



Totalitarian Dystopian Society as Depicted in Margaret Atwood's the Handmaid's Tale and the Testaments

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Abstract

A society which has no trace of any happiness is considered a dystopian society. People in dystopian societies are tormented and have no freedom to live in that society. The totalitarian regime oppresses the citizens and seizes their fundamental rights in society. Beneath this government, the political system seems to be tyrannical, dictatorial, and vulnerable. The government in power keeps the people under control through educational and religious institutions. Especially, women suffer the most. Women are kept under control by men, especially men in power. This type of totalitarian dystopian society is seen in Margaret Atwood's novels "The Handmaid's Tale" (1985) and "The Testaments" (2019). The objective of this paper is to analyse the totalitarian system and dystopian society concerning the situations portrayed in these novels.

Keywords: Totalitarianism, dystopia, society, oppression,

A government that controls all aspects of its citizens' lives is considered a totalitarian government. There is no freedom for people under this government. The dictatorial system represses the people, and even their fundamental rights are seized. The political system seems to be tyrannical, dictatorial, and vulnerable. To keep people under control, this government uses religious norms. So, it is considered a dystopian society. Totalitarianism is a monopoly rule. There is no place for individual institutions and organizations. People are made to come under one roof, ruled by a single political power on top. People have no freedom, no rights in society, and they have no rights even in their own lives. People's fates are decided by the government. The laws and rules created by this political system are ruthless. People must follow the rules. Anyone who opposes it is punished ruthlessly or executed.

The term *totalitarian* has become meaning to a single government with repressive power over its citizens. The other totalitarian governments include Adolf Hitler's Nazism in Germany (1933–1945), Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union (1924–1953), and a modern *totalitarian* state under Kim's rule over North Korea. The totalitarian government gives no place to individuals' rights and individual institutions and organizations. In totalitarianism, the government or the authority in power completely controls people's lives. To take over control, this government develops an ideology. Totalitarian governments repress individuals' freedom, and there is no place for traditional social organization. The totalitarian government has secret police or military forces to control citizens' lives. This totalitarian regime uses its secret police forces to the extreme to attain its goal. It also forcefully demands its citizens to attain its goals for the state. But the authoritarian system has some limitations and restrictions on using its forces to attain any goal. The totalitarian regimes have some characteristics in common. In the work *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, authors Carl J. Friedrich, a German-American professor and political theorist and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, a Polish-American diplomat and political scientist mentioned some of the common characteristics of totalitarian regimes.

The authors' method of analysis is essentially institutional. They define totalitarian dictatorship in the simplest possible terms and then apply each element of the definition to Nazi, Fascist, and Russian Communist Political reality. Totalitarian dictatorship is presented in an ideal type of six interrelated traits: a single party, an ideology, a terror mechanism, a communication monopoly, a directed economy, and a weapon monopoly. (Friedrich 367)

Totalitarianism ideology has a strong impact on society's political and philosophical perspectives. Its level changes according to the changes in the world. Under totalitarianism, the government holds absolute control over the people. A totalitarian government is a monopoly. Mostly, the state is controlled by a single supreme power. It is an extreme form of authoritarianism. This rule has no concern for people's basic rights. Most of the time, it violates human nature and its norms. Most totalitarian rulers are considered dictators. There is no place for any anti-government movements or revolutions. If there is any revolutionary movement or resistance from the people, the government takes ruthless actions. It demands unquestioned loyalty from its people. It is an extreme form of dictatorship. George Orwell's classic dystopian novel, *1984*, is considered an extreme form of totalitarian regime to live in. The phrase by O'Brien, "If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face – forever" to Winston Smith (Orwell 269). This phrase shows the power and control of the police force over the people of society.

Totalitarian states have several common characteristics. All totalitarian states have an ideology that helps to control all aspects of their citizens' lives. These ideologies help to attain the final goals of the states. A single authority rules the state, which is mostly a monopoly and a dictatorship. A single authority that is in power controls all the public and private activities of the society. The citizens must follow and serve a single ideology to attain the state's ultimate goal. The totalitarian state dissolves all the conventional forms of political organisation like liberalism, freedom, democracy, individual ideologies, and individual institutions. The government develops a new form of social and political organization to be followed by the people without any question under a single ruler. The people of the state are constantly watched by the secret forces employed by the government.

