From Grumpy to Grateful: Ove's Transformation Through Love, Loss, and Community in Fredrik Backman's *A Man Called Ove*

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DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **From Grumpy to Grateful: Ove's Transformation Through Love, Loss, and Community in Fredrik Backman's *A Man Called Ove*** submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Arts (M.A.)** is carried out by me **THANUSHYA B** during the period from **JANUARY 2025 - MAY 2025** under the guidance of **Mrs. C. KAVITHA,** Assistant Professor, Department of English, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education For Women (SF), Coimbatore, and, has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship or similar Titles in this University or any other University or other similar Institutions of Higher Learning.

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **From Grumpy to Grateful: Ove's Transformation Through Love, Loss, and Community in Fredrik Backman's *A Man Called Ove*** submitted to in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Arts (M.A.,)** is carried out by **THANUSHYA B** during the period from **JANUARY 2025 - MAY- 2025** under the guidance of **Mrs. C. KAVITHA ,** Assistant Professor, Department of English, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education For Women (SF), Coimbatore, and has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree , Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship, or similar Titles in this University or any other University or other similar Institutions of Higher Learning.

Signature of the

Head of the Department

Signature of the

Supervisor with Designation

Signature of the Director

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ABSTRACT

Fredrik Backman's *A Man Called Ove* is a touching narrative that delves into the life of a curmudgeonly yet deeply wounded man who undergoes a profound emotional transformation. This thesis explores the thematic arc of Ove's journey from grief-stricken isolation to rediscovered purpose, tracing how love, loss, and the power of human connection shape his evolution. At the beginning of the novel, Ove is portrayed as a rigid, rule-bound individual, consumed by the recent death of his beloved wife Sonja and struggling to find meaning in a world that seems to have left him behind. However, as the story unfolds, unexpected relationships especially with his vibrant new neighbours, Parvaneh and her family begin to chip away at his emotional defenses. These interactions become catalysts for Ove's gradual reconnection with life. The study also investigates how Backman uses these relationships to highlight the redemptive potential of empathy, compassion, and community. Ove's transformation is not immediate but emerges through small, significant moments that challenge his preconceived notions and awaken a long-dormant sense of belonging. His transition from bitterness to gratitude serves as a powerful commentary on the human capacity for change, even in the face of deep sorrow. Through Ove's story, Backman conveys that the threads of love and kindness, when woven into the fabric of daily life, can heal even the most fractured hearts. It portrays Ove's character arc, which exemplifies how genuine connection and purpose can breathe new life into a soul numbed by grief, ultimately suggesting that transformation is not only possible but deeply human.

Chapter 1 deals with information about literature in general, including British literature, American literature, Indian literature, Swedish literature, fiction, psychological theory, authors, contemporary writers, and summary.

Chapter 2 deals with psychological theory in detail.

Chapter 3 explores the thematic arc of Ove’s journey who from grief-stricken isolation rediscover the purpose of life, tracing how love, loss, and the power of human connection shapes one’s evolution

Chapter 4 deals with the conclusion part

INTRODUCTION

Literature is one of the most interesting and significant expressions of humanity.

P.T Barnum

Literature reflects society, history, culture, and the human condition, allowing readers to explore different perspectives, ideas and emotions. A vital part of human culture is literature. Transferring knowledge and wisdom maintains history, culture, and customs. It also acts as a political and social criticism platform, encouraging change and challenging conventions. Literature encompasses any written work, but it's often considered an art form, particularly novels, plays and poems, which serve to record, preserve, and transmit knowledge and entertainment through literary works.

Literature helps people see the world from many angles by fostering critical thinking, creativity, and empathy. Language and literature are equally meaningful. In terms of serious study, it could refer to literary works like fiction or literature. The achievement of aesthetic and moral merit such as that of canon or the grand tradition could be what literary writing is referred to as. Each literary era influenced language, storytelling, and the exploration of human experience, all of which aided in the development of English literature. The rich history continues to impact writers and readers around the world because it offers profound insights into society's ever-changing ideas and concerns.

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British literature originates in the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, Northern Ireland, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain. English language British literature in addition to Latin and Anglo Norman literature which are concerned with the early history

of the English language. Major authors who wrote in Scots are also briefly discussed, but the articles on Scottish literature cover most of the subject. The literature published in other languages that are and have been used in Britain is the main topic of Literature in the Other Languages of Britain. Latin literature in Britain, Anglo-Norman, Cornish, Guernesiais, Jerriais, Latin, Manx, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, and so on are all included in the articles. Although Ireland was a part of the United Kingdom from January (1801) to December(1922), it can be problematic to label Irish literature British even if Irish writers have contributed significantly to developing English and Scottish literature. For some, this includes Northern Irish authors' works.

American literature was influenced by the nation's history. For over a century and a half, America was nothing more than a collection of colonies dotted around the eastern coast of the continent of North America, from which a few courageous individuals dared to journey west. Following a successful uprising against the motherland, America formed a nation known as the United States. By the end of the 19th century, this country stretched north to the 49th parallel, west to the Pacific, and south to the Gulf of Mexico. It was also one of the World's powers by the end of the 19th century, and because of its close ties to other countries, it was unavoidably involved in two world wars and the issues that followed in Europe and East Asia. Meanwhile, people's lives saw numerous changes due to the development of industry and science and shifts in attitudes and thought processes.

The Indian literature of the United States was shaped by all of these elements in its history. The history of American poetry, drama, fiction, and literary and social critique is traced from the early 17th century until the beginning of the 21st century. Indian literature refers to works written in several regional languages such as Sanskrit, Prakrit, Pali, Bengali, Bihari, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Oriya, Punjabi,

Rajasthani, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Lahnda, Siraiki, and Sindhi, in addition to English. In this context, Indian literature refers to both works created within the Republic of India after 1947 and works created throughout the Indian subcontinent before the year. Indian literature is next briefly discussed. See South Asian Arts. Literature for a more thorough discussion. Also see Bangladesh: The Arts, India: The Arts, Pakistan, The Arts, and Islamic Arts: Islamic literatures.

Swedish literature is the body of writings produced in the Swedish language within Sweden's modern-day geographic and political boundaries. The literatures of Sweden and inland, considered Scandinavian literature, are closely linked. From the mid-12th century until 1809, Finland was ruled by Sweden, and Swedish remained the dominant language of the upper classes in Finland until the end of the 19th century. Writings produced in Finland in the Swedish language. Finland-Swedish literature are discussed under Finnish literature, as are the works of Finnish exiles .who lived in Sweden

The interest in European intellectualism was not extinct in the late 20th century either as by the mid (1980s), the method known as structuralism, which originated primarily in France and Germany, had permeated the study of English literature itself in several published critical studies and academic departments. Deconstructionist analysis, which drew heavily from the writings of French philosopher Jacques Derrida, had an additional influence. In addition, Britain's previous imperial endeavours worldwide continued to influence literature sometimes in a hostile way and other times with nostalgia.

English literature has spread overseas, not just in nations with a large English speaking population but also in all those different countries where learning English is the primary option for second language learners. English literature is, therefore, not so much isolated as it is estranged from the continental European tradition on the other side of the Channel. It excels at all the traditional categories of the bookseller's list. Shakespeare has a

world-renowned dramatist, poetry, a genre that is notoriously difficult to translate and thus difficult to compare with the poetry of other literature, is so vibrant that it deserves to be at the top; English literature's humour is just as difficult to communicate to foreigners as poetry, if not more so a fact that at least allows the designation idiosyncratic to be applied. The 16th century two dates mark the beginning of modern Swedish history. (1523) the breach with Denmark and Gustav I Vasa's accession as king of Sweden, and (1527) the breach with Rome and the establishment of a national Lutheran Church. The political revolution that eventually brought Sweden to the position of a European power had no considerable effect on literature until a century later, but the Reformation wholly dominated Swedish letters in (1500).

Olaus Magnus wrote the first geographical and ethnographical account of Scandinavia, Historia de gentium septentrional bus (1555) *History of the Northern Peoples*, Eng. trans. *Description of the Northern People Rome* (1555). In the first half of the 17th century, Swedish literature remained limited in scope and quantity. However, Lars Wall is made a unique contribution, whose lyrics revealed a feeling for nature new to Swedish poetry. With its intervention in the Thirty Years War, Sweden established itself as a European power; national pride and culture soon began to develop, as revealed in the literature of this epoch.

The period's outstanding work was the allegorical epic Hercules, published (1658) by Georg Stern Wheel, which reflected many of the social and political problems of the time. Another poem often attributed to Stern wheel is Brollopsbesvars ihugkommelse, first published (1818) *Recollections of Wedding Troubles,* a masterpiece of humour and realism describing the drunken debauchery of a wedding feast and the joys and sorrows of matrimony. Sternwheel's followers included the two brothers Columbus, one of whom Samuel, wrote *Odai* suitcase (1674) Swedish Odes and a collection of anecdotes

illumining Stiernhielm's character. A rival to Stiernhielm was the unidentified Skogekar Bargbo, a pseudonym, whose Wenerid (1680) was the first sonnet cycle in Swedish.

Stiernhielm aimed to integrate Sweden's cultural heritage with the accepted ideals of Continental Classicism. His Hercules is full of old Swedish words that he was eager to revive. Samuel Columbus also demanded a more vigorous flexible language. The Lament of the Swedish Language. National pride and religious feeling are combined in the works of the bishops Haquin Spegel and Jesper Swedberg, the latter the father of the Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg. Spiegel contributed to Swedberg's new hymnbook (1695), which became the poetry book of the Swedish people and was of lasting influence.

Even the lyric poet Lucidor's pseudonym, Lars Johansson, was represented in it. His poetry was an intense expression of the contrasting moods of the period: in his love songs and, above all, in his drinking songs, he was as pagan and reckless as he was devout in his hymns and funeral poems. At Uppsala, meanwhile, the scholar Petrus Lagerlöf attempted to impose purer Classical standards on native literature, and Olof Valerius edited and translated Icelandic sagas. Olof Rudbeck became interested in Valerius's work and developed a theory that Sweden was the lost Atlantis and had been the cradle of Western civilization.

He proposed this idea in Aland Eller Manheim (1679–1702), which, translated into Latin as Atlantic, attained European fame. Baroque and Classicist tendencies ran parallel in late 17th-century Swedish literature. Gunno Aurelius (Gunno Dahls Tierna) wrote an elaborate epic, Kungaskald Hymn to the King), for King Charles XI’s funeral in (1697). Simpler in style was Johan Ruins, who expressed Christian stoicism among Swedes during the disastrous early decades of the 18th century. Jacob Frese was a gentler and more

intimate poet; his lyrics and hymns contain some of the emotional pietism that became a feature of 18th-century thought.

After the death of King Charles XII (1718) and the collapse of his empire, a utilitarian attitude to life and letters gradually developed in Sweden. Olof von Dalin was the outstanding populariser of the new ideas of the Enlightenment, which he expressed perhaps most clearly in Svea Rakes Historian (1747–62) History of the Swedish Realm a rational and readable treatment of Swedish history commissioned by the estates of the realm that long remained a standard work.

Educated at Lund, he later went to Stockholm. He began to publish, anonymously, The Swansea Argus (1732–34) and The Swedish Argus, a weekly periodical modelled on The Spectator of the Englishmen Richard Steele and Joseph Addison. One of Sweden's first serious journalistic ventures, it began a new era in which orthodoxy gave way to scepticism and the Enlightenment, the Baroque to Classicism, and German influence to English and French. At this time, the middle class also began to take over the role of chief consumer of literature.

Argus Dalin ridiculed the foibles of the capital, and Sagan Om Hasten's (1740) "*The Story of the Horse*" showed himself a master of allegorical satire. Sweden underwent significant political changes during the first decade of the century, with (1809) marking a watershed: the king abdicated as a result of a coup, the country received a new, more democratic constitution, and a third of Swedish territory, including Finland, was lost in the Treaty of Frederikshavn Hamina. Literature participated in the reconstruction of the badly bruised national self-image. Ardent nationalism emerged as a characteristic of Swedish Romanticism. The early years of the 20th century were a period of decadence and pessimism in Swedish literature. Psychological subtlety and irony were happily combined

and in which, as in his novels *Martin Bircks ungdom* (1901) *Martin Birck's Youth and Doktor Glas* (1905) Doctor Glas, he appeared as a master of Swedish prose. Bergman also produced memorable short stories, but his real medium was the lyric*s. He developed his talent in a series of collections from Marionetterna*'s (1903) "*The Marionettes" to Richet's* (1944) *"The Kingdom".*

Fiction is literature produced from Imagination rather than being presented as fact, even though it might be based on a real-life event or story. Fiction is any creative work, primarily narrative works that depicts fictional people, places, or events in fictional ways. Therefore, fictional depictions are incompatible with history, fact, or plausibility. Fiction is traditionally defined as written narratives in prose, most frequently novels, novellas, and short stories. But in a broader sense, fiction includes fictional stories told through any kind of media, such as live theatre, movies, television shows, radio dramas, comic books, role-playing games, and video games.

Fiction namely the source of fiction's existence. The history of reality and its later expressions in the form of facts are the source of nonfiction's ontological certainty. Fiction must, therefore, originate from a different source than nonfiction. One inspires the other historical and realism literature is two examples but this reciprocal impact should not be mistaken for a mutual source. Because there is a distinction between historical fiction and a history textbook, a work of fiction must always have something fundamentally distinctive that keeps it inside the boundaries of fiction, regardless of how much it aims to mimic reality.

Ideology is caused and influenced by the Written, which seeks to keep the Imagination from becoming too extreme. To put it another way, the Written uses strict enforcement of the lines dividing the realm of the Imaginative from reality to control the

Imaginative continuously. Consequently, the Written, whether in the form of speech or tangible media, fully exploits the limitations placed on the Imaginative by confining it to the realm of its existence. As a result, the work of fiction is contained within the Written Word and derives its meaning from nothing else. Fiction needs to tell its own story in this way. For instance, consider the idea of a work of fiction.

Psychological theories systematically explain human mental processes and behaviours developed through empirical research and field observation. These theories provide frameworks for understanding how and why people think, feel, and act the way they do. They guide academic research and practical applications in therapy, education, marketing, and public policy. Psychological realism is accomplished by thoroughly examining and explaining the innermost thoughts and feelings of the character. A psychological novel is a fictional work in which the external action of the story is not as interesting as the characters' motivations, thoughts, and feelings. External events impact the characters' internal states and emotional responses in a psychological novel, which in turn causes them to have a meaningful symbiotic relationship.

William Shakespeare's Hamlet is arguably the best early example of this emphasis on characters' inner lives in dramatic form. It is a fundamental component of a large body of fiction. The earliest English novels, like Laurence Sterne's introspective first-person narrative Tristram Shandy (1759-67) and Samuel Richardson's Pamela (1740), which is told from the heroine's point of view both explicitly, take a psychological approach, but it wasn't until the 20th century that the psychological novel realized its full potential. Sigmund Freud's discoveries and the advancement of psychology coincided with its development, but this was not always the cause. The associative memories of Marcel Proust, the stream of consciousness technique of James Joyce and William Faulkner, the continuous flow of experience of Virginia Woolf, the intricate documentation of the

impact of external events on individual consciousness as practised by Henry James, and the penetrating insight into psychological complexities and unconscious motivations characteristic of the works of Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Leo Tolstoy were all independently arrived.

The psychological novel's plot relies on in-depth character development and is subordinate to it. Events may be described as transpiring in the character's contemplations, fantasies, reveries, dreams, and thought associations rather than in chronological order. For example, the action in Joyce's Ulysses (1922) occurs in Dublin over a day. Still, the day's events elicit associations that transport the reader between the characters' past and present lives. Events that seem to be occurring in reality are controlled by the subjective logic of dreams in Franz Kafka's intricate and ambiguous works, which externalize the subjective World. Sigmund Freud's legacy, it is essential to begin with a look at his life.

His experiences informed many of his theories, so learning more about his life and the times in which he lived can lead to a deeper understanding of where his theories came from. Freud was born in Freiberg in Moravia (1856), now known as the Czech Republic. He was the oldest of eight children. His family moved to Vienna several years after his birth, and he lived most of his life there. Freud earned a medical degree and began practising as a doctor in Vienna. He was appointed Lecturer on Nervous Diseases at the University of Vienna in 1885. Civilization and Its Discontents" Famous work: "*The Future of an Illusion", "The Psychopathology of Everyday Life"*, *Totem and Tabo.*

Carl Jung born July 26 (1875), in Kisiel Switzerland, died June 6 (1961) was a Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist who founded analytic psychology, in some aspects a response to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis. Jung proposed and developed the concepts of extroverted and introverted personalities, archetypes, and the collective unconscious. His

work has influenced psychiatry and the study of religion, literature, and related fields. Famous Work*: Memories Dreams, Reflections Psychology of the Unconscious and "Man and His Symbols.*

Abraham Harold Maslow April 1, (1908) June 8 (1970) was an American psychologist who created Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a theory of psychological health predicated on fulfilling innate human needs in priority, culminating in self-actualization. Maslow was a psychology professor at Brandeis University, Brooklyn College, and New School for Social Research, and Columbia University. He stressed the importance of focusing on the positive qualities in people as opposed to treating them as a bag of symptoms.

