew when I wanted it that I was dreaming of a distant future that might never arrive, or arrive in some half-hearted, damaged way, or arrive and then be destroyed. But it appears that the thing I wanted most of all was this: I wanted to be king. (Rushdie, 2023 p.258)

The protagonist's resolute pursuit of independence and her ambition to ascend to the throne symbolizes an individualistic self. Despite encountering circumstances such as societal and cultural limitations, political strife, and other external factors that disturb her independence, she consistently upholds it. Her only aspiration is to attain widespread recognition as a mother in the city.

Self as an Interdependent construal

According to the interdependent self-construal hypothesis, individuals who live in collectivist societies obtain the majority of their sense of self from social interactions. Their fundamental aim is to foster interpersonal relationships and can be described as having the following characteristics: "sociocentric, holistic, collective, allocentric, ensemble, constitutive, contextualist, connected, and relational" (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 227). The challenge Pampa Kampana encounters when attempting to navigate the intricate web of cultural and religious restrictions and societal conventions is the management of her sense of self. Nevertheless, the study highlights the intricate process of managing the interaction and transformation of the character's external influences and internal identities. Pampa Kampana experienced a sense of melancholy as she found herself in the dual role of being both the mother of Bisnaga and her own offspring. Pampa perceived a deficiency in the attributes necessary to fulfil the role of a mother. In contrast, she exhibits a fluctuating pattern of behaviour, alternating between displaying nurturing tendencies towards her daughters and exhibiting rudeness towards her son. According to Rushdie, "She had raised her daughter to be better than men, better-educated than any man and more outspoken, and they could also ride horses better than men and argue better and fight harder and more effectively than any male warrior in the army" (Rushdie, 2023 p.104). She had nurtured her daughter with the intention of surpassing males in several aspects. This included superior education, assertiveness, equestrian skills, debating prowess, and combat effectiveness, even outperforming male warriors in the military. Rushdie depicts Pampa Kampana's independence of self in terms of "In love the other is united with the self, and becomes the equal of the self, and therefore to love the other is also to love the other in the self, for they are equals, and the same." (Rushdie 2023, p. 229-230). The intricate relationship between Pampa Kampana and motherhood is closely associated with the interdependent self-construal theory, a theoretical framework that underscores the interconnectedness between individuals and their social contexts. Interdependent individuals are preoccupied with integrating into the social fabric, making them susceptible to the influence of their surroundings and circumstances to pursue collective goals that shape their actions. (Gudykunst & Lee, 2003). Pampa perceived herself as an inadequate mother when assessing her performance based on external factors rather than her own self-assessment. Due to the early loss of her mother, she had the presumption that becoming a parent would be a challenging experience. Nevertheless, Pampa Kampana possesses knowledge of the extraordinary power she has attained and the duration of her lifespan, resulting in her witnessing the demise of her offspring. Due to societal perceptions, the mother is constrained from articulating her personal desires as an autonomous individual. Even in the modern era, women's desires served as constraints in the role of being a responsible mother.

Pampa's challenges stem from internal conflict, which was shaped by the distressing sight of her mother Radha's act of self-immolation. The aforementioned sad event serves as a lens

through which Pampa reflects upon her maternal role, resulting in feelings of emotional detachment and bitterness. Murakami exposes the reality of the society that happiness is something to aspire and sadness and loss are unavoidable. His novel dealt with several recurring themes of fate, the unpredictability of prophecy including the benefits of self-sufficiency, grief, loss and the subconscious's effect on the relationship between dreams and reality in the novel *Kafka on the Shore* (2002). Similarly, *Victory City* (2023) explores recurring themes of sorrow and loss Pampa's struggle encompasses not only the challenges inherent in motherhood but also the societal expectations and standards that encompass this role. The act of Pampa Kampana concealing her association with Domingo Nunes serves as an illustration of the societal interdependence that impacts her decision-making process. Due to apprehensions regarding societal scrutiny and potential consequences, the individual opts to conceal their affection, leading to the development of a complex psychological burden. This burden is exemplified by the case of "Domingo Nunes, and the three daughters whose father he had been, a father pushed into the shadows, his paternity never recognized. I wronged him" (Rushdie, 2023 p.184). The author underscores the interconnectedness of familial bonds and the intricate web of consequences that stem from cultural conventions, positing that the notion of blood revenge exemplifies this phenomenon. The offspring of Pampa do exhibit certain supernatural characteristics, albeit their lineage does not perpetuate into a sustained dynasty. The study elucidates the challenges that the individuals in society face as they endeavour to conform to social norms by simultaneously embracing traditional and contemporary ways of living. In a manner akin to Rushdie, Gabriel García Márquez employs the literary technique of magical realism in his renowned literary masterpiece, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), to portray the inherent clashes that arise between the forces of modernity and tradition. The interdependent construal theory highlights the intricate connections that exist between individual decision-making and social norms.

Conclusion

The research demonstrates the transformation of the main character, Pampa Kampana, in the novel *Victory City* (2023), through the lens of Self-construal theory. The character development of Pampa Kampana encompasses the interplay between self-construal characteristics that are both independent and interdependent. At the outset, she maintained her autonomy and integrity throughout the novel by adhering to her personal principles. The external influences of social, political, and familial context subsequently impacted her independence. Pampa Kampana is adept at reconciling the interdependent and individualistic aspects of human society, including familial relationships, cultural norms, and social dynamics. Despite the advancements of the modern era, women continue to experience economic subjugation, adherence to cultural norms, and societal perspectives that limit their opportunities. Pampa Kampana serves as a reflection of the women within the community, offering insight into the ways in which external influences impact the distinctiveness of women. This research emphasizes the constraints imposed by cultural limits and familial obligations that can impede the autonomy and aspirations of women. This study centers on analysing the character development of Pampa Kampana, an individual who advocates for women's equality and showcases perseverance, through the lens of Self-construal theory. Additional unexplored facets that warrant meticulous examination include magical realism and mythological analysis within the same literary work.

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