The totalitarian government controls and manages all the mass media—journals, television, and radio, together with art and literature. A totalitarian government controls and manages the state's economy. To attain the goal and its ideology, the regime takes control of the economy, taking all forms of income. The police force is used to control people's freedoms and all basic rights of the citizens of the state, under a totalitarian system. Their actions are ruthless and extreme. Likewise, they are controlled by the supreme power or a single authority in power. These types of police operations are seen in the Adolf Hitler regime in Germany, and the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin. The current totalitarian states in the world are North Korea and Eritrea, a state in Eastern Africa. North Korea is considered the world's biggest totalitarian state. Firstly, it was established as the Republic of Korea in 1948. It remains one of the world's most oppressive governments, ruled by Kim Jong-un. His rule is considered a dictatorship. According to Human Rights Watch, these states maintain their power through brutality and violence.

The authorities in power use education and religion as a tool to control the people. In the name of religion, the totalitarian government imposes its ideology to be followed and worshipped by the people. People, without any question, follow those ideologies in fear of God. Politics and religion are the two sides of the state. Totalitarian governments use theocracy to enforce their laws. Theocratic laws are based on a basic Bible interpretation, chiefly on the Old Testament. "Theocracy" is the rule of God. It is not God who rules the world directly. A government in the name of God rules the world or state. Under totalitarianism, the government uses theocratic rules to enforce its rules and makes the people subject to authority. In a theocratic government, the person in authority is considered a divine person. Most of the theocratic government authorities are from the church. Theocratic laws are based on early civilization.

Patriarchy is one of the elements of a totalitarian government. In a patriarchal society, women are considered the weaker gender. Women are subordinate to men. Under totalitarian rule, the government uses theocracy to convince women that they are weaker than men.

A society that has no trace of any happiness is considered a dystopian society. Dystopia is an imagined state or society in which people suffer badly because of repression by authorities, the terror of violence, disease, extreme pollution, radiation, war, or the injustice of a totalitarian government. A dystopian world or society may be a near-future world or a fictional world. Dystopia is the opposite of utopia. Utopia is the ideal, harmonious, and perfect place for people to live happily ever after. The environment, government, laws, constitution, and social conditions are perfect for people to live happily without any fear. A Dystopia is a place where humanity is dehumanised and people live in terror. Most dystopian societies are ruled by totalitarian governments or regimes. Those societies face an extreme environmental crisis, violence, a lack of freedom, a lack of basic rights, and oppression.

The characteristics of a dystopia are that people are under a totalitarian government. They do not have any individual rights. Propaganda is employed by the authorities to regulate the people of a society. There is no place for individuals' thoughts and private institutions and organizations. People of this society have no fundamental freedom—freedom of speech, act, and expression are denied. The government controls all aspects of the people, and they decide the fate of the citizens. The economy of the state is completely controlled by the authorities in power. So, the people can concentrate and serve the nation to attain a single goal. Unquestioningly, people must obey the law and, with loyalty, they must follow the ideology developed by the ruler in power. Citizens are always watched by the special forces employed by the state. A dystopian society may face some serious environmental crises: radiation, pollution, and destruction of natural resources. People in a dystopian society live in terror, or fear of violence. A society that faces constant war can also be considered a dystopian society. The government convinces its citizens that they live in a perfect society, but in reality, the society is an illusion of an ideal utopian world. Thus, overall, a totalitarian state or society is considered a dystopian society. Dystopian features differ from political, social, religious, war, technology, psychology, or spirituality, which may become present in the future or a near-future destructive world.

The other significant features of dystopia are dystopian controls. Often the dystopian society has a totalitarian government in which the authority in power represses the people, by gaining their control, and convinces the people, by portraying an unreal perfect utopian society. This illusion is maintained by following controls.