A Review of General Psychology survey published in 2002, ranked Maslow as the tenth most cited psychologist of the 20th century. Famous Work*: A Theory of Human Motivation (1943), Motivation and Personality* (1954), *Toward a Psychology of Being (1962), The Psychology of Science: A Reconnaissance* (1966). Albert Bandura born December 4, (1925), Mund are, Alberta, Canada, died July 26, (2021), Stanford, California, U.S. was a Canadian-born American psychologist and originator of social cognitive theory who is probably best known for his modelling study on aggression, referred to as the bobo doll experiment, which demonstrated that children can learn behaviours through the observation of adults. Famous work: *Adolescent Aggression* (1959), *Principles of Behaviour Modification* (1969), *Aggression: A Social Learning Analysis* (1973)*, Social Learning Theory* (1977).

Viktor Emil Frankl (March 26, 1905 – September 2, 1997) was an Austrian neurologist, psychologist, philosopher, and Holocaust survivor who founded logotherapy, a school of psychotherapy that describes a search for a life's meaning as the central human

motivational force. Logotherapy is part of existential and humanistic psychology theories. Logotherapy was promoted as the third school of Viennese Psychotherapy after those established by Sigmund Freud and Alfred Adler. Frankl published 39 books. The autobiographical Man's Search for Meaning, a best-selling book, is based on his experiences in various Nazi concentration camps. Famous Work: *Man's Search for Meaning, Yes to Life ,The Doctor and the Soul.*

Fredrik Backman born June 2, (1981) is a Swedish author, blogger, and columnist. He wrote *A Man Called Ove* (2012), *Things My Son Needs to Know about the World* (2012*), My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry (*2013), *Britt-Marie Was Here* (2014), *Bear town* (2017), *Us Against You* (2018), *Anxious People* (2020), and *The Winners* (2022). The books were number one best sellers in his home country of Sweden. Backman's books have been published in more than twenty-five languages. Backman grew up in Helsingborg, Scania, Sweden. He has been writing for the Swedish newspaper Helsingborg's and the Swedish men's magazine Moore Magazine. Backman debuted as a novelist in (2012) with *A Man Called Ove*.

The novel was adapted as a film, which premiered on December 25 (2015) and again in 2023. The rights to his book *Beartown* were bought by the Swedish production company Film Lance. It was adapted for television in 2020. Many of his books have been translated into English. After his debut novel, *A Man Called Ove*, was translated into English, it remained on the bestseller list for 42 weeks. Following the success of his first book, Atria bought the rights to his other novels and had them translated into English. Fredrik Backman married Neda Shaft Backman in (2009). They have two children. His second book, Things *My Son Needs to Know about the World* (2012), was based on his own experiences with parenting. He labelled it a dysfunctional parenting guide and made a deal that his publisher had to publish the book to publish *A Man Called Ove.*

A Man Called Ove (2012): Backman's debut novel, an international bestseller adapted into a feature film, tells the story of a gruff but secretly kind older man who befriends his neighbours. *My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry* (2013). This novel follows the story of a young girl who is sent to live with her eccentric grandmother in Sweden, where she learns about love, loss, and the importance of family. *Britt-Marie* Was Here (2014). This story explores a woman's life in a new chapter after a long marriage as she navigates a new job and a newfound sense of independence.

Bear town (2017). This novel, part of a trilogy, follows the lives of a small town and its hockey team, exploring themes of family, ambition, and the challenges of growing up *Us Against You* (2018). The second book in the Beartown trilogy, this novel continues the story of the characters from the first book, focusing on their lives as they navigate new challenges and relationships *Anxious People* (2020). This novel follows a group of people who find themselves unexpectedly together in a house during a real estate viewing, exploring themes of anxiety, connection, and the human condition *The Winners* (2022). The third book in the *Beartown* trilogy, this novel concludes the story of the characters from the first two books, focusing on their lives as they navigate new challenges and relationships.

Born May 28 (1969), Muriel Barberry is a French novelist and philosophy teacher. (Her 2006) The novel The Elegance of the Hedgehog quickly sold over a million copies in several countries. The Elegance of the Hedgehog, A Single Rose, Gourmet Rhapsody, The Life of Elves, A Strange Country, One Hour of Fervour, A Single Rose by Muriel Barbery, Muriel Barbery Books Overview, *The Writer's Cats. Sara Baume* (born 1984) is an Irish novelist. She was named *on Granta's Best of Young* British Novelists list in (2023). *Spill Simmer Falter Wither* (2015), a *Line Made by Walking* (2017), *Handiwork* (2020), and *Seven Steeples* (2022). *Travis John Klune*, born May 20 (1982), is an American author of

fantasy and romantic fiction featuring gay and LGBTQ characters his fantasy novel. The House in the Cerulean Sea is a New York Times bestseller and *winner* of the (2021) Alex and Mythopoeic Awards. Klune has spoken about how his asexuality influences his writing. His novel Into This River I Drown won the Lambda Literary Award for Gay Romance (2014). *He Bones beneath My Skin, Wolf Song, Brother Song, The House in the Cerulean Sea, Somewhere beyond the Sea, Under the Whispering Door.*

A Man Called Ove is a charming and multi-layered book about a seemingly sour and inflexible man whose peaceful existence takes a surprising turn when new neighbours move in. Fundamentally, the book examines friendship, love, grief, and the value of interpersonal relationships. Ove, 59, a widower, leads a lonely existence in a small Swedish community. Ove is a short-tempered, resentful man who adheres to rigorous schedules and often complains about people breaking them. His neighbours know him as such. He is a very wounded man who is grieving the loss of his loving wife, Sonja, who was the light of his life beneath his harsh and icy demeanour.

After her death and his forced retirement from long-standing employment, Ove feels alone, unwelcome, and cut off from the outside World. Ove intends to end his own life since he feels he has no reason to live. The chaos and needs of others, however, interrupt every effort at suicide. The most significant disruption occurs when a new family moves in next door Parvaneh an intelligent and kind Iranian woman her husband Patrick, who Ove refers to as "The Lanky One" because of his awkwardness and their two young girls. The trailer that Patrick backs into Ove's mailbox starts a chain of unanticipated events. Whether she needs assistance fixing something broken, borrowing tools, or getting Ove to the hospital Parvaneh regularly knocks on Ove's door. Slowly Ove re-engages with the World around him after being sucked into their lives without his will. He becomes a father figure, guardian, and mentor to everyone in the neighbourhood not just their family.

He becomes friends with a young gay man named Mirsad, adopts a stray cat and even makes amends with former adversaries. Even if Ove still complains, it's apparent that he cares a lot. The novel tells Ove's life story through a sequence of flashbacks including the early death of his parents, his romance with Sonja, the difficulties they encountered together, such as a terrible accident that left Sonja paralyzed and resulted in a miscarriage, and his intense, unwavering devotion to her until the end of her life.

Despite being Ove's complete antithesis in many respects, Sonja's warmth and positivity gave his life purpose. He was gone after she died. However Ove starts to rediscover a feeling of purpose and belonging thanks to the new people in his life, particularly Parvaneh and her kids. Even after his metamorphosis, Ove's health subtly declines. Despite having a cardiac issue, he decides not to disclose it to anyone. He passes away quietly in his sleep a few years later. Even though he never meant to, the many people attending his burial are heartwarming indications of how many lives he affected. In Fredrik Backman's novel A Man Called Ove, the protagonist, Ove, is depicted as a complex and deeply human character whose stern exterior masks profound grief and compassion. Ove, a curmudgeonly and rigid man, initially appears as a stereotypical grumpy neighbor who enforces neighborhood rules and resents the changing world around him. However, Backman skillfully peels back the layers of Ove's personality to reveal a man shaped by loss, loyalty, and a deeply ingrained sense of duty. The early death of his beloved wife, Sonja, leaves him isolated and bereft of purpose, leading him to contemplate suicide. Yet, Ove's interactions with his persistent new neighbors, particularly the spirited Parvaneh and her family, gradually rekindle his connection to life

CHAPTER II

PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY

A psychological theory is a collection of justifications, or a framework, used to comprehend and explain human behaviour and mental processes. Psychologists create these theories to forecast people's thoughts, behaviours, and reactions in different circumstances. They are models that assist us in making sense of the complicated world of behaviour and the mind. Psychological theories are fact-based concepts that explain human behaviour phenomena. They are predicated on an empirically supported hypothesis. Therefore, a psychological theory has two essential elements: It needs to describe behaviour. It must be able to forecast future actions.

The word theory appears surprisingly frequently in everyday speech. It often denotes an assumption, intuition, or estimate. Some people may even ignore important facts as just a theory. However, a theory in science is much more than a conjecture. A theory presents a testable concept or idea. Through empirical research, scientists can test a hypothesis and collect data confirming or disproving it. Psychological theories originate from the viewpoints of different subfields of psychology. Each stands for a distinct perspective on people's conduct and mentality. This does not imply that one hypothesis is correct or superior to another. There are many methods for comprehending, elucidating, and forecasting human thought.

The five main psychological theories include behavioural, cognitive, humanistic, psychodynamic, and biological theories. Let us examine these psychological ideas and their mechanisms in more detail. Behaviourism, the Theory of learning known as behavioural psychology, is predicated on the notion that all behaviours are learned through conditioning. Internal mental processes are not taken into account at all in this method.

Instead, it emphasizes how behaviour can be taught and shaped by interactions with the environment, such as associations, rewards, and punishments.

Behavioural theories dominated psychology throughout the first half of the 20th century, supported by well-known psychologists like B.F. Skinner and John B. Watson. 2. Personality, Human Development, and Culture: International Perspectives on Psychological Science Psychology Press, Schwarzer R, Frensch .P Therapists still frequently employ behavioural approaches today to assist their clients in developing new behaviours and skills.

The focus of cognitive psychology theories is on internal states, including motivation, reasoning, attention, problem-solving, and decision-making. These theories explain various mental processes, such as how the mind processes information and how our beliefs influence particular feelings and actions. Theories in cognitive psychology contend that our thoughts have a significant role in how we perceive and react to the world. Regarding how information is processed, saved, retrieved, and used, some theories adopt an information processing stance, arguing that the human mind functions similarly to a computer. According to some views, people create mental models, or schemas, to aid in the organization and interpretation of data. We then use our pre-existing schemas to inform how we perceive new information.

Theories of humanistic psychology started gaining traction in the 1950s. Four theorists, Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, were among the leading humanists. Humanist conceptions of behaviour highlighted people's fundamental goodness, contrasting older ideas that frequently concentrated on aberrant behaviour and psychiatric issues. These theories highlight free will and individuals' innate desire to develop and

realize their most significant potential. According to these psychological ideas, people are more than the sum of their parts and tend to adopt a more holistic perspective. Roger's idea of unconditional positive regard, Maslow's hierarchy of wants, and the significance of self-actualization are all important humanistic notions.

Psychodynamic theories examine the unconscious ideas that influence our feelings, attitudes, and personalities. Understanding the underlying reasons for unconscious behaviour is the goal of psychodynamic techniques. All ideas, desires, emotions, and memories hidden from our conscious awareness are collectively called the unconscious. Psychodynamic theorists contend that the unconscious influences our behaviour, although we are unaware of it. These beliefs have a close connection to Sigmund Freud and his adherents. Many Freudian ideas, such as the idea that our adult behaviours stem from our early experiences and that the id, ego, and superego are the three components of the personality, are examples of the psychodynamic approach.

Psychology's founding theory, behaviourism, emphasizes external behaviour analysis more than inward mental processes. John B. Watson popularized it in the early 1900s, arguing that psychology should only study what is observable and quantifiable. Later, B.F. Skinner expanded on this Theory by presenting the idea of operant conditioning, which describes how rewards and punishments can either increase or weaken behaviour. According to behaviourism, people are fashioned by outside stimuli rather than by their inner thoughts or emotions, and all human acts are taught through interaction with the environment. The Theory is predicated on the notion that conduct may be predicted and altered by manipulating an individual's environment.

Behaviourism has been widely applied in education, therapy, and even behaviour modification programs due to its emphasis on experience-based learning. It also offers a helpful lens through which to analyze literary characters by examining how their environment and prior experiences influence their behaviours. One of behaviourism's central tenets is that behaviour is learnt through conditioning. There are two primary kinds: operant conditioning, which B.F. created by Skinner, and classical conditioning, which Ivan Pavlov first presented. Learning through association is a feature of classical conditioning; for instance, a dog may salivate in response to a bell that signals food. Contrarily, operant conditioning is predicated on the notion that actions are dictated by their results.

A reward increases the likelihood that a behaviour will be repeated, whereas a punishment decreases the probability of a behaviour recur. According to this notion, people learn to adjust to their surroundings and develop habits. It is possible to view commonplace human actions like adhering to rules, avoiding conflict, and getting up early for work as the outcome of gradual reinforcement or punishment. Behaviourism sees the mind as a black box. It concentrates on the activities visible from the outside rather than what is happening inside a person's thoughts or feelings. Because of this, the idea is applicable and quantifiable, particularly in behaviour training, therapy, and education. Despite criticism for disregarding emotions and mental processes, behaviourism is still widely used, especially in classroom administration and behaviour therapy. It provides a methodical approach to comprehending how people respond to particular circumstances and how the correct environment might alter their behaviour.

Behaviourism, another name for behaviour theory, is a branch of psychology focusing on observable behaviours and how the environment shapes them. It implies that

encounters with the environment, not ideas or feelings, are how all behaviour is learnt. John B. Watson, who thought psychology should only examine quantifiable and observable behaviour, formally presented the Theory. In behaviourism, there are two primary forms of learning: operant conditioning, which B.F. presented. Skinner involves learning through rewards and punishments and classical conditioning, which was established by Ivan Pavlov and involves behaviour being learnt by association. Another early contributor, Edward Thorndike, developed the Law of Effect, which states that actions that result in favourable consequences are more likely to be repeated. Since rewards and penalties shape conduct, behaviour theory has several real-world applications in parenting, education, therapy, and the workplace.

A psychological theory that stresses the analysis of observable behaviour, behaviourism, was instrumental in forming the scientific underpinnings of psychology during the 20th century. According to this school of thought, psychology should focus primarily on behaviour rather than mental processes. A novel and scientific approach to studying human and animal behaviour was provided by behaviourism, which concentrated on how people learn from their surroundings. Earlier psychological approaches that mainly depended on introspection and the subjective study of consciousness were largely challenged by this viewpoint. Behaviourism is based on the idea that all behaviours are learned through conditioning and that feelings, motivations, and other interior mental states are either unimportant or subordinate to acts that can be seen.

The history of behaviourism, the contributions of its influential personalities, the fundamental ideas it espouses, its uses, its detractors, and its continued applicability in modern psychology are all examined in this essay.

Behaviourism's rise signified a dramatic shift from structuralism and functionalism, the two previous ideologies. John B. Watson was one of the first and most well-known behaviourists. In 1913, he wrote a seminal paper titled "Psychology as the Behaviourist Views It." In this essay, Watson argued that psychology should be regarded as an impartial, experimental area of natural science.

He argued that psychology research should concentrate on conduct rather than consciousness, that analysing observable activities is important, and dismissed introspection as unscientific. Watson believed that psychology needed to rely on data that could be evaluated and validated objectively if it was to become a serious science. His viewpoint laid the groundwork for one of the most significant psychological movements in history.Another major contributor to behaviourist theory was Ivan Pavlov, a Russian physiologist known for discovering classical conditioning. Though he did not consider himself a psychologist, Pavlov's experiments with dogs profoundly influenced the development of behaviourism. In his research, Pavlov demonstrated that dogs could be trained to salivate at the sound of a bell if the sound was repeatedly paired with food presentation.

This phenomenon, which Pavlov called the "conditioned reflex, showed that animals could learn to associate a previously neutral stimulus with a biologically significant event. Pavlov's work laid the foundation for later behaviourists like Watson and B.F. Skinner expanded on his ideas to develop more comprehensive theories of learning. Edward Thorndike also contributed to the early development of behaviourist thought, particularly through his work on the Law of Effect. This principle suggests that behaviours followed by satisfying outcomes are more likely to be repeated, while those followed by unpleasant outcomes are less likely to occur again. Thorndike's research with cats in puzzle boxes provided empirical support for this idea and helped pave the way for future

studies on operant conditioning. While Thorndike's work is sometimes considered a precursor to formal behaviourism, his emphasis on measurable outcomes made him an important figure in its development. The most famous behaviourist, Skinner, built on his predecessors' work to formulate a more systematic approach to understanding behaviour. Skinner is best known for his Theory of operant conditioning, which examines how behaviour is shaped by its consequences. He distinguished between two types of reinforcement: positive reinforcement, which involves adding a pleasant stimulus to increase behaviour, and negative reinforcement, which involves removing an unpleasant stimulus to achieve the same effect.

Skinner also identified different types of punishment that decrease the likelihood of a behaviour occurring again. Through experiments with animals in the so-called "Skinner Box," he demonstrated how rats and pigeons could learn complex behaviours through reinforcement schedules. These findings had profound implications for psychology and education, showing that behaviour could be modified through systematic control of the environment. Behaviourism is grounded in several key principles that influence psychological research and practice. One of the most fundamental concepts is classical conditioning, which describes how organisms learn to associate one stimulus with another. This process explains much basic learning behaviour, from phobias to habits.

Operant conditioning, on the other hand, focuses on the consequences of behaviour. It suggests that behaviours followed by rewards are more likely to be repeated, while those followed by punishments are less likely to occur. Reinforcement schedules, such as fixed-ratio, variable-ratio, fixed-interval, and variable-interval, determine how often behaviour is reinforced and have different effects on the speed and strength of learning. Extinction occurs when a previously reinforced behaviour is no longer followed

by reinforcement, leading to a gradual decrease in that behaviour. Generalization refers to the tendency to respond similarly to stimuli similar to the conditioned stimulus, while discrimination involves learning to differentiate between similar stimuli.

These principles have been applied in numerous practical settings, demonstrating the lasting impact of behaviourism. In education, teachers use reinforcement to encourage good behaviour and academic performance. Positive reinforcement, such as praise or rewards, is often employed to motivate students. Behaviourist strategies like programmed instruction and task analysis help break down complex skills into manageable steps, making learning more accessible. Behaviour modification plans based on operant conditioning principles are used to improve classroom management and support students with special needs.

In therapy, behaviourism has led to the development of several practical treatment approaches. Behaviour therapy, which focuses on changing maladaptive behaviours, includes techniques such as systematic desensitization, flooding, and aversion therapy. These methods are particularly effective in treating phobias, anxiety disorders, and behavioural problems. Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), a specialized form of behaviour therapy, is widely used in the treatment of autism spectrum disorder. Applied Behaviour Analysis involves the careful observation of behaviour, the identification of reinforces, and the use of structured interventions to promote desired behaviours and reduce problematic ones.

Behaviourism has also been influential in the field of animal training. Trainers use principles of operant conditioning to teach animals various tasks, from basic obedience commands to complex routines in entertainment or service roles. Techniques like shaping,

chaining, and reinforcement are essential tools in this process. These applications highlight the versatility and effectiveness of behaviourist methods in modifying behaviour across a wide range of contexts.Despite its many successes, behaviourism has not been without its critics. One major criticism is that it is overly reductionist, simplifying complex human experiences into basic stimulus-response patterns. Critics argue that by ignoring mental processes such as thinking, emotion, and motivation, behaviourism fails to capture the full richness of human behaviour. The rise of cognitive psychology in the mid-20th century brought renewed attention to these internal processes and challenged behaviourism's dominance.

Another point of contention is that behaviourism does not adequately address the role of biological and genetic factors in behaviour. While behaviourists emphasize environmental influences, research has shown that heredity and brain function also play significant roles in shaping behaviour. This has led to more integrative approaches, such as biopsychology and cognitive neuroscience, which consider environmental and biological factors. Ethical concerns have also been raised regarding some behaviourist experiments. For example, the Little Albert experiment has been criticized for its lack of informed consent and for potentially causing long-term psychological harm to the infant. Modern ethical guidelines for psychological research are much more stringent, and such studies would not be approved today. Nonetheless, these historical examples serve as important reminders of the need for ethical considerations in behavioural research.

Despite these criticisms, behaviourism remains a valuable and influential approach within psychology. Many contemporary psychologists adopt a more balanced perspective incorporating behaviourist principles alongside cognitive, humanistic, and biological

insights. For example, cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) combines behaviourist techniques with cognitive strategies to treat conditions such as depression, anxiety, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. CBT recognizes the importance of thoughts and beliefs but uses reinforcement and behavioural exercises to bring about change.

Behaviourist principles continue to inform research and practice in education, mental health, and organizational psychology. Behaviour management systems based on reinforcement are still widely used in classrooms. Techniques like exposure therapy and behavioural activation are effective treatments for various psychological disorders in clinical settings. Even in the workplace, principles of reinforcement and motivation are applied to improve employee performance and satisfaction.

Behaviourism has had a profound and lasting impact on psychology. Its emphasis on observable behaviour, empirical research, and systematic experimentation laid the groundwork for psychology as a scientific discipline. Though it has been criticized for its limitations and narrow focus, many of its principles have stood the test of time. Today, behaviourism is often integrated with other psychological approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of human behaviour. Its legacy can be seen in educational practices, therapeutic interventions, animal training, and beyond. By continuing to explore and refine behaviourist concepts, psychologists can better understand how behaviour is learned and how it can be changed to improve individual and societal outcomes.

Humanistic psychology, also known as the third force in psychology, emerged in the mid-20th century as a reaction to the deterministic nature of psychoanalysis and the rigid scientific approach of behaviourism. Unlike these earlier schools of thought,

humanistic Theory focuses on the individual as a whole, emphasizing personal growth, self-actualization, free will, and the inherent goodness of human beings. It seeks to understand people through their subjective experiences and believes everyone has an internal drive to achieve their fullest potential. Central to the humanistic approach is the idea that psychological well-being is achieved not by modifying behaviour alone or uncovering unconscious conflict but by nurturing the inner self. This essay explores the historical development of humanistic psychology, its core principles, major theorists, practical applications, criticisms, and enduring influence in the modern psychological landscape.The historical context in which humanistic psychology developed is essential to understanding its foundations. During the early to mid-20th century, psychology was primarily dominated by two schools: psychoanalysis, founded by Sigmund Freud, and behaviourism, championed by figures like John B. Watson and B. F. Skinner.

Psychoanalysis focuses on unconscious motives and childhood experiences as determinants of behaviour, often painting a pessimistic picture of the human condition. Conversely, behaviourism limited itself to studying observable behaviour, ignoring inner mental states entirely. Many psychologists and thinkers became disillusioned with these perspectives, which they felt failed to account for the richness of human experience. In response, humanistic psychology arose as a movement that placed the individual and their subjective experience at the centre of inquiry. It aimed to provide a more holistic and optimistic view of human nature.

One of the foundational figures of humanistic psychology was Carl Rogers. Trained initially in clinical psychology, Rogers developed what became known as person-centred therapy, a form of psychotherapy that emphasized unconditional positive regard,

empathy, and genuineness on the therapist's part. Rogers believed that individuals possess an innate tendency toward growth and fulfilment, which he called the actualizing tendency. According to Rogers, when people are in environments that provide acceptance and support, they are more likely to become self-actualized and psychologically healthy. In contrast, when people experience conditional regard acceptance only when they behave in specific ways, they may develop incongruence between their authentic self and their ideal self. This incongruence can lead to feelings of anxiety and low self-worth. Rogers' Theory emphasized the importance of the self-concept and believed that a psychologically healthy person has a self-concept congruent with their experiences.

Another key figure in the humanistic movement was Abraham Maslow, best known for his hierarchy of needs. Maslow argued that human motivation is driven by a series of hierarchical needs, beginning with basic physiological requirements such as food and shelter and progressing through safety, love and belonging, esteem, and finally, self-actualization. According to Maslow, self-actualization is realizing one's fullest potential and living by one's values and beliefs. Maslow studied exemplary individuals such as Albert Einstein and Eleanor Roosevelt to understand the characteristics of self-actualized people. He found that they tended to be creative, autonomous, realistic, and deeply concerned with the welfare of others. Maslow's emphasis on positive mental health and the pursuit of meaning contrasted sharply with the pathology-focused approaches of Freud and behaviourists.

Humanistic psychology is grounded in several core assumptions that differentiate it from other schools of thought. First and foremost is the belief in free will. Humanistic theorists argue that individuals are not merely the product of their environment or

unconscious drives but can make choices and shape their destinies. This emphasis on agency empowers individuals to take responsibility for their lives and promotes a sense of purpose. Second, humanistic psychology highly values the individual's subjective experience. Rather than relying solely on objective measurements and external observations, humanistic psychologists strive to understand how people perceive and interpret their worlds. This phenomenological approach considers the individual's inner life as important as observable behaviour.

Another key principle of humanistic Theory is the belief in the inherent goodness of people. While psychoanalysis viewed individuals as driven by selfish desires and inner conflict, and behaviourism often treated them as programmable organisms, humanistic psychology adopted a more compassionate and hopeful view. It held that people are fundamentally good and possess an inner drive toward personal growth and fulfilment. This assumption underlies therapeutic practices emphasizing empathy, authenticity, and non-judgmental support. From a humanistic perspective, therapy's goal is not to "fix" the client but to provide an environment where the client can realize their potential and become more fully themselves.

In practice, humanistic psychology has significantly influenced the field of psychotherapy. Person-centred therapy, developed by Carl Rogers, remains one of the most widely practised forms of humanistic therapy. It is characterized by a non-directive approach in which the therapist provides a supportive environment that encourages clients to explore their feelings and experiences. Through this process, clients are believed to gain insight, resolve internal conflicts, and move toward self-actualization. The therapist's role is not to interpret or analyze the client's behaviour but to act as a growth facilitator. Other

forms of humanistic therapy include Gestalt therapy, developed by Fritz Perls, which emphasizes awareness, responsibility, and the integration of different aspects of the self.

Humanistic principles have also been found to be applicable in education, health care, and organizational development. In education, humanistic approaches encourage student-centered learning, emphasizing the development of the whole person rather than rote memorization of facts. Teachers are seen as facilitators rather than authorities, and classrooms are designed to foster autonomy, creativity, and self-motivation. In health care, holistic models of treatment that consider patients' physical, emotional, and spiritual needs reflect humanistic values. In business, humanistic principles have informed leadership styles prioritizing employee well-being, job satisfaction, and personal growth.

Despite its many contributions, humanistic psychology has not been without its critics. One common criticism is that it lacks scientific rigour. Because it emphasizes subjective experience and rejects many forms of quantitative measurement, some psychologists argue that humanistic Theory is too vague and difficult to test empirically. While appealing, self-actualization and unconditional positive regard are often criticized as poorly defined and lacking predictive power. Additionally, critics argue that humanistic psychology may be overly idealistic, assuming that all individuals have the capacity and motivation for personal growth when, in reality, some may be hindered by severe psychological disorders or socio-economic constraints.

Furthermore, humanistic Theory has been critiqued for its focus on individualism, particularly in Western cultures. The emphasis on personal fulfilment and self-expression may not resonate with collectivist cultures prioritizing community, family, and social

harmony. Critics argue that humanistic psychology may inadvertently promote self-centeredness or neglect the importance of social and cultural factors in shaping behaviour. However, proponents of the Theory maintain that its emphasis on human dignity, empathy, and personal growth is universally relevant and can be adapted to different cultural contexts.

Despite these criticisms, humanistic psychology has had a lasting influence on psychology and continues to inform many areas of research and practice. For instance, the rise of positive psychology owes much to the groundwork laid by humanistic thinkers. Positive psychology focuses on strengths, well-being, and factors contributing to a fulfilling life. Like humanistic psychology, it seeks to understand what makes life worth living and how individuals can achieve their highest potential. Similarly, the modern emphasis on mindfulness, resilience, and emotional intelligence in clinical and educational settings reflects the humanistic concern with holistic well-being and personal growth. In the therapeutic realm, humanistic ideas have been integrated into various treatment approaches. Many cognitive-behavioral therapists incorporate humanistic principles such as empathy and client-centered relationships. Existential therapy, which explores themes like freedom, responsibility, and meaning, also shares many values with humanistic psychology.

Even psychodynamic and behavioural approaches have begun to recognize the importance of the therapeutic alliance and the client's personal goals, both of which are central to humanistic practice. Humanistic psychology represents a profound and enduring contribution to understanding human behaviour and mental health. By emphasizing free will, personal growth, and the individual's inherent dignity, it offers a hopeful and empowering vision of what it means to be human. While it may lack the empirical

precision of other psychological models, its influence can be seen across various disciplines and practices. Humanistic principles, from therapy and education to health care and business, continue to shape how we understand and support human development. In an era of technological advancement and social change, the humanistic commitment to empathy, authenticity, and personal meaning remains as relevant as ever.

Psychoanalytic Theory, one of the earliest and most influential frameworks in psychology, was developed by Sigmund Freud in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This Theory laid the foundation for understanding human behaviour through the lens of unconscious motivation, early childhood experiences, and internal psychological conflicts. Freud's psychoanalytic model conceptualized the mind as divided into conscious, preconscious, and unconscious domains, with the unconscious being a repository of thoughts, desires, and memories not accessible to conscious awareness but influencing behaviour. Central to Freud's Theory were concepts such as the id, ego, and superego, mechanisms of defence, psychosexual stages of development, and the interpretation of dreams. Psychoanalytic Theory has profoundly impacted psychology, literature, art, and culture. Despite undergoing numerous revisions and facing significant criticism over the decades, its legacy continues to be felt in various forms of psychotherapy and theoretical perspectives. This essay explores the origins, key tenets, major contributors, applications, criticisms, and lasting impact of psychoanalytic Theory within psychology.

Sigmund Freud, an Austrian neurologist, introduced psychoanalytic Theory as a method for treating psychopathology through dialogue between a patient and a psychoanalyst. Freud initially worked with patients suffering from hysteria and other unexplained physical symptoms, leading him to hypothesize that these conditions had

psychological rather than physiological origins. He postulated that unresolved unconscious conflicts, often stemming from childhood experiences, were the source of neurotic symptoms. Freud developed techniques such as free association, dream analysis, and transference interpretation to explore these hidden conflicts. Free association involved encouraging patients to speak freely about whatever came to mind, allowing unconscious material to surface. Dream analysis was used to decode the symbolic meaning of dreams, which Freud referred to as the "royal road to the unconscious." Transference refers to redirecting feelings from a significant person in a patient's past onto the therapist, providing insight into unresolved relational patterns.

Freud’s model of the psyche was organized into three structures: the id, ego, and superego. The id, present from birth, is the source of instinctual drives and operates on the pleasure principle, seeking immediate gratification without consideration for reality or morality. The ego, which develops to mediate between the id and the external world, operates on the reality principle and employs rational strategies to satisfy desires in socially cceptable ways. The superego emerging from internalized parental and societal standards, functions as the moral conscience often inducing guilt or shame when its ideals are unmet. These three structures constantly interact, often producing internal conflict in behaviour and psychological symptoms. For example, a person might feel anxiety when the id's desires conflict with the superego's prohibitions, prompting the ego to deploy defence mechanisms such as repression, denial, projection, or displacement to reduce psychological tension.

A central component of Freud's psychoanalytic Theory is his Theory of psychosexual development, which posits that personality develops through a series of stages centred on erogenous zones. These stages include the oral, anal, phallic, latency,

and genital stages, each associated with specific conflicts nd potential fixations. The oral stage (birth to 1 year) focuses on pleasure through sucking and feeding; issues during this stage can result in dependency or oral habits in adulthood. The anal stage (1–3 years) centres on toilet training and control, potentially leading to either obsessive cleanliness or messiness. The phallic stage (3–6 years) introduces the Oedipus and Electra complexes, where children develop unconscious desires for the opposite-sex parent and rivalry with the same-sex parent. Successful resolution leads to the formation of the superego. The latency stage (6–12 years) involves a period of relative calm, during which sexual energies are sublimated into socially acceptable activities.

The genital stage, adolescence onward, marks the reawakening of sexual impulses and the capacity for mature relationships. Freud believed unresolved conflicts in any of these stages could result in fixation and influence adult personality and behaviour. Freud's work paved the way for a host of followers and critics who expanded, modified, or opposed his theories. Carl Jung, originally a close associate of Freud, broke away to form his analytical psychology. While Jung agreed with the existence of unconscious processes, he emphasized the collective unconscious as a shared reservoir of archetypes and symbols common to all humanity. He downplayed the centrality of sexuality in development. Alfred Adler also diverged from Freud, emphasizing the importance of social interest, feelings of inferiority, and striving for superiority as fundamental motivators of behaviour.

Karen Horney challenged Freud's views on female psychology and introduced concepts like basic anxiety and the need for security in interpersonal relationships. These theorists and others contributed to what is now known as the Neo-Freudian movement, which retained the importance of unconscious processes while emphasizing social and cultural factors more.

In practice, psychoanalytic Theory gave rise to psychoanalysis, a long-term form of psychotherapy aimed at uncovering unconscious conflicts and fostering insight and emotional growth. Psychoanalytic therapy traditionally involves multiple sessions per week over several years, with the patient reclining on a couch and the analyst remaining relatively silent to encourage transference and free association.