In a dystopian society, the role of government is significant. Most of the time the government is ruled by a totalitarian system that represses the people's freedom and rights. No place for liberalism, individuals' thoughts, democracy, and equality. In *Animal Farm* (1945), and *1984* (1949) George Orwell portrayed a dystopian world at its best. In *1984*, Orwell the world is controlled by the government. In 1984, London, the place is unpleasant to live in, where people are constantly watched by a fictional dictator, Big Brother, and the Thought Police are employed to watch people and read their minds. This novel portrays a powerful totalitarian society ruled by a dictatorship. George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) is a classic satire. It is a satire of the Russian Revolution. Animals of the farm changed Mr Jones's Manor Farm into Animal Farm. The animals aim to create a democratic society (farm) with a motto that "All Animals Are Created Equal." (Orwell 4)

In dystopian fiction, technology controls society. People are controlled by modern devices, computers, robots, and other scientific innovations. Additionally, it ruins the ecology and nature. e-waste is a result of technological advancement and is harmful to people and society. Furthermore, it causes pollution and radiation, both of which harm human health and the environment. Reproduction and fertility rates are also affected by radiation. Aldous Huxley's utopian World State lives by the motto "Community, Identity, Stability." Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, published in 1932,

examines the drawback of using new inventions and technology. The World State's government uses technology to keep its citizens under control. People's minds are conditioned by technology to follow the rules. Powerful technological advancements lead to a low fertility rate.

Philosophical or spiritual ideology is commonly employed through a monopoly form of government, to control society. This is a kind of dystopian society, controlled by a theocratic society. The novels that portray dystopian societies are *The Time Machine* by H. G. Wells, *The Trial* by Franz Kafka, *Fahrenheit 451* by Bradbury Ray, *Anthem* by Ayn Rand, and *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift.

Thus, almost all totalitarian state or society is considered dystopian society. People in a dystopian society are tormented and have no freedom to live in that society. Under the totalitarian government, people have no freedom and life seems to be a nightmare for people. The dictatorial system oppresses the citizens and sizes their fundamental rights in society. Beneath this government, the political system seems to be tyrannical, dictatorial, and vulnerable. The government in power keeps the people under control through educational and religious institutions. Especially, women suffer the most. Women are kept under control by men, especially men in power.

The Handmaid's Tale (1985) and *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood depict this kind of authoritarian dystopian society (2019). Both books are written as stories that are told by female characters. In these books, women are put in tragic circumstances. Their fundamental rights, even their identities, are taken away against their will. They are regarded as forbearing children without any claim to their bodies and as material objects. Women are pushed into becoming handmaids for upper-class men, abducted from their families, and forced to labour. The Republic of Gilead is a near-future New England that serves as the setting for Margaret Atwood's books *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Testaments*. Totalitarian and theocratic government has substituted democratic rule in the United States of America.

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the story revolves around the character Offred, her life, her sufferings, and the injustice faced by her in the patriarchal society as a Handmaid for one of the commanders from an elite group in The Republic of Gilead, but the story ends in vague. *The Testaments* is a sequel to *The Handmaid's Tale*, set fifteen years after the events of the previous novel. The story is narrated by three characters in the novel, Aunt Lydia, a character from the previous novel, Agnes and Daisy. This novel sees some rebellious characters, and movements and the novel ends with a trace of the fall of Gilead. In these novels, Atwood pictures the condition of people, especially women under totalitarian, patriarchal, and theocratic rule, set in a near-future dystopian society.

Both the novels have strong totalitarian and dystopian characteristics-repression of people, violence, secret police force, patriarchal society, subordination of women (as weaker gender) set in the near-future that is The Republic of Gilead, monopoly, theocratic laws, restriction of freedom, denial of freedom for women, no fundamental education, low fertility issue, and colonies affected by radiation. The government takes control over all the aspects of citizens' lives, economy control, no place for revolution, and people are constantly watched by the secret police force employed by the authority. The objective of this paper is to analyse the totalitarian system and dystopian society concerning the situations portrayed in these novels. Dystopian fiction helps readers to educate and warn people about the dangers of current social and political structures, also about climate change, and its impact on the environment. Dystopian novels have an informative message with anarchism, oppression, environmental destruction, the usage of powerful technology to condition people, radiation, and mass poverty.