Through this process, patients gradually gain awareness of repressed thoughts and feelings, enabling them to resolve internal conflicts and achieve greater psychological integration. Modern adaptations of psychoanalytic therapy, such as psychodynamic therapy, have made this approach more accessible by reducing session frequency and duration while retaining the focus on unconscious processes, childhood experiences, and the therapeutic relationship. Beyond therapy, psychoanalytic Theory has influenced numerous fields, including literature, film, art, and cultural studies.

Freudian concepts such as repression, the unconscious, and the Oedipus complex have become part of everyday language and continue to inform critical analyses of artistic and cultural texts. For example, literary critics use psychoanalytic Theory to explore characters' unconscious motivations, symbolic meanings, and the dynamics of desire and repression in narrative structure. In film theory, Freudian ideas have been used to interpret visual imagery, dream sequences, and the psychological development of characters. Even in marketing and advertising, psychoanalytic principles are applied to tap into unconscious desires and create emotionally resonant messages. Despite its widespread influence, psychoanalytic Theory has been extensively criticized, particularly by proponents of more empirically driven approaches. One of the major criticisms is its lack of scientific

testability. Many of Freud's concepts, such as the id, Oedipus complex, and defence mechanisms, are difficult to operationalize and measure, making them incompatible with the scientific method. Critics argue that psychoanalytic Theory is unfalsifiable, meaning it cannot be proven wrong because it can explain behaviour post hoc. Additionally, Freud's overemphasis on sexuality, especially in the early stages of development, has been challenged as reductionist and culturally biased. Feminist scholars have critiqued the patriarchal assumptions embedded in Freud's theories, particularly his portrayal of female development as secondary and derivative of male development.

Another critique lies in the methodology of Freud's research, which was primarily based on case studies of a small, non-representative sample. These case studies often lacked objectivity and relied heavily on subjective interpretation. Moreover, the intensive time and financial commitment required for traditional psychoanalysis make it inaccessible to many individuals, limiting its practical application in modern mental health settings. The rise of cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) and other evidence-based practices has further marginalized psychoanalysis in clinical psychology, as these newer approaches offer more structured, goal-oriented, and empirically validated interventions.

Despite these criticisms, psychoanalytic Theory remains a cornerstone in the history of psychology and continues to evolve. Contemporary psychoanalytic thinkers have integrated insights from attachment theory, neuroscience, and developmental psychology to refine and support psychoanalytic ideas. For instance, object relations theory, developed by Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott, and others, focuses on internalized relationships with significant others and their impact on personality development. Attachment theory, pioneered by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, has drawn on

psychoanalytic ideas while emphasizing early caregiver-infant interactions and their influence on emotional regulation and relational patterns. Neuropsychoanalysis is an emerging field that seeks to bridge the gap between psychoanalytic Theory and neuroscience, exploring how unconscious processes are represented in the brain.

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in psychodynamic therapy, particularly for the treatment of complex mental health conditions such as personality disorders, trauma, and chronic depression. Research has shown that psychodynamic therapy can be effective, with some studies suggesting that its benefits increase over time, even after treatment has ended. The therapeutic relationship, a central focus of psychodynamic therapy, is now recognized across various approaches as a critical factor in successful outcomes. Therapists of different orientations routinely employ concepts such as transference, countertransference, and resistance to understand and navigate the therapeutic process.

Psychoanalytic Theory has played a foundational role in shaping modern psychology's understanding of the human mind and behaviour. Despite its limitations and the critiques against it, the Theory introduced ground breaking ideas about the unconscious, the role of childhood experiences, and the complexities of internal psychological conflict. Its influence extends beyond clinical settings, permeating literature, art, culture, and everyday thought. As the field of psychology continues to advance, psychoanalytic Theory remains relevant, not as an unchanging doctrine, but as a dynamic framework that continues to evolve in light of new research and societal changes. Its enduring legacy lies in its commitment to exploring the depth and richness of human experience, a mission that remains at the heart of psychological inquiry today.

Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST), developed by psychologist Laura L. Carstensen, offers a profound understanding of how humans prioritize their goals and social relationships based on their perception of time. This Theory has gained traction in psychological and gerontological studies due to its compelling explanation of behavioural changes, particularly in older adults. According to SST, as individuals age and perceive their future as increasingly limited, they shift from acquiring information and expanding social networks to nurturing emotionally satisfying relationships and experiences.

In contrast, younger individuals who view time as open-ended tend to prioritize knowledge acquisition, exploration, and broader social connections. This temporal shift in goals and behaviour highlights the intersection of cognition, motivation, and emotional regulation across the human lifespan. The core premise of SST centres around the human perception of time, not merely chronological but psychological time. Carstensen and her colleagues argue that this perception drives the prioritization of social and emotional goals. When time feels abundant, as it often does in youth, individuals are motivated by future-oriented goals such as learning, career advancement, and meeting new people. They seek to expand their horizons, gather knowledge, and prepare for long-term outcomes. However, as people grow older and begin to see their remaining time as more finite, their motivations change.

Rather than continuing to invest in expansive, future-based goals, they concentrate on the present moment, valuing relationships and activities that offer immediate emotional satisfaction. This motivational shift has significant implications for emotional regulation. One of the most consistent findings within SST research is that older adults report higher levels of emotional well-being than their younger counterparts. This might seem

paradoxical, considering the physical and cognitive declines often associated with ageing. However, SST offers a psychological explanation: older adults are more selective in their social interactions, engaging with people who bring them joy and comfort. They also avoid stressful or conflict-ridden encounters, which helps maintain emotional stability. This selective narrowing of social networks is not a sign of social withdrawal or loneliness but a strategic adjustment to maximize emotional satisfaction.

Research supports these claims. Studies have demonstrated that older adults remember positive information more than negative, a phenomenon known as the positivity effect. This cognitive bias is believed to result from the goal shift proposed by SST. For example, in experimental studies where participants are shown emotional stimuli, older adults consistently favour and recall positive images or words over neutral or negative ones. This suggests that the brain's emotional processing mechanisms evolve with age to prioritize positivity, likely as a form of adaptive emotional regulation.

Another key area where SST provides valuable insight is understanding social network structure and function. Young adults often have large, diverse social circles filled with acquaintances and casual friends. These networks serve various instrumental functions, such as networking, information gathering, and social exploration. However, as individuals age, these broader networks shrink. Older adults often maintain a smaller, more intimate circle of close friends and family members. According to SST, this is not due to social loss or a decline in social skills but is instead a reflection of motivational realignment. With a focus on emotional gratification, older adults concentrate on relationships that offer depth, security, and mutual affection.

This intentional narrowing of social circles is crucial for maintaining mental health and emotional well-being in later life. Studies have shown that older adults who prioritize emotionally meaningful relationships tend to experience lower rates of depression and anxiety. Their ability to focus on positive interactions and disengage from negative ones acts as a psychological buffer against many of the challenges associated with ageing, such as bereavement, physical decline, and social isolation. Socioemotional Selectivity Theory thus not only explains these behavioural tendencies but underscores their adaptive value in maintaining emotional equilibrium during the ageing process.

Moreover, SST holds profound implications for how society approaches ageing. For instance, in caregiving environments, such as assisted living facilities and nursing homes, understanding that older adults prioritize emotional meaning over novelty can influence the design of social and recreational programs. Rather than emphasizing variety and excitement, programs that foster intimate connections, reminiscence, and meaningful interactions may be more effective in promoting psychological well-being. This understanding can also inform policies aimed at improving the quality of life for older people, suggesting a shift in focus from physical activity and cognitive stimulation alone to include emotional enrichment and social support.

The Theory also has practical applications beyond ageing populations. It has been applied to understand behaviour in younger individuals facing terminal illness or other situations where the perception of time becomes limited. Research has shown that young people with life-threatening illnesses often exhibit behaviours similar to older adults, choosing to spend their time with close loved ones and focusing on emotionally meaningful activities. This supports the idea that it is not age itself but the perception of

the remaining time that drives the motivational shifts described by SST. Such findings highlight the Theory's broader relevance in understanding human behaviour in contexts where time is psychologically constrained.In contrast, when younger individuals perceive time as expansive and opportunities as unlimited, they may tolerate emotionally unsatisfying experiences in exchange for future rewards. For example, they might endure unpleasant jobs, engage in large but shallow social networks, or pursue challenging academic goals geared toward long-term benefit.

This future oriented mindset aligns with the goals of exploration and self-development, which SST identifies as primary motivators in early life stages. While this approach may lead to greater achievement and knowledge accumulation, it often comes at the cost of emotional well-being in the short term.Additionally, SST intersects with other psychological theories, such as Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development. While Erikson emphasized the role of identity and generativist in middle and late adulthood, SST adds a motivational dimension that helps explain why individuals prioritize specific goals at different life stages. Together, these theories provide a richer, more nuanced understanding of adult development, highlighting the structural and emotional dimensions of ageing.

The Theory's applicability has also been explored in cross-cultural contexts. Although the core principles of SST are considered universal, cultural values can influence how individuals prioritize emotional goals. In collectivist societies, for instance, familial relationships may take precedence in later life, whereas individualistic cultures may emphasize personal happiness and autonomy. Nonetheless, the general trend of narrowing social circles and focusing on emotionally rewarding experiences in older adulthood has

been observed across various cultures, suggesting SST captures a fundamental aspect of human motivation.

Technology and digital communication offer another intriguing lens through which to view SST. With the rise of social media and instant messaging, younger generations maintain expansive networks that allow constant social exploration. However, older adults tend to use these platforms differently. They are more likely to use technology to strengthen close relationships rather than seek new ones. This selective use of digital tools reflects the underlying motivational goals outlined in SST, reaffirming the Theory's relevance even in modern, technologically advanced societies.

Cognitive Theory is a central framework in psychology, focusing on the intricate processes humans acquire, interpret, store, and utilize knowledge. Rooted in the belief that mental functions should be studied as actively constructed and rational, Cognitive Theory explores internal mechanisms like perception, attention, language, memory, and problem-solving. Unlike behaviourism, which emphasizes observable stimuli and responses, cognitive theorists argue that understanding human behaviour requires examining the underlying mental processes. This essay explores the historical development, key concepts, major theorists, practical applications, and contemporary developments of Cognitive Theory, emphasizing its enduring relevance in educational, clinical, and technological contexts.

Historical Development of Cognitive Theory the emergence of Cognitive Theory in the mid-20th century marked a significant shift in psychological thought. Known as the cognitive revolution this movement arose in response to the perceived limitations

behaviourism, which had dominated psychology since the early 1900s—behaviourists, such as John B. Watson and B.F. Skinner insisted that psychology should focus solely on observable behaviours, rejecting introspective methods as unscientific. However, by the 1950s, many psychologists began to argue that the human mind could and should be studied scientifically, even if its processes were not directly observable.

One of the catalysts of this revolution was the advancement of computer technology. Computers offered a new metaphor for understanding the mind, likening it to an information-processing machine capable of encoding, storing, and retrieving data. This parallel encouraged psychologists to conceptualize mental processes as structured, logical operations. In 1956, George A. Miller's seminal paper on the limits of short-term memory, which introduced the concept of "the magical number seven, plus or minus two," further legitimized the study of cognition by quantifying mental capacity (Miller 81). Jean Piaget and Cognitive Development Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget is arguably the most influential figure in Cognitive Theory, particularly in child development. Piaget proposed that children are not passive recipients of knowledge but active constructors of understanding.

Through his observations, he identified four primary stages of cognitive development: the sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational. Each stage represents a qualitatively different way of thinking, reflecting the child's increasing ability to perform complex mental operations (Piaget 12). Piaget's Theory emphasizes two key processes: assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation involves integrating new information into existing cognitive schemas, while accommodation entails modifying those schemas to incorporate new experiences. Children strive to balance these two processes through equilibration, fostering cognitive growth.

Piaget's work profoundly influenced educational practices, advocating for developmentally appropriate instruction and discovery-based learning that aligns with a child's cognitive stage.

Information-Processing Theory and Cognitive Architecture Building on Piaget's foundation, the information-processing model became a dominant paradigm in cognitive psychology. This model views the mind as a system that receives input processes it, and generates output, akin to the operations of a computer. Researchers such as Robert Siegler and John Anderson contributed to this model by analysing how attention, memory, and executive function operate in children and adults. Key components of this Theory include sensory memory, short-term working memory, and long-term memory, each with distinct roles in information retention and manipulation (Atkinson and Shiffrin 125).

One critical development in this area is the understanding of metacognition—thinking about one's own thinking. Metacognitive skills, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's cognitive processes, are essential for effective learning and problem-solving. The information-processing model also introduced the concept of cognitive load, which refers to the amount of mental effort being used in working memory. Educators and instructional designers use this principle to optimize learning environments by minimizing unnecessary cognitive demands.

While Piaget emphasized individual cognitive construction, Lev Vygotsky offered a complementary view highlighting cognitive development's social and cultural context. Vygotsky introduced the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is defined as the range of tasks a learner can perform with guidance but not independently. According to Vygotsky, learning occurs most effectively within this zone through social

interaction and scaffolding provided by more knowledgeable others, such as teachers or peers (Vygotsky 86).

Vygotsky's Theory underscored the importance of language in cognitive development, arguing that internal speech mediates thinking. His work has impacted educational practices, encouraging collaborative learning, dialogue-based instruction, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Unlike Piaget, who saw development as a universal sequence, Vygotsky recognized that cognitive processes are shaped by cultural tools and values, making his Theory particularly relevant in diverse educational settings.

Cognitive Theory also forms the foundation for Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), a widely practised and empirically supported therapeutic approach. Developed by Aaron T. Beck and further advanced by Albert Ellis, CBT posits that maladaptive thoughts contribute to emotional distress and dysfunctional behaviour. Individuals can develop healthier emotions and behaviours by identifying and restructuring these negative thought patterns (Beck 23).

Cognitive Behavioural Theory is based on the premise that cognitive distortions such as catastrophizing, overgeneralization, or black-and-white thinking can be challenged through guided questioning and behavioural experiments. This approach has been successfully applied to treat a wide range of psychological disorders, including depression, anxiety, phobias, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Integrating cognitive principles into therapeutic practice exemplifies the practical utility of Cognitive Theory beyond academic settings. Cognitive Neuroscience and Brain Function. In recent decades, the field of cognitive neuroscience has bridged the gap between psychological theories and biological mechanisms. Researchers can now observe the neural correlates of cognitive processes in

real time by utilizing neuroimaging techniques such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and electroencephalography (EEG). Studies have revealed specific brain regions associated with different cognitive functions: for instance, the prefrontal cortex is involved in executive function, the hippocampus in memory consolidation, and the parietal lobe in spatial reasoning (Gazzaniga et al. 138). These insights have enhanced our understanding of neurological disorders such as Alzheimer's disease, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and dyslexia. Cognitive neuroscience has also informed interventions that target neuroplasticity the brain's ability to reorganize itself in response to experience leading to innovative treatments and educational programs tailored to individual cognitive profiles.

Cognitive Theory has significantly influenced educational psychology by emphasizing how students learn and process information. Instructional approaches grounded in cognitive principles prioritize active engagement, meaningful learning, and critical thinking. For example, strategies such as concept mapping, retrieval practice, and self-explanation are designed to enhance memory retention and knowledge transfer (Bransford et al. 72). Moreover, cognitive theories have led to differentiated instruction, where teaching methods are adapted to accommodate diverse cognitive styles and learning needs. Educators are encouraged to assess students' prior knowledge, provide clear objectives, and scaffold complex tasks. These practices reflect an understanding that learning is a constructive and individualized process profoundly shaped by how information is mentally organized.

Critiques and Limitations of Cognitive Theory despite its widespread acceptance, Cognitive Theory is not without criticism. One major limitation is its tendency to overlook

emotional, social, and unconscious behavioural influences. While the Theory provides a robust framework for understanding rational thought processes, it may underemphasize the role of effect and motivation. Early cognitive models have also been criticized for being overly mechanistic, likening the mind to a computer without acknowledging human consciousness's and subjectivity's complexity (Kihlstrom 144).

Cognitive theories have sometimes been criticized for their limited ecological validity. Laboratory studies on memory and attention may not always reflect how these processes function in real-world contexts. However, contemporary cognitive psychologists have responded to these critiques by integrating insights from affective science, social psychology, and cultural studies to create more comprehensive models of human cognition. Contemporary Developments and Future Directions. Modern cognitive research increasingly adopts interdisciplinary and dynamic approaches. For instance, the rise of embodied cognition challenges the traditional view of the mind as separate from the body. According to this perspective, cognitive processes are deeply rooted in bodily interactions with the environment. Research in this area explores how physical movement, sensory input, and motor activity influence thought and learning (Wilson 625).

Another promising area is artificial intelligence (AI) and cognitive modelling. Researchers aim to understand better how cognition operates by simulating human thought processes in machines. AI systems based on cognitive architectures, such as ACT-R and SOAR, offer insights into decision-making, learning, and problem-solving. These developments advance technological innovation and inform psychological theories of intelligence and behaviour. Cognitive Theory continues to be a vital force in psychological science, offering nuanced explanations for how people think, learn, remember, and solve

problems. From Piaget's developmental stages to contemporary advances in cognitive neuroscience, the Theory has evolved to encompass a broad range of perspectives and applications. Whether in education, therapy, or artificial intelligence, Cognitive Theory provides the conceptual tools necessary to understand the complexities of the human mind. As psychology progresses into the future, cognitive approaches will undoubtedly remain central to exploring the depths of human thought and behaviour.

Attachment theory, developed by British psychologist John Bowlby, is one of the most influential frameworks for understanding human emotional development and relationships. Bowlby's work in the mid-20th century challenged traditional ideas about child development by suggesting that early emotional bonds between infants and caregivers significantly shape psychological well-being. Through the establishment of attachment, infants gain security and the confidence to explore their environment, forming a blueprint for future social and emotional experiences. In modern psychology, attachment theory remains a crucial lens for understanding behaviors across the lifespan, influencing fields such as therapy, education, and social work.

John Bowlby introduced attachment theory based on observations of children who were separated from their parents during World War II. He proposed that infants are biologically programmed to form attachments with caregivers as a survival mechanism (Bowlby 194). According to Bowlby, attachment is not merely a learned behavior but an innate system that motivates the child to seek proximity to a protective figure. This attachment provides a "secure base," allowing the child to explore the world while feeling safe. Bowlby emphasized that the quality of this early attachment profoundly affects a child's social, emotional, and cognitive development. Disruptions in the attachment process, such as prolonged separation, neglect, or inconsistent caregiving, can lead to

emotional difficulties later in life, including anxiety, depression, and difficulty forming healthy relationships.

Building on Bowlby’s theoretical foundation, Mary Ainsworth conducted empirical research that provided concrete evidence for different types of attachment relationships. Her "Strange Situation" experiment, conducted in the 1970s, systematically observed how infants responded to separations and reunions with their caregivers (Ainsworth et al. 50). Ainsworth identified three primary attachment styles: secure, anxious-ambivalent, and avoidant. Securely attached children showed distress when separated from their caregiver but quickly recovered upon reunion, seeking comfort and resuming exploration. Anxious-ambivalent children exhibited intense distress and difficulty calming down even when the caregiver returned. Avoidant children showed little emotional response upon separation or reunion, often avoiding contact altogether. These patterns demonstrated that the consistency and sensitivity of caregiving greatly influence a child's attachment security.

Later researchers expanded Ainsworth's categories to include a fourth style: disorganized attachment. Disorganized attachment is characterized by contradictory behaviors, such as approaching the caregiver but looking away or freezing in place (Main and Solomon 109). This style often emerges in situations where the caregiver is simultaneously a source of comfort and fear, such as in cases of abuse or severe neglect. Disorganized attachment is considered a strong predictor of later psychopathology, including dissociative disorders and difficulties in emotion regulation.

Attachment theory has significant implications beyond early childhood. In adulthood, attachment styles manifest in romantic relationships, friendships, and even

workplace dynamics. Researchers like Cindy Hazan and Phillip Shaver extended Bowlby and Ainsworth's work by studying how attachment styles influence adult romantic relationships. They found that individuals with secure attachment styles tend to form healthier, more stable relationships, while those with insecure attachment styles may struggle with intimacy, trust, and dependency (Hazan and Shaver 515). Understanding one's attachment style can thus be a powerful tool in personal development and psychotherapy, allowing individuals to recognize maladaptive patterns and work toward healthier emotional connections.

Modern interventions often draw directly from attachment theory principles. For example, therapies such as Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) aim to rebuild secure emotional bonds between partners by addressing underlying attachment needs. Similarly, attachment-informed parenting programs help caregivers foster secure attachments by promoting responsiveness, sensitivity, and emotional attunement to children's needs. In cases of trauma or early adversity, therapeutic approaches often focus on healing attachment wounds, reinforcing the idea that the capacity for secure attachment can be rebuilt over time with consistent, supportive relationships.

In conclusion, attachment theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the fundamental role of early emotional bonds in shaping human development. Bowlby's groundbreaking insights, supported by Ainsworth's empirical research and later expansions, highlight the importance of secure attachments for lifelong emotional health. Whether in parenting, education, therapy, or personal relationships, applying the principles of attachment theory can lead to more supportive and resilient human connections. As research continues to evolve, attachment theory remains a

foundational concept, offering profound insights into the emotional lives of individuals across all stages of life.

CHAPTER - III

LIFE BEYOND LOSS: OVE'S RECONNECTION WITH THE WORLD in *Fredrik Backman, A Man Called Ove.*

In Fredrik Backman's heart warming and melancholic novel *A Man Called Ove*, the titular character presents an intricate portrait of grief, Isolation, and, ultimately, the possibility of emotional reconnection in the face of devastating personal loss. *Ove*, a curmudgeonly and seemingly misanthropic man in his late fifties, is first introduced as someone defined by his rules, routines, and unwavering sense of order. However, beneath this gruff exterior lies a broken man who has experienced profound emotional pain: the death of his beloved wife, Sonja. This loss, compounded by years of disappointment, professional frustration, and social alienation, has led *Ove* into a dark psychological space, one where he no longer sees purpose in life.

Backman's novel is not merely a narrative of an elderly widower struggling with loneliness; it is a poignant psychological journey that explores the behavioural mechanisms of grief and healing, the social constructs that define masculinity and ageing, and the profound impact of human connection in fostering resilience. This thesis examines *Ove's* character through the lens of psychological behaviour theory, including key concepts from grief theory, Erikson's psychosocial development model, and attachment theory, to understand how loss does not mark the end of meaning but can become the catalyst for transformation and renewal.

He is the kind of man who points at people he does not like the look of, as if they were burglars and his forefinger a policeman's torch." (page 1)At the novel's beginning .*Ove* is introduced not just as a man grieving the death of his wife but as someone who has

grown estranged from the world. His failed suicide attempts, often interrupted by intrusive neighbours or circumstantial inconveniences, are symbolic of his existential crisis. These acts are not dramatic pleas for attention but rather manifestations of deep psychological withdrawal, an indication that he perceives no reason to go on living without Sonja.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's five stages of grief denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance offer a framework for understanding *Ove's* behaviour in these early stages. Though the stages are not always experienced linearly, *Ove* exhibits clear signs of being caught between anger and depression. His angry interactions with others, including shouting at shop clerks, arguing with neighbours, and railing against societal bureaucracy, serve as a coping mechanism. They mask the vulnerability and helplessness he feels in the absence of his wife. In this sense, *Ove's* outward hostility is not a reflection of malice but rather a defensive psychological strategy to preserve a semblance of control over a world that has become unrecognizable.

Moreover, *Ove's* adherence to routines, rules, and structure highlights a behavioural pattern rooted in operant conditioning, as described in the work of B.F. Skinner. Over the years, *Ove* has developed behavioural reinforcements associated with control and order. These behaviours of checking the radiator, inspecting the neighbourhood, and enforcing parking regulations give him purpose and identity. After Sonja's death, these rituals become a life raft in a sea of uncertainty. His obsession with these practices may seem obsessive or absurd to the outside observer, but within the context of his grief, they serve as stabilizing mechanisms. Without them *Ove* would have no anchor.

His behaviour exemplifies that actions followed by a sense of purpose or control become self-reinforcing. The absence of emotional warmth in his life is substituted with the cold comfort of predictability and precision. Through these lenses *Ove's* character is

not simply antisocial or irritable but demonstrates a psychological survival strategy in the wake of unbearable sorrow.

Psychologically *Ove* is a character frozen in time. He is not simply grieving Sonja's death; he is also grieving a way of life that no longer exists. His past is filled with a series of small but cumulative traumas: the early death of his parents, institutional rejection, economic hardship, and a lifelong struggle with social systems that disregard integrity and hard work. Sonja was his only sanctuary, symbolizing joy, unpredictability, and warmth. Her loss is not merely that of a spouse but of a moral and emotional compass. Without her, Ove cannot find his place in a modern world that seems to reward incompetence and punish integrity.

This alienation reflects Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, particularly the Generativists. Stagnation" stage, which typically occurs during middle to late adulthood. According to Erikson, individuals in this stage seek to contribute to the next generation and find meaning in nurturing relationships. Those who fail to achieve this enter a state of stagnation and despair. Following Sonja's death and forced retirement, Ove finds himself locked in this despair, feeling obsolete and useless. However, Erikson's theory also suggests that positive transformation remains possible, primarily through meaningful connections and a renewed sense of purpose, which both begin to unfold slowly in Ove's life as the novel progresses. "He shoved his hands in his pockets in that particular way of a middle-aged man who expects the worthless world outside to disappoint him". (page 5)

The love journey shifts when he is reluctantly pulled into the lives of his new neighbours, particularly Parvaneh a pregnant Iranian woman who refuses to be intimidated by his cold demeanour. Parvaneh's persistence in seeking *Ove's* help, whether to drive her

to the hospital, teach her to drive, or assist in community matters, functions as a behavioural intervention. Her requests force *Ove* to engage with the world around him in practical, problem-solving ways. These interactions disrupt his patterns of suicidal ideation by introducing small but cumulative acts of responsibility. According to Albert Bandura's reciprocal determinism theory, human behaviour is influenced by the interaction of personal factors, behaviour, and the environment. *Ove's* cognitive schema, built on the belief that he has no value without Sonja, begins to shift as his environment introduces new stimuli: people who need him, neighbours who respect him, and situations that rely on his unique skills. These experiences slowly reframe his sense of identity from one of irrelevance to one of usefulness. In this light *Ove's* transformation is not a sudden epiphany but a behavioural reconditioning shaped by external stimuli and reinforced by positive social feedback.

Through his reluctant engagement with neighbours and strangers alike, be it Jimmy, the overweight and gentle neighbour; Adrian, the teenage boy who needs help with his bike; or Mirsad, a young gay man kicked out by his father *Ove* capacity for empathy resurfaces. These connections, seemingly mundane on the surface, reflect more profound psychological healing. They challenge his prejudices, force him to reconsider rigid moral judgments, and, most importantly, allow him to reconstruct his identity outside the context of loss. John Bowlby's attachment theory becomes particularly relevant here having formed a secure attachment with Sonja.

Ove's loss initially leads to detachment and despair. However, as he builds new attachments, reluctantly, he begins to experience secure emotional bonds again. These relationships do not replace Sonja but expand his capacity to love and be loved, proving that attachment and emotional resilience can be renewed even after profound loss.

The initial stages of *Ove's* psychological profile are steeped in loneliness and rigid internalization of past values. His world is defined by the binary lens through which he sees right and wrong, often refusing to accept the complexity of human emotion or nuance. While irritating to his neighbours, this moral absolutism is a protective mechanism rooted in a lifetime of abandonment, disappointment, and loss. From a behavioural standpoint, *Ove* has been conditioned to equate emotion with weakness. His father taught him to be practical, silent, and loyal, and these early reinforcements laid the groundwork for his inflexible personality. The loss of Sonja only amplifies his rigidity, driving him further into behaviours that shield him from emotional vulnerability. *Ove* does not cry or openly mourn because, in his mind, doing so would betray the principles of self-reliance and masculinity that have governed his life. However, this repression is not sustainable.

According to psychodynamic theory, unexpressed grief and emotional suppression often manifest as irritability, withdrawal, or even somatic symptoms, all of which are visible in *Ove's* daily routines and social interactions. As his interactions with others increase, whether through conflict or reluctant cooperation, the reader begins to see the cracks in *Ove's* emotional armour. Despite claiming indifference, saving a man from being hit by a train reveals his subconscious attachment to life and his internal moral code. While he tells himself that he no longer cares about anyone, his actions suggest otherwise.

This cognitive dissonance, a term coined by Leon Feininger, describes the psychological discomfort arising from conflicting beliefs. *Ove* believes he wants to die, yet his repeated interventions to help others suggest a deeply rooted desire to preserve life and meaning. This dissonance becomes a pivotal force in his behavioural evolution. Each act of kindness he performs, even if begrudgingly, challenges his internal narrative of despair

and purposelessness. These contradictions drive gradual self-reflection and, ultimately, transformation.

The symbolism throughout *A Man Called Ove* reinforces this emotional conflict. The Saab Ove's prized car, represents his loyalty to tradition and past identity. When he argues with his neighbours about the superiority of Saab over other car brands, it is not just about vehicles it is about identity preservation. Letting go of the Saab would mean accepting that the world has changed and that his ideals may no longer fit within modern society. Similarly, his numerous suicide attempts are interrupted not only by human interaction but also by mechanical failure and ironic inconvenience, suggesting that life itself conspires to keep him engaged. These moments, while laced with dark humour, are emblematic of the subconscious pull toward life. Through Backman's narrative structure, the universe does not permit *Ove* to vanish quietly. Instead, he is persistently dragged back into the world by circumstances and people who need him, reigniting his sense of relevance.

Ove's reluctant friendship with Parvaneh becomes the emotional core of his reawakening. As a young immigrant woman, Parvaneh represents everything that initially irritates *Ove n*oise unpredictability, emotional openness, and cultural unfamiliarity. However, it is precisely these traits that challenge his worldview. Her insistence on involving *Ove* in her life despite his protestations forces him to confront his own loneliness and emotional stagnation. In a sense, Parvaneh acts as a behavioural mirror, reflecting *Ove's* potential for empathy and his resistance to change. She does not ask for his permission to care about him; she does.

This unconditional concern disrupts his internalized belief that he is unworthy of love without Sonja. Over time Parvaneh's presence begins to recondition *Ove's* expectations. He starts to anticipate her visits, prepares to assist her, and even finds purpose in being relied

upon. According to positive reinforcement principles in behavioural psychology, the consistent validation and appreciation he receives are stimuli that encourage the repetition of prosaically behaviours. Each support he gives her whether driving lessons, medical trips, or handyman tasks reinforces a new identity rooted in purpose rather than loss.

Another critical aspect of *Ove's* psychological shift is his evolving view of community. Initially, he sees his neighbours as nuisances and intrusions into his solitary world. However, as he begins to engage with their struggles, such as Jimmy's body image issues, Mirsad's rejection by his father, or Rune's deteriorating health, *Ove* starts to perceive the community not as an invasion but as an interconnected web of human needs. This evolution reflects Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, notably the transition from safety and belonging to esteem and self-actualization. *Ove's* earlier fixation on order and rules of safety is gradually replaced by his need to belong and be useful in esteem. Through helping others, he finds a renewed sense of identity. His ability to fix things like cars, radiators, and relationships becomes a metaphor for his psychological healing. The skills that once isolated him now integrate him into a network of human reciprocity. This transformation suggests that healing from loss does not require forgetting the past but reframing it to serve the present.

This shift also invites an exploration of Ove's masculinity. Traditional models of masculinity, particularly in Scandinavian culture, emphasize stoicism, practicality, and emotional restraint. *Ove* embodies these traits to an extreme, believing that vulnerability is synonymous with weakness. However, his experiences challenge these assumptions. As he begins to connect emotionally with others whether comforting Mirsad, allowing Parvaneh's daughters to crawl into his arms, or reminiscing about Sonja he redefines masculinity not as the absence of emotion but as the courage to express it. These moments

signify a crucial breakthrough in his psychological development. The rigid walls of stoicism begin to crumble, allowing for emotional authenticity and intimacy. He is no longer just Sonja's widower or the cranky neighbour; he is a protector, a grandfather figure, and a friend. This redefinition of identity through interpersonal connection and emotional vulnerability is a powerful testament to the human capacity for renewal.

It is also essential to note the role of intergenerational relationships in *Ove's* psychological reintegration. Parvaneh's children, with their innocence and unconditional affection, provide *Ove* with the opportunity to revisit a nurturing role that he was never able to fulfil as a father. The childlike trust they place in him bypasses his defences and awakens a protective instinct that has been dormant. Erikson's stage of Ego Integrity, Despair which occurs in late adulthood, centres on the need to reflect on life with a sense of satisfaction and coherence. *Ove* integrates his past joys and regrets into a meaningful narrative through these intergenerational bonds. He comes to terms with what he has lost not by denying it but by allowing it to inform how he moves forward. This is the essence of psychological healing: the capacity to reconstruct meaning after loss, to transform pain into purpose, and to find identity not in Isolation but in others.

As *Ove's* emotional transformation progresses, his interactions increasingly reflect intentional engagement with others. What began as reluctant compliance becomes active involvement. The shift is subtle yet significant *Ove* is no longer acting solely out of obligation or habit but out of growing emotional investment. This development indicates behavioural modification influenced by positive reinforcement and social reciprocity. He begins to anticipate social interactions and exhibits proactive behaviours that show a desire for connection, such as fixing his neighbours' problems without being asked and visiting individuals in need. This evolution highlights the strength of behavioural theory when

applied to grief recovery. Specifically, that behaviour can change when an individual receives consistent, rewarding feedback from their environment. In *Ove's* case, the rewards come in the form of emotional fulfilment and social inclusion, two things he had denied himself since Sonja's passing.