Margaret Atwood, one of the prominent figures of the literary world is a celebrated author of dystopian fiction. A near-future England called Gilead is the setting for Margaret Atwood's novels *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) and *The Testaments* (2019). It provides a warning against a totalitarian society that comprises theocratic rule, a patriarchal system, declining fertility, and radiation. Dystopian literature expresses an author's ideology. *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood features Offred as the main character, who is confined in a totalitarian and patriarchal society and fights to escape it, like all dystopian protagonists. Offred represents all the women of society. The major characters Aunt Lydia, Agnes, and Daisy in the dystopian novel *The Testaments* act revolutionary, much like other main characters in dystopian literature, and this causes The Republic of Gilead to topple (a totalitarian society). The objective of this thesis is to examine and argue how the authoritarian dystopian society is shown in these novels.

The idea that literature serves as a reflection of society is widely recognized. And literature has always served as a mirror of the terrible events that occur in society. Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Testaments* picture a totalitarian dystopian society that comprises authoritarianism, dictatorship, and a patriarchal system. The thesis attempts to explain how the fundamental ideologies of society in the name of religion and politics have commonly been utilised to control the people of society and how they take advantage of women in society.

The Handmaid's Tale, written by Canadian novelist Margaret Atwood between West Berlin and Alabama, was released in Canada in 1985. It belongs to the class of books known as dystopian novels, which are set in a near-future New England (a futuristic world) where oppressive social control and the image of a perfect society are justified through moral, technological, or, in the circumstance of *The Handmaid's Tale*, totalitarian control. Totalitarian control is a form of government with religion as a tool and with definite power that holds a focus on controlling various aspects of social and private life.

Many critics seem to believe that Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is still frightening and powerful today, in large part due to its historical truth. When Atwood's text was initially published in 1985, not all critics agreed with her. But this book always has readers. The book was always in print. Sales of the book peaked specifically during the Trump administration, and readers in the US connected themselves to the events of the book. *The Handmaid's Tale* has been adapted into numerous different media, including radio, television, opera, and film.

Later the increasing popularity of the novel and the success of the series adaption in 2017 made Atwood write its sequel *The Testament* which got published in 2019. As the first book of the Gilead series ended in vague, the sequel gives the proper ending to the Gilead series. Both novels are considered speculative novels, as both come under the genres of sci-fi, dystopia, feminism, and feminist-dystopia.

The term dystopia is the opposite of utopia. If there is a utopia there is always a dystopia and vice versa. A dystopian society is one in which there is no sign of happiness in people's lives. In a dystopian state in which there is the oppression of people by authorities, the threat of violence, disease, excessive pollution, radiation, struggle, or the injustice of a totalitarian regime, people suffer immensely. A dystopian society could be fictitious or set in the near-future world. The ideal, peaceful, and perfect conditions for humans to live happily are described as utopia. The social, political, legal, and environmental conditions are ideal for allowing individuals to live peacefully and fearlessly. In a dystopia, individuals are tormented and humanity is crushed. Most dystopian societies have totalitarian regimes. In those societies, people face an extreme environmental crisis, violence, a lack of freedom, a lack of basic rights, and oppression.

The Dystopian genre became popular in the 20th century. However, John Stuart Mill first used the phrase dystopia in a debate in parliament in the eighteenth century. But a dystopia cannot be properly understood without its opposite, a utopia. In *The Age of Dystopia: One Genre, Our Fears and Our Future*, Louisa MacKay Demerjian argues, "Dystopian works reflect society's worries. What do we have to worry about? Income inequality, the financial crisis, power in the hands of a few—a few anonymous, wealthy, and powerful elite—which brings to mind the elite group of the Party insiders in 1984" (Demerjian 49). According to Demerjian dystopian works reflect society. Especially dystopian works reflect flaws of society and people's struggles. She mentions that gender inequality, economic crisis, and authority power that oppresses people remind the society of Orwell's 1984.