The psychological significance of purpose cannot be understated in *Ove's* journey. Viktor Frankl a psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, emphasized in his theory of logo therapy that the search for meaning is the primary motivational force in humans. For *Ove,* the initial absence of meaning after Sonja's death was psychologically paralyzing. He believed his usefulness had ended with her life, and this nihilistic mind set fuelled his suicidal ideation. However, as he becomes increasingly involved in his neighbours' lives, he discovers new dimensions of purpose. He is no longer Sonja's husband alone but also a mentor, friend, advocate, and protector. Each role offers him new meaning and contributes to the reintegration of self previously shattered by loss. This new identity does not erase his grief. Still, it situates it within a broader context of connection and contribution, echoing Frankl's assertion that suffering ceases to be suffering once it finds meaning.

Ove's resistance to societal change is another area in which Backman skillfully weaves psychological nuance. *Ove* is not merely opposed to new technology, changing values, or immigration; his discomfort stems from a deep sense of personal obsolescence. He sees himself as a relic of a forgotten time where integrity, craftsmanship, and loyalty were rewarded instead of overlooked. This perception mirrors what Erikson described in the psychosocial stage of Ego Integrity and Despair. where older adults either find coherence and meaning in their life narrative or despair over perceived failures. Initially, *Ove's* worldview reflects this despair, as he sees the world moving forward without him and perceives his life as a collection of missed opportunities. However, as he helps

Parvaneh navigate motherhood, defends Mirsad from discrimination, and supports Jimmy in his struggle for self-acceptance *Ove* begins to view himself not as a remnant of the past but as a bridge to the future. His values do not become obsolete; they are decontextualized and appreciated within a new framework. In this way, the novel demonstrates how psychological healing in older adulthood can be achieved not by denying generational change but by contributing meaningfully.

Backman also uses subtle symbolic motifs to reflect *Ove's* changing psychological state. The cat, for example, initially represents another irritant in *Ove's* life. He sees the stray animal as a burden, an uninvited guest that disrupts his routines. However, as he begins to care for the cat, feeding and protecting it, the animal becomes a symbol of *Ove's* capacity for nurturing despite his gruff exterior. The cat becomes a stand-in for vulnerability and companionship, reflecting *Ove's* gradual emotional opening. The creature's presence challenges his self-perception as cold and unlovable, suggesting that even the smallest acts of care can catalyse emotional change. Here, the behavioural feedback loop at work is clear: the cat responds positively to *Ove's* attention. *Ove* begins to expect the cat's presence, and this mutual relationship becomes another pillar in his reconnection with the world.

Ove's ultimate acceptance of love and community marks the culmination of his psychological transformation. Perhaps the most touching evidence is his relationship with Parvaneh's children, particularly their instinctual trust in him. As observers and emotional mirrors, children sense safety in *Ove's* despite his blunt demeanour. Their unfiltered affection forces *Ove*'s to reconsider how he presents himself to the world. This is especially significant given that *Ove* and Sonja were unable to have children due to the aftermath of a tragic accident. His tenderness toward the children reflects a form of healing

and emotional fulfilment, a delayed but not denied experience of fatherhood. These moments are rich with emotional weight, as they do not erase *Ove's* grief but offer a parallel emotional experience that allows for reconciliation. He realizes he can be a father figure and a legacy bearer, even without biological ties. This shift underlines the plasticity of family and the redemptive power of chosen relationships.

One of the most potent indicators of psychological progress is *Ove's* eventual acknowledgement that life, despite its chaos and unpredictability, is still worth living. In the latter part of the novel, we see a man who was once obsessed with control learning to embrace uncertainty. He opens his home, schedule, and emotions to others. The same man who once tried to die in silence becomes someone who lives loudly through acts of service, protection, and compassion. This transition embodies Carl Rogers concept of the "fully functioning person" in humanistic psychology: an individual who is open to experience, lives in the present, trusts their feelings, and accepts themselves and others. While Ove may never express emotions with typical sentimentalism, his actions reveal a man who has rediscovered the capacity to love and to allow him to be loved. The novel does not romanticize his transformation. It is messy, reluctant, and gradual, but it is authentic. That authenticity makes his journey not just believable but profoundly moving.

Finally *Ove's* death is peaceful and natural, and being surrounded by those who care for him represents the narrative's ultimate act of psychological closure. He does not die alone as he once feared. He is no longer the man whom the world forgot but the one it remembers fondly. In a sense, he achieves what Erikson would call ego integrity a feeling that his life had a purpose, that he mattered. His story is one of healing not through denial of grief but through its transformation. The emotional reintegration of a man undone by sorrow becomes the heartbeat of the novel's message: that connection, even late in life, can

resurrect meaning and restore the will to live. *Ove's* legacy is not built on words or grand gestures but on quiet, consistent acts of love. Through these, he reconnects with the world and, more importantly, himself.

Fredrik Backman's *A Man Called Ove* presents a protagonist whose emotional journey defies the expectation that growth belongs only to the young. By centring the narrative on an older man grappling with profound grief, the novel rejects cultural assumptions that older adults are emotionally stagnant or incapable of transformation. Instead *Ove* becomes a case study in late-life psychological plasticity, challenging the deterministic view that personality traits become fixed over time. Psychologists such as Dan P. McAdams argue that identity in adulthood continues to evolve through narrative identity the internalized, evolving story we tell about ourselves. *Ove's* initial self-narrative is one of obsolescence: a widower, a bureaucratic stickler, a man whose usefulness has expired. However, as others begin to rewrite their stories with Ove in them, Jimmy's friend, Parvaneh's helper, and Adrian's confidant *Ove* begins, consciously and unconsciously, to revise his own. His identity, once locked in mourning, becomes dynamic. Through behavioural and emotional feedback from his community, he reinterprets his past not as a series of ends but as a foundation for new beginnings.

Backman's deliberate framing of ordinary life as sacred facilitates this revised self-understanding. The novel is filled with small moments of fixing a radiator, sharing a meal, and helping someone park their car, all carrying enormous emotional weight. While mundane, these acts signify *Ove's* willingness to participate in the human experience again. Each task he performs is imbued with meaning because it connects him to others. The repetition of small, helpful behaviours reinforces his reintegration into society. From a behavioural psychology perspective, these acts are a form of self-conditioning. Each

positive response he receives from those around him strengthens the likelihood that he will continue these behaviours. This way, *Ove* is conditioned by his environment and actively reconditioning himself. This interaction loop becomes a framework for emotional and psychological growth, emphasizing that healing is not a singular moment but a process built on everyday effort.

The philosophical undertones of *Ove's* transformation also warrant exploration. The novel poses a quiet existential challenge: How does one find purpose after losing one's defining relationship. *Ove's* journey mirrors aspects of existential psychotherapy, which posits that human suffering arises from the tension between our desire for meaning and the apparent indifference of the universe. Sonja's death is *Ove's* confrontation with existential absurdity. Her absence destabilizes his world; his sense of being is threatened emotionally and ontologically. For a time, *Ove* exists in a kind of psychological purgatory, neither fully alive nor dead. He confronts this absurdity and overcomes it only through new relationships. Parvaneh and her family, the cat, Jimmy, Mirsad, and the other neighbours become his "absurd companions," echoing Albert Camus's idea that meaning can be generated through shared human defiance of Isolation and despair. By choosing to live and to live for others, *Ove* embraces a kind of secular faith: that the world, though painful, is still worth showing up for.

A vibrant scene encapsulating *Ove's* philosophical and psychological evolution occurs when he rescues Rune, an old friend turned enemy, from being institutionalized. This act is not just about defending an older man from bureaucracy; it is a redemption arc for *Ove* himself. Rune represents a past grudge, a relationship soured by ego and misunderstanding. By advocating for Rune. *Ove* symbolically reconciles with his past, his failures, pride, and regrets. He does not erase these things but transforms them into

compassion. In doing so, he breaks the cycle of reactivity that governed his earlier life. This moment also reflects Kohlberg's stages of moral development, particularly the shift from law-and-order morality, where rules and duty are paramount, to a post-conventional stage, where ethical decisions are based on internalized principles of justice and care. *Ove* once a man of rules now becomes a man of values. This transformation is not theoretical but lived and embodied through his actions.

Backman's narrative strategy reinforces this slow-burning transformation by using juxtaposition. The reader sees *Ove* through his gruff inner monologue and the perspectives of those around him. Parvaneh's admiration, Jimmy's trust, and the children's affection all act as mirrors that gradually reshape how we, and *Ove*, see him. This multiperspective challenges the reader's initial impression and mirrors the broader thematic message. People are more than their worst moments. *Ove's* growth is not linear; he relapses into angr, isolates himself, and lashes out. However, each return to connection brings him closer to emotional wholeness. This uneven path is crucial to the novel's psychological realism. It avoids sentimentality while still affirming the redemptive power of love and community. In clinical terms *Ove* experiences what could be considered a protracted but ultimately successful form of grief resolution. His bereavement is not "cured" but integrated into a new life narrative that does not exclude the pain of his past.

The structural parallels between Sonja and Parvaneh emphasize *Ove's* emotional awakening. Both women embody warmth, openness, and resilience, contrasting sharply with *Ove's* rigidity. However, where Sonja is *Ove's* anchor to the world, Parvaneh becomes his bridge back to it. She does not replace Sonja but catalyses *Ove's* rediscovery of relational living. Parvaneh's refusal to be intimidated by Ove's coldness is especially significant. Her persistence is not aggressive but compassionate and gradually wears down

the walls *Ove* has built. This dynamic showcases attachment theory in practice. *Ove* having lost his primary attachment figure begins to form new bonds that allow him to regulate his emotions, re-establish trust, and find comfort in interpersonal closeness. The presence of a secure base, someone who provides consistent, non-judgmental support, enables *Ove* to explore the emotional terrain of a life without Sonja.

Throughout the novel, Backman also explores the tension between individuality and interdependence. *Ove* is a man who prides himself on self-sufficiency, yet the book's core message is that no one truly survives alone. Behavioural theory teaches us that humans are social learners, and much of our personality is shaped through observation, modelling, and reinforcement. *Ove* despite his age, is still learning. He models new behaviours from those around him, such as Parvaneh's acceptance Mirsad's vulnerability, and tenderness from the children. These models do not overwrite his identity but expand it. The richness of *Ove's* character lies in his ability to retain his essential nature his values, integrity, and sarcasm while evolving emotionally. His reconnection with the world is not a transformation of identity but a fuller expression of it.

A Man Called Ove is the intersection of masculinity and vulnerability, particularly how traditional gender roles can inhibit emotional expression and psychological healing. Ove's gruff demeanour, stoic habits, and mechanical competence are all hallmarks of a conventional masculine identity, which prizes strength, self-reliance, and emotional restraint. While applicable in specific contexts, these characteristics become barriers to intimacy in the wake of grief. *Ove* does not know how to process his loss within the boundaries of traditional masculinity, and this struggle leads to his emotional paralysis. Psychologist Ronald Levant describes this phenomenon as normative male alexithymia, a socialized difficulty in expressing and identifying emotions. *Ove's* silence is not a lack of

feeling but an inability to articulate his pain in a socially acceptable way. Only through interactions with others, particularly women and children, can he expand his emotional vocabulary and engage in behaviours that defy traditional masculine norms. Fixing a car is easy for *Ove* but holding a crying child is not. However, it is the latter that transforms him.

One of the novel's most profound relationships is between *Ove* and Parvaneh's husband, Patrick. Patrick's clumsiness, light heartedness, and expressive emotions contradict *Ove's* severity. At first *Ove* sees him as a failure, a man who cannot back up a trailer, fix a radiator, or assert control. However as time progresses. *Ove* sees value in Patrick's sensitivity and joy. This recognition marks a pivotal point in Ove's journey: the moment he realizes that masculinity can take many forms. Emotional openness and gentleness, once equated with weakness in his worldview, become signs of strength. This shift reflects behavioural adaptation and a re-evaluation of deeply held beliefs. Social learning theory suggests that behaviour is shaped by observing others and modelling their actions when the outcomes appear beneficial. *Ove* may never adopt Patrick's demeanour entirely, but he begins to integrate elements of that openness into his life, signalling psychological growth through redefined masculinity.

In particular *Ove's* interaction with Mirsad is rich with symbolic and psychological meaning. Mirsad, a young man cast out by his father for being gay, is vulnerable in every sense: emotionally, socially, and economically. *Ove* who initially reacts with suspicion, ultimately accepts Mirsad not despite his identity but because of his humanity. This acceptance is a profound moment in the narrative because it reflects personal growth and signals a redefinition of moral clarity. *Ove*, who once measured goodness by punctuality and rule-following, now sees kindness and courage as truer virtues. His defence of Mirsad is not a political statement but a profoundly human one. In

terms of psychological behaviour, this represents the integration of empathy into *Ove's* decision-making processes, which is a sign of emotional intelligence increasing over time. It also demonstrates how personal proximity to marginalized individuals can reduce prejudice and catalyse behavioural change, a process known as the contact hypothesis in social psychology.

In *A Man Called Ove*, Legacy is not about material inheritance or reputation. It is about impact. *Ove's* legacy is built in daily acts of service, quiet gestures, and persistent presence. He does not seek gratitude or recognition but becomes indispensable to those around him. This mirrors the Buddhist notion of right action. where morality is not per formative but grounded in intentional, compassionate behaviour. The cumulative effect of *Ove's* actions is that he creates a community that thrives because he chooses to live. In this way, his psychological healing becomes a communal resource, and his survival uplifts others. This ripple effect reinforces systems theory in psychology, which posits that individuals are embedded in dynamic systems of families, communities, and societies that influence their behaviour. While deeply personal *Ove's* emotional growth catalyses transformation in others, reminding readers that healing is inward and outward.

What makes *Ove's* reconnection with the world so poignant is its realism. He does not become a different person; he becomes more fully himself. His sarcasm remains, as does his love of Saab, meticulous routines, and frustration with incompetence. However, these traits, once defensive mechanisms, are softened by purpose. Backman does not offer a fairytale conclusion where *Ove* finds perfect peace. Instead, he offers a believable, hopeful ending: *Ove* lives; he loves again not romantically but platonically, maternally, and fraternally, and when he finally dies, it is not from despair but natural causes. This death, surrounded by those who cared for him, is the psychological resolution of a long and

painful journey. It signifies that *Ove* has completed his task of reintegration, and his legacy will live on through the lives he touched. His death is not a period but an ellipsis, a continuation of meaning beyond physical presence.

Ultimately, *A Man Called Ove* is not a novel about death or grief. It is a novel about love in its most enduring form: the kind that survives loss. *Ove's* reconnection with the world is not miraculous but methodical, rooted in psychological truths about behaviour, attachment, purpose, and healing. Fredrik Backman crafts a story that affirms what behavioural psychologists and humanists have long proposed: that with the right environment, support system, and internal shift, even the most closed hearts can open again. *Ove's* journey from Isolation to integration is a reminder that life, despite its unfairness, unpredictability, and pain offers the chance for redemption daily.

The early chapters of *A Man Called Ove* present a protagonist steeped in what psychologist Martin Seligman famously termed learned helplessness. In this condition, individuals believe they have no control over their circumstances, even when opportunities for change exist. Following the death of his beloved wife Sonja. *Ove* exhibits a profound sense of emotional paralysis. His routine, stripped of joy or variability, reflects a withdrawal from life that is less about choice and more about internalized despair. *Ove's* repeated suicide attempts, although tinged with dark humour in Backman's writing, are not merely plot devices. They are stark indicators of learned helplessness and clinical depression.

In *Ove's* mind, life without Sonja is painful and meaningless. Every effort he makes to end his life fails not through his design but through comical or coincidental interruptions. This becomes the narrative's way of illustrating an unconscious desire to live

still flickering beneath his overt despair. Each interruption is an opportunity, a behavioural cue that offers *Ove* a subtle reminder: he is still needed.

What begins as a narrative about resignation gradually shifts into one of post-traumatic growth a psychological concept referring to the positive psychological change experienced as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances Unlike resilience, which focuses on bouncing back post-traumatic growth involves a transformation of worldview, values, and self-concept. *Ove* does not bounce back to who he was before Sonja's death; instead, he becomes someone entirely new, shaped by the pain of his loss and the purpose he rediscovers.

He learns to trust again, to laugh again, and to love in unconventional but significant ways. This growth is not linear. There are moments of relapse days when he still wishes for the release of death, but each act of service, each connection with his neighbours, builds a scaffold of hope that slowly supports a new identity. In psychological terms *Ove* experiences a cognitive restructuring of his beliefs about life, death, and himself. Once he believes life ended with Sonja, he sees that her memory can be carried into new relationships, not abandoned for their sake.

This transformation is further supported by the cultivation of emotional resilience, which is the ability to mentally and emotionally cope with a crisis or return to pre-crisis status quickly. For *Ove* resilience is not an innate trait but a developed skill. Initially, he appears brittle, rigid in routine, emotionally repressed, and easily agitated. However, as he engages more with the world around him, this brittleness gives way to flexibility. He still grumbles, still scowls, but now he stays. He listens. He comforts. From a behavioural standpoint *Ove's* exposure to emotionally supportive environments, particularly through Parvaneh and the children, functions as a conditioning mechanism that reinforces openness

over withdrawal. This shift highlights how resilience is nurtured through positive relationships and repeated exposure to manageable stressors. *Ove* does not face one monumental challenge that changes everything; he undergoes a thousand small trials that each demand emotional adaptation. This cumulative process aligns with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, where learning and growth occur just beyond one's current abilities with the help of others.

Behavioural therapy literature also underscores the role of positive reinforcement in behaviour change. Parvaneh, for example, consistently praises and thanks *Ove* not with empty flattery but with genuine appreciation for his help and reliability. These expressions serve as reinforces for *Ove's* prosocial behaviour. Even when he insists he is not doing it for her, the internal shift is evident: he begins to seek these reinforcers. Helping becomes intrinsically rewarding, not because of the attention it garners, but because it reaffirms his usefulness and belonging. Importantly, the reinforcers are often subtle, such as a child's hug, a neighbour's smile, or even the cat curling beside him. These small moments of connection provide *ove* with a new source of emotional currency. Where he once drew strength only from Sonja, he now finds multiple, if modest, emotional investments that sustain him. The frequency and consistency of these reinforcements stabilize his mood, reduce his Isolation, and gradually replace despair with something resembling peace.

Backman’s depiction of *Ove’s* evolution is also notable for its narrative coherence, a psychological construct reflecting the degree to which a person's life story makes sense. Once dominated by order and predictability, Ove's life becomes chaotic and full of unpredictable encounters. However, by the novel's end, he sees these events as part of a larger, meaningful arc. Narrative coherence is associated with psychological well-being because it provides a framework through which individuals can understand their past and

envision a future. *Ove*, who once viewed his life as ending with Sonja's, reconstructs a story in which his existence continues to matter. His love for Sonja does not fade; it evolves into action, legacy, and mentorship. The narrative coherence that emerges is one of continuity, not in the literal sense of romantic love but in the emotional truth that love endures even after death through the lives we continue to touch.

At the heart of *Ove's* behavioural transformation is a psychological rebirth not marked by grand gestures but by small, repeated re-engagement with the world. His shift from learned helplessness to post-traumatic growth is gradual, driven not by epiphany but by community. *Ove's* story is a case study of how the mechanisms of behaviour reinforcement, modelling, emotional feedback, and narrative identity converge to create the conditions for healing. His grumpiness never entirely disappears, nor should it. It is part of his charm, his coping mechanism, his individuality. However, beneath it is softness, growth, and, most importantly, love. Moreover, that love, no longer focused solely on the past, becomes a living force that rebuilds a life brick by brick, hug by hug, word by word.

As Ove continues his reluctant re-engagement with life, he increasingly assumes the role of a protector, a character archetype rooted in both psychological function and mythic structure. In Jungian psychology, archetypes are universal, recurring patterns of behaviour that influence how individuals experience the world. The protector archetype defends, nurtures, and sacrifices for the safety of others. Though brusque in manner and averse to emotional display, Ove consistently exhibits these qualities once his connection with others begins to deepen. His instinct is to defend Mirsad from his father, to teach Adrian the value of standing by someone he loves, and to care for Parvaneh and her children even when he insists he is only doing so because he "has to" align with the protector archetype

This role provides Ove with a renewed psychological framework: By becoming responsible for others, he reclaims a sense of purpose from Sonja's death.

Ove's acts of protection are particularly poignant because they oppose impersonal institutional power systems, such as bureaucratic health organizations and housing authorities. These institutions prioritize rules and efficiency over individual dignity and serve as antagonistic forces throughout the novel. *Ove's* battles with "The Men in White Shirts" symbolize a psychological resistance to depersonalization, a threat to others' well-being, and his sense of moral identity. This resistance reflects a key psychological drive: the need for autonomy and agency. Self-determination theory, developed by psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, posits that human beings are inherently motivated to pursue goals that fulfil three basic psychological needs: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. *Ove's* actions challenging institutional indifference, advocating for neighbours, and upholding his code fulfil these needs in powerful ways. Each time he intervenes on someone's behalf, he reclaims agency over a life that once felt meaningless.

Ove's protectiveness is not limited to human characters but extends to the stray cat a profound symbol throughout the novel. At first, the cat is an intruder, unwanted and dismissed. However, over time, it becomes a companion that mirrors *Ove's* emotional state. The scarred and homeless cat represents vulnerability, survival, and quiet loyalty. From a behavioural perspective the cat's presence functions as a therapeutic object, which psychologists might term a "transitional object." These objects or beings help bridge the gap between Isolation and intimacy, especially in cases of grief or trauma. For Ove, feeding and sheltering the cat becomes a behavioural anchor that reflects his growing empathy and stimulates daily routines imbued with new meaning. In caring for another

creature, Ove accepts care of himself through companionship, touch, or unspoken presence.

The symbolic weight of the neighbourhood as a living, breathing community organism cannot be overstated. The people surrounding. *Ove* become not just neighbours but a chosen family. In psychological terms, this speaks to the theory of communities, a concept developed by anthropologist Victor Turner, who describes the profound sense of belonging and equality found in communal experiences, especially during periods of transition or crisis. *Ove*, who once upheld rules as the sole measure of righteousness, begins to embrace communal relationships that are messy, imperfect, and deeply human.

His prior reliance on order was a form of psychological defence; it allowed him to avoid the unpredictability of intimacy. However, as the neighbourhood rallies around him, he, in turn, becomes their rock. *Ove* begins to experience what Maslow might call a peak experience a profound moment of love, understanding, and interconnectedness. These experiences are instrumental in his behavioural shift from Isolation to integration. The symbolic significance of *Ove's* home, a space built initially to share with Sonja, also evolves throughout the narrative. At first, the home is a mausoleum, a sacred site of memories he cannot relinquish. However, as the narrative progresses, the house becomes a hub for life: a place of laughter, visitors, meals, and noise. This transformation reflects a deep psychological principle from environmental psychology, which posits that physical spaces impact mental health and identity. Ove's willingness to open his doors literally and figuratively symbolizes his emotional opening.

He reclaims the home as a reminder of what he has lost and a space to cultivate new relationships and rituals. Sharing his space becomes an act of healing, transforming the house from a shrine of grief into a vessel ofgenerativity. *Ove's* journey as a protector is

also intimately tied to his developing moral identity. Whereas early in the novel *Ove* is rigid in his judgments, dismissing others based on superficial traits or past grievances, he begins to evolve into someone who values action over ideology. This ethical development is mirrored in moral development theory, particularly Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning. *Ove* transitions from a conventional level of morality, where behaviour is governed by societal norms and rules, to a post-conventional level, where actions are guided by universal ethical principles such as justice, compassion, and loyalty. He defends Mirsad not because the rules say he should but because it is right. He helps Parvaneh not because of obligation but because of empathy. These decisions reflect an advanced stage of moral reasoning in which personal integrity supersedes social conformity.

The novel thus presents a man who, once emotionally bankrupt and behaviorally stagnant, becomes a dynamic force of stability and kindness in a chaotic world. *Ove's* growth is not romanticized; it is messy, reluctant, and full of detours. However, it is real. Through the characters he protects, the institutions he defies, and the symbols he embraces, whether feline, domestic, or human, *Ove* becomes more than a man mourning a past life. He becomes someone who builds a new one, not despite his grief, but through it. His protector role is not only a function of personality but a behavioural strategy for finding purpose in a world that once seemed devoid of it.

One of the most poignant elements of Fredrik Backman's *A Man Called Ove* is the ever-present emotional gravity of Sonja Ove's late wife, whose memory persists not merely as a sentimental backdrop but as **a** psychological anchor. Sonja's absence shapes every facet of Ove's behavioural world. Her photographs, books, how she arranged the furniture and even the decisions she would have made continue to influence *Ove's* actions. In psychological terms, Sonja functions as an internal working model**,** a concept from

attachment theory that suggests early and significant relationships form the templates through which future emotional and interpersonal experiences are filtered. Sonja is gone, but her voice, mannerisms, and values live within *Ove's* psyche, constantly referent for right and wrong, kindness and cruelty, grace and grit.

Though one-sided and often muttered aloud *Ove's* conversations with Sonja are not delusional but symbolic representations of how the mind processes grief through internal dialogue. Psychologist Robert Niemeyer has written extensively about the constructivist approach to grief, emphasizing that the bereaved often reconstruct continuing bonds with the deceased as a way to retain meaning. In *Ove's* case, he does not simply mourn Sonja he consults her. He reflects on what she would say in certain situations, how she would respond to the neighbours, and what advice she might offer about the chaos infiltrating their once orderly life. This behaviour reflects a psychologically healthy form of bereavement where memory becomes motivational, not paralyzing. Though *Ove* is initially trapped in grief, Sonja's structure and guidance act like a cognitive compass, helping him orient himself in a world that has shifted entirely.

As *Ove's* behavioural transformation unfolds, Sonja's memory becomes a bridge, connecting him to the past and others in the present. For instance, when *Ove* teaches Parvaneh's children to read or drives Parvaneh to the hospital, it is not just altruism; Sonja's influence and compassionate legacy manifest through *Ove's* evolving behaviour. These are commemorative behaviours; actions carried out not for recognition but as silent tributes to someone lost. These behaviours also demonstrate how, when integrated healthily, grief becomes not a static state but a source of generativism. Erik Erikson's term for the desire to nurture, guide, and contribute to future generations. *Ove* becomes a

generative figure in his gruff way, echoing Sonja's warmth through every act of reluctant kindness.

The concept of ambiguous presence, coined in grief counselling literature, helps explain the psychological tension *Ove* experiences. Sonja is not physically present, but she remains emotionally and mentally significant. This tension, when unresolved, can create what is known as complicated grief. However, the narrative shows a progressive integration of this ambiguous presence in *Ove's* case. Instead of becoming stuck in an emotional limbo, he gradually learns to carry Sonja with him, not as a ghost haunting his days but as a compass guiding them. His suicide attempts early in the novel are fuelled by a desire to reunite with her, but by the end, his desire to honour her takes precedence over the desire to join her. This marks a critical cognitive reframing in the grieving process, from death as a reunion to life as a tribute.

Backman does not portray Sonja as idealized or flawless; she is witty, stubborn, and patient, but she also challenges *Ove's* worldview, forcing him to grow and evolve. This complexity makes her memory a dynamic force rather than a static idol. From a narrative psychology perspective, this creates a biographical anchor that allows *Ove* to reinterpret his life not as a series of tragedies but as a tapestry of shared moments that still inform his identity. His life with Sonja, though past, becomes a launching point rather than a dead end. His identity as Sonja's husband remains central to who he is, even as he becomes a mentor, friend, and surrogate grandfather to others. The ability to maintain a stable self-concept while adapting to new roles is a key indicator of successful psychological adjustment to bereavement.

Ove's emotional trajectory also underscores the evolution of love beyond the temporal limits of physical presence. Love, as explored through the psychological lens of

existential psychotherapy, is not constrained to being with someone but rather to what we do because of them and for their memory. In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl argued that love transcends death when the essence of the loved one becomes a source of purpose. This theory aligns beautifully with *Ove's* eventual willingness to live to endure time and inhabit it meaningfully, carrying Sonja with him not as a burden but as a beacon. Her love becomes a renewable psychological resource, allowing *Ove* to redirect his grief into action and connection makes *Ove's* reconnection with the world so powerful is that it does not erase the past; it includes it. He does not get over Sonja. He incorporates her into a broader story that continues to unfold. His healing is not forgetting her but remembering her in ways that fuel forward motion.

This delicate interplay between memory and momentum forms the novel's emotional core. It reflects how love can deepen rather than diminish when it is intertwined with loss. It is through Sonja that *Ove* becomes a man capable of change. Moreover, it is because of Sonja that he ultimately chooses life not just as survival but as an active, loving, and profoundly human endeavour. Grief is the emotional cornerstone of *A Man Called Ove*. From the very first pages *Ove* is introduced as a man consumed by sorrow following the death of his beloved wife, Sonja. Backman portrays *Ove's* grief not through overt emotional outbursts but through routine, silence, and stubbornness. *Ove's* rigid adherence to daily rituals, inspecting the neighbourhood, enforcing rules, and planning his suicide are subtle indicators of a man trying to regain control in a life shattered by loss.

As literary scholar Petra Jansen notes, Backman employs everyday minutiae to reveal the emotional devastation hidden beneath. *Ove's* gruff exterior" (Jansen 142). Grief is not simply a backdrop in the novel it is a living, shaping force that influences *Ove's* decisions, colours his relationships, and ultimately drives his transformation. The

sacredness he assigns to memory makes *Ove's* grief so poignant. He constantly recalls moments with Sonja, replaying their life's joyful and painful episodes together. These flashbacks humanize *Ove* and create emotional depth. They also reinforce a key message of the novel: that grief, when met with compassion and community, can be a path toward reconnection rather than permanent Isolation.

Loneliness and Isolation closely linked to grief is the theme of loneliness. At the novel's beginning, *Ove* is a deeply isolated figure, not only physically, as a widower living alone, but emotionally, as someone who refuses to let others in. His suicide attempts, while treated with dark humour, highlight his despair and alienation. According to cultural critic Martin L. Summers *Ove's* self-imposed isolation mirrors the often invisible suffering of the elderly in modern societies, especially those who lose their partners later in life (Summers 88).

Backman masterfully contrasts *Ove's* loneliness with the vibrant, messy community surrounding him. When Parvaneh and her family move into the neighbourhood, they serve as a narrative catalyst for *Ove's* re-engagement with life. Through their persistence and kindness, they slowly break down his emotional walls. This theme reminds readers that human connectionno matter how accidental or unwelcome it may initially seem is essential for overcoming the despair of solitude. Ove, Friendship, and Community

While Ove begins the story as a solitary figure, *A Man Called Ove* ultimately celebrates the redemptive power of love and friendship. Backman carefully develops *Ove's* relationships, especially with Parvaneh, a pregnant Iranian woman who becomes an unexpected source of friendship and meaning. Her refusal to be dismissed by *Ove* and her warm, insistent nature provide the emotional spark that rekindles his willingness to live

and connect. Their relationship is emblematic of how friendship can evolve in unlikely places.

The broader community of quirky, flawed, and endearing neighbours also plays a vital role in reshaping *Ove's* worldview. From Jimmy, the overweight but kind-hearted friend, to Anita and Rune, whose relationship mirrors *Ove's* past struggles, these characters represent the beauty of communal support. Through his interactions, *Ove* gradually learns to accept help, offer care, and take pride in being part of something bigger than him. As literary analyst Clara Brumfield suggests backman constructs a neighbourhood not just as a physical space but as a moral framework in which love and care take precedence over individualism" (Brumfield 164). In this sense, the novel becomes a modern parable of empathy and social interdependence.

His resistance to change initially defines *Ove's* character. He distrusts new technology, scoffs at bureaucracy, and clings to how things "used to be." He sees change as a disorder and a threat to the stability he once found with Sonja. This rigidity, however, is also a defence mechanism, a way of holding onto a past he cherishes and a partner he has lost. Backman uses this resistance as a narrative device to explore how emotional rigidity can slowly give way to personal growth.

As the novel progresses, *Ove* finds himself forced into new situations that challenge his worldview. Whether he is helping Parvaneh learn to drive, rescuing a gay teenager from his homophobic father, or taking in a stray cat, each act of kindness marks a step away from resistance and toward adaptation. These experiences do not transform *Ove* into a different person but rather allow his true character compassionate, loyal, and just to reemerge beneath the layers of bitterness. As Backman writes you only need one ray of

light to chase all the shadows away (Backman 219*)*. *Ove's* transformation is a testament to the human capacity for change at any age.

After retirement and the death of his wife, *Ove* finds himself grappling with a lack of purpose. His role as a husband, worker, and rule-enforcer gave his life structure and meaning. When those roles disappear, so too does his sense of self. The novel's early chapters reveal a man attempting to orchestrate his end, not out of melodrama, but because he genuinely believes he no longer has anything left to give. In many ways, Backman uses *Ove'*s journey to explore how identity is often tethered to one's usefulness in society and family.

However, as *Ove* unwillingly becomes involved in the lives of his neighbours, a new purpose slowly emerges. Helping others, whether fixing things, protecting the vulnerable, or simply being present, restores *Ove's* sense of identity. He goes from planning his death to protecting life, from pushing people away to becoming the centre of a found family. As literary theorist Jeanette Peterson points out, *Ove's* path from despair to purpose illustrates the psychological importance of having roles that affirm one's place in the social world" (Peterson 193). The novel thus serves as a subtle yet powerful reminder that personal identity is not fixed but shaped continuously through our relationships and responsibilities.