The Handmaid's Tale presents totalitarian politics and repressive laws. Like Nineteen Eighty-Four's Oceania, Gilead is always at war with external enemies (and, according to its evening news, always winning); it faces scarce natural resources; and those who do not fit the society's norms are re-educated, expelled, or executed. Like Brave New World, Gilead is a hierarchical society with highly differentiated roles, status-rankings, and activities. (Stillman 71)

In the paper entitled *Identity, Complicity, and Resistance in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale* the authors Peter G. Stillman and S. Anne Johnson, wrote about the themes of identity, complicity, and resistance in the novel *The Handmaid's Tale*. The authors argue that Atwood's Gilead is like Orwell's 1984 Oceania. Also argues that the hierarchical system of Gilead is similar to Huxley's *Brave New World*. Atwood draws inspiration from her predecessors, *The Handmaid's Tale* shares dystopian characteristics with Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's 1984. Especially the setting of the near future and the patriarchal society controlled by the monopoly rule. The dystopian setting is significantly influenced by feminism and religious fundamentalism.

Atwood's novel is set in the near-future New England, also known as The Republic of Gilead. "There's been a coup, here in the United States, just as in times past in so many other countries. Any forced change of leadership is always followed by a move to crush the opposition" (T 116). The president of Congress is assassinated and the United States of America is couped by the religious fundamentalists, called the Sons of Jacob. Commander B. Fredrick Judd (from *The Testaments*) is the leader of the Sons of Jacob and the secret police force called the Eyes. He planned the attack in pre-Gilead. The reasons for the rise of Gilead are extreme corruption, a fall in the birth rate because of high radiation and pollution, and more abortions by women. The goal of Gilead and its supporters is to clean society from corruption and to stop the diminishing birth rate. So, to achieve its goal, the Gilead government took the freedom of individuals and their rights. Women were terminated from their jobs and sent back to their homes, as Gilead believed that women's place in society is in their homes and to bear children; it is the only duty and purpose of their lives. There is no place for women in society's development in the economy and power. The citizens of the nation are classified according to class. People and authorities in power are considered the dominant class. The eyes, guardians, angels, and other people are categorised according to the work they do. Punishments are made severe to reduce the crime rate. People are executed if they fail to follow the rules.

Gilead is a society of injustice, violence, and cruelty. The near-future setting, radiation, pollution, strict government (totalitarian regime), oppression of people by the authorities, repression of women, and social hierarchy prove that Atwood's novels portray a dystopian society.

But Gilead is also a distinctive dystopia. Facing plagues and ecological crises that caused widespread sterility, the founders of Gilead generated a right-wing fundamentalist reading of the Bible, grafted it onto patriarchal attitudes, and imposed it throughout society. Gilead is devoted to reproduction? white, Christian, misogynist, stratified reproduction. (Stillman 71)

In *Identity, Complicity, and Resistance in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale* the authors Peter G. Stillman and S. Anne Johnson mentions that Atwood's Gilead is a dystopian society. Atwood's both novels have the setting of the near future (dystopia), with environmental destruction. The radiation and pollution affected the birth rate of Gilead. The radiation-affected area is called "the Colonies." Gilead condemns the previous government for environmental destruction. According to Gilead, (a totalitarian regime), too much freedom and freedom of abortion for women are the reasons for the fall of the birth rate. Radiation affecting technological advancement leads to pollution and that caused harm to the people. Though she is not against technological development, as an environmental activist indirectly, Atwood mentioned her concern over pollution and environmental destruction in the novel. As a global celebrity and citizen, has made it her mission to use her literary fame for good by promoting environmental awareness in an age where the continued depletion of the earth's natural resources is caused by an exponential rise in the human population.

As a totalitarian theonomy society, the Gilead has a secret police force and security called "The Eyes." An undercover police force that constantly watches the