Generational Gaps and Cultural Differences Backman also examines the tension between generations and cultures, particularly through *Ove's* interactions with younger and more diverse characters. Parvaneh, an Iranian immigrant, symbolizes the cultural shifts that *Ove* initially resists but eventually embraces. Her persistence, competence, and warmth challenge *Ove's* stereotypes and force him to reassess his assumptions. This cultural interaction is not didactic or preachy but natural and character-driven. The

friendship between *Ove* and Parvaneh shows how empathy and shared experience can bridge generational and cultural divides.

The younger generation in the novel, including Adrian (the bullied teenager) and Mirsad, the gay man rejected by his father, also reflect societal changes that *Ove* initially mistrusts. However, through repeated contact and mutual aid, *Ove* understands their struggles and becomes their advocate. This dynamic reflects a broader theme: the importance of intergenerational understanding in an increasingly complex and diverse world. Diversity scholar Lena Hartmann states, *Ove's* grudging acceptance and eventual defence of those he once judged underscores the novel's belief in change not just on a personal level, but a societal one" (Hartmann 207).

CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSION

In *A Man Called Ove*, Fredrik Backman crafts a poignant and uplifting narrative, illustrating how even the most seemingly irascible individuals can rediscover purpose through the bonds of human connection. *Ove's* transformation from a cantankerous, isolated widower to a vital, empathetic figure in his community underscores the profound effects of love, loss, and social engagement on personal growth. Throughout the novel, *Ove's* rigid worldview is challenged and gradually reshaped by the unexpected interventions of his neighbours, the persistent echoes of his late wife Sonja's compassion, and the small yet significant acts of kindness that accumulate over time. His journey is not one of sudden revelation but of slow, reluctant awakening to the value of interdependence and the healing power of relational intimacy.

Backman's portrayal of grief is neither romanticized nor reductive; instead, it is grounded in the everyday struggles of coping, remembering, and learning to live anew. Ultimately, *Ove's* story offers a powerful reminder that even amid deep sorrow and personal stubbornness, individuals retain the capacity for renewal. The novel affirms that community and compassion are not mere comforts but necessities in navigating the complexities of human existence. As such, *Ove's* evolution from grumpy to grateful encapsulates his redemption and invites readers to reconsider the transformative possibilities of embracing vulnerability and connection.

In *A Man Called Ove*, Fredrik Backman intricately weaves a story that demonstrates a man's quiet but powerful evolution entrenched in grief, bitterness, and routine. *Ove's* transformation from a reclusive and rigid curmudgeon to a caring and indispensable community member results from random chance and the culmination of persistent, humanizing encounters with others. The death of his beloved wife Sonja, which

initially cements his detachment from the world, ironically becomes the emotional catalyst for his eventual reconnection with it. Through the incessant and often chaotic interventions of his new neighbours, particularly Parvaneh and her family, *Ove* is forced to re-engage with life, step outside his tightly controlled environment, and reconsider the worth of relationships he once rejected. These interactions serve as emotional touchstones, slowly softening his defences and reminding him of the values Sonja had always embodied: compassion, patience, and generosity.

Backman does not present this transformation as linear or simple; instead, he emphasizes the nuances and setbacks accompanying emotional recovery. *Ove's* attempts at suicide haunting yet portrayed with a delicate blend of gravity and dark humour reflect not only his immense sorrow but also the difficulty of reimagining life after profound loss. Nevertheless, each failed attempt becomes a narrative device that draws him deeper into the lives of others, reinforcing the theme that human connection can offer a powerful lifeline in the depths of despair. What begins as reluctant involvement becomes a meaningful purpose, and *Ove's* role in the community evolves from passive outsiders to active caretakers and friends. By the novel's conclusion, *Ove* is no longer defined solely by what he has lost but by what he has chosen to give: time, help, affection, and, ultimately, legacy.

Thematically, A Man Called *Ove* is a poignant meditation on the redemptive potential of love and community in the face of grief and disillusionment. Backman invites readers to reflect on the quiet heroism found in daily acts of kindness, the healing potential of relationships, and the importance of allowing oneself to be vulnerable to grow. *Ove's* journey reveals that transformation is not reserved for the idealistic or the young; it is available to anyone willing to open their heart, even when deeply broken. In bearing witness to *Ove's* reluctant yet profound metamorphosis, readers are reminded that life's

value often lies not in grand gestures but in the small, persistent efforts to connect, care, and find meaning in shared humanity. Thus, *Ove's* shift from grumpy to grateful transcends personal redemption it becomes a universal call to embrace life not in isolation but in the company of others who remind us, often inconveniently but necessarily, that we are not alone.

Fredrik Backman's *A Man Called Ove* ultimately presents a compelling narrative of emotional rehabilitation, demonstrating that even the most seemingly irredeemable individuals can be restored by the enduring presence of love and the quiet force of community. *Ove's* character arc, steeped in the realism of human resistance to change, stands as a powerful illustration of how grief does not have to be a terminus but can become the beginning of a new, albeit unexpected, journey. As the novel unfolds, *Ove's* rough edges are worn smooth not by epiphanies or solitary strength but by the gentle, persistent involvement of others. Parvaneh, with her fierce compassion and unwillingness to be dismissed, embodies the disruptive empathy that forces *Ove* to reenter a world he had long since deemed unworthy of his presence. Her children, cat, and chaotic family life become the inadvertent architects of his resurrection, challenging his assumptions and reigniting his sense of duty and belonging.

Ove's journey also reflects how the memory of a loved one Sonja can remain an active and guiding presence long after death. Her influence is not confined to flashbacks or sentiment; it permeates *Ove's* choices and behaviours, reminding readers that love's reach often extends beyond mortality. His small acts of service, whether fixing a radiator, defending neighbours, or simply listening, are not random they echo Sonja's gentler worldview, merging with *Ove's* rigid moral code. This fusion marks the true transformation: not an abandonment of identity but a reconciliation of grief and grace, sorrow and service. Through this, Backman rejects the cultural trope of the “grumpy old

man" as an archetype destined for irrelevance, instead presenting *Ove* as a multidimensional figure whose emotional depth only emerges when he is seen, heard, and needed.

On a broader level, Backman's novel is a social commentary on ageing, loneliness, and the quiet marginalization of older people. *Ove's* initial invisibility to the world mirrors the common societal neglect of those who no longer appear valid. As his neighbours draw him out, he becomes indispensable, not despite his age but because of the wisdom, experience, and moral clarity that age can bring. This reassertion of his value within the social fabric offers a powerful message: that every person, no matter how gruff or broken, can impact others in profound and lasting ways. Ove's grumpiness, once a shield, becomes a lens through which compassion and humour can be understood in equal measure.

A Man Called Ove is not simply about personal loss or emotional isolation. It is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the transformative power of relationships. Backman invites readers to look past surface irritations and see the full humanity of those who suffer silently. *Ove's* progression from bitter solitude to emotional reawakening is a reminder that healing is rarely solitary; it is often found in the messiness of shared lives, the vulnerability of asking for help, and the courage to let others in. His eventual embrace of community, responsibility, and love is not just a personal victory. It is a universal call to recognize the redemptive potential within us all. Through *Ove*, Backman affirms that gratitude is not the absence of grief but its natural evolution when life is once again lived in the company of others.

Fredrik Backman's *A Man Called Ove* ultimately redefines the nature of transformation by grounding it not in dramatic shifts but in the cumulative impact of ordinary moments shared among imperfect people. *Ove's* evolution from a curmudgeonly,

rule-bound widower to a cherished community member is neither romanticized nor exaggerated. Instead, it is built through a series of subtle, emotionally charged encounters that slowly crack the shell of his self-imposed isolation. These moments are infused with warmth, frustration, humour, and sorrow the elements that make up genuine human relationships. Parvaneh's assertive kindness, the cat's quiet presence, and the incompetence and vulnerability of his neighbours all contribute to *Ove's* reawakening, reminding readers that connection often comes uninvited and healing begins when we allow others to need us and when we accept that we need them in return.

This thematic architecture affirms Backman's central philosophical argument: that every life, no matter how withdrawn, embittered, or broken, is capable of renewal through love and community. *Ove's* initial persona is shaped by loss, rigid moral codes, and a society that has left him behind. Yet, his capacity to love, protect, and even laugh again proves that redemption is accessible not through grand gestures but through persistent human contact. His neighbours don't merely tolerate his curmudgeonly behaviour they challenge it, confront it, and, most importantly, stay. Their insistence on *Ove's* presence in their lives becomes an unspoken affirmation of his worth, even when he cannot recognize it himself. In this, Backman offers a powerful critique of a culture that often reduces ageing individuals to stereotypes and instead insists on their dignity, complexity, and ongoing potential.

Moreover, Ove's emotional journey is a meditation on grief's paradoxical ability to isolate and connect. His pain following Sonja's death is profound and paralyzing, but it is also the very foundation upon which his empathy is built. It is precisely because Ove knows the depth of love that he can see in others. Whether it is in the bond between Parvaneh and her children, in the quiet love of Jimmy for his mother, or even in the chaos of Adrian's youthful fumblings, Ove begins to identify reflections of his past life and, from

them, reconstructs a new one. Sonja's memory never fades but becomes integrated into the daily rituals of caring, helping, and remembering—a process that reveals how the dead continue to shape the living through the values they instil and the love they leave behind.

The novel's final chapters do not offer a fairy-tale ending but something more meaningful: continuity, legacy, and belonging. Ove's death, while inevitable, is not marked by solitude or regret but by presence. He is surrounded by people who love him, argue with him, and carry his memory forward. Once a fortress of grief, his home becomes a space of life and laughter. His legacy is not in monuments or accolades but in repaired radiators, nurtured children, and lives made slightly better by his quiet determination. Backman thus reaffirms the idea that one's impact is not measured in size but in sincerity.

In the end, Ove's story is a narrative of personal transformation and a literary embodiment of the quiet triumph of ordinary humanity. His movement from grumpy to grateful captures the novel's broader message: that dignity, purpose, and even joy can be reclaimed at any age, in any condition, through the simple but powerful act of letting others in. A Man Called Ove offers its readers more than a character study—it delivers a compassionate, often humorous, and profoundly affecting reflection on what it means to live, mourn, and begin again. Through Ove, Backman reminds us that no one is too lost to be found, no heart too guarded to be softened, and no life too quiet to matter.

Ove's journey underscores the interconnectedness of human lives, emphasizing that no one truly exists in isolation. His eventual acceptance of the support and companionship of others illuminates how community acts as both a mirror and a scaffold, revealing the inherent worth of every individual. Even in his darkest moments, Ove's actions reflect an understanding that human lives are built upon small, unnoticed exchanges of care and concern. This makes his transformation so powerful: not the grand, sweeping moments of

change that define his character but the accumulation of everyday interactions that slowly, imperceptibly rebuild his capacity for joy and connection. The novel's richness is that these small acts of kindness fixing a neighbour's car, helping a struggling immigrant family, or even offering a few moments of patience collectively create a life of profound meaning and significance.

By showing how Ove's relationships evolve and how he learns to appreciate others despite his struggles. Backman positions ove as a microcosm of the broader human experience. Each of us carries emotional baggage, social preconceptions, and often, a sense of invisibility. Ove's story reveals that there is always the possibility of finding redemption, not in moments of singular achievement, but in the everyday resilience of loving and being loved. In this way, Backman's narrative compels readers to reconsider what they value in their lives. Do we measure success by individual accomplishment, or do we find meaning in how we impact those around us? Though filled with ordinary moments, Ove's life becomes a testament to the idea that impact is not a matter of scale but of sincerity, connection, and willingness to show up for others, even when it is inconvenient or uncomfortable.

The novel's conclusion, wherein Ove's death is met not with loneliness but with an outpouring of affection and respect, serves as a reminder that even the most ordinary life has significance. Ove's legacy lives on not in monumental achievements but in the lives of the people he touched each individual in the community he once thought himself disconnected from. By his death, Ove has transformed from a man who saw no value in his existence to one whose life has had a lasting, positive influence on others. Backman masterfully uses Ove's character arc to highlight a profound truth: that the meaning of life is often found not in extraordinary achievements but in the simple, shared human experiences that connect us all.

Ove's transformation from a bitter older man to a grateful one reflects the larger human condition, revealing how love, loss, and community shape us. It affirms the belief that while we may each face our struggles and moments of despair, it is through connection—with others, with memory, with the resilience of the human spirit—that we find a path forward. The novel echoes a timeless message: it is never too late to change, love, or find peace. In embracing others and allowing ourselves to be embraced in turn, we are capable of transforming our own lives and the lives of those around us.

Ultimately, A Man Called Ove is a testament to the power of human connection, reminding readers that even in a world that often seems filled with disconnection and individual struggle, there is hope in the simplest of interactions. Through Ove's journey, Fredrik Backman celebrates the quiet, enduring power of kindness and the transformative potential of a life well-lived, no matter the circumstances. Ove's final, grateful acceptance of his place in the world becomes a beacon of hope for those who, like him, may feel forgotten or overlooked. His story demonstrates that every individual no matter how gruff, closed off, or seemingly out of place—can find meaning, joy, and love in the most unexpected ways.

Ove's story is a poignant reminder that personal and social transformation is a slow and often painful process. While the novel's conclusion celebrates Ove's growth, it also emphasizes that healing is not linear. The path to reconnection is usually fraught with setbacks, moments of doubt, and even relapses into old habits. Backman does not offer a perfect or immediate resolution to Ove's emotional struggles but presents a realistic and relatable journey. This refusal to provide a neatly tied conclusion mirrors life's messy, imperfect nature. The novel affirms that transformation does not happen in a moment of epiphany but is the result of consistent, sometimes hard-won efforts to reach out, to be vulnerable, and to allow others into one's life. Therefore, Ove's arc serves as a powerful

meditation on the resilience required to change and the quiet yet profound acts of courage involved in choosing to face one's pain rather than retreat from it.

Furthermore, Backman's exploration of grief as a driving force behind Ove's transformation offers an insightful commentary on the power of memory and loss in shaping our identities. For Ove, grief is not simply a painful emotional state but a defining force that shapes his world and his relationships. The memory of Sonja—his love, his companion, his anchor acts as both a source of profound sorrow and an eventual source of strength. His grief, initially paralyzing, becomes a catalyst for change, showing how deeply held sorrow can also be a form of emotional depth that allows for empathy, connection, and growth. Ove's ability to let go of the past without forgetting it underscores the novel's deeper theme that healing is not about erasing pain but integrating it into a new understanding of self. The ability to reconcile with loss and move forward is portrayed not as forgetting but as honouring what was once loved and carrying it into a new phase of life.

Through Ove, Backman also reflects on the multifaceted nature of human relationships. Ove's relationship with Parvaneh, the young immigrant mother who ultimately becomes his closest ally, is a poignant reminder of the transformative power of cross-cultural and cross-generational relationships. Their unlikely bond—formed through mutual need and respect becomes one of the novel's most central and moving connections. Parvaneh's ability to confront Ove's gruffness, challenge his assumptions, and offer him companionship and care is a testament to how love transcends age, culture, and personality barriers. Ove's evolving understanding of his neighbours demonstrates that no one is beyond the reach of love and that human connection is the key to personal healing and communal well-being. Through Parvaneh's unwavering support, Ove learns to see the

world not through the lens of loss and cynicism but through hope and possibility—a significant shift essential for his transformation.

As Ove's journey unfolds, it becomes clear that his transformation is not merely an individual one but a reflection of the larger, collective process of growth that communities undergo. The interconnectedness of Ove's life with the lives of those around him highlights the importance of nurturing relationships, especially in a society that often prioritizes individual achievement over communal solidarity. Ove's ultimate peace with his life is inextricably linked to his connection with others whether they are neighbours, friends, or strangers. Backman's portrayal of community as a space for mutual support and interdependence speaks to a fundamental human truth: that our well-being is deeply tied to the well-being of others. Ove's transformation, then, is a triumph not only of personal resilience but also of the power of communal care, where healing occurs through the simple acts of being there for one another.

A Man Called Ove transcends the conventional narrative of personal redemption. It is a rich, complex exploration of the human condition of love, loss, and community's quiet, transformative power. Ove's journey from grumpy isolation to grateful acceptance illustrates the enduring importance of human connection while offering a nuanced commentary on the roles that grief, ageing, and societal expectations play in shaping our identities. Through Ove's life, Fredrik Backman invites readers to reflect on their relationships, reconsider the value of those who may be overlooked or misunderstood, and understand that it is never too late to find new meaning and purpose in life. Ove's story ultimately serves as a potent reminder that the smallest, most everyday acts of kindness whether they are as simple as fixing a radiator, sharing a meal, or offering a moment of patience have the power to transform lives, restore dignity, and heal even the deepest wounds.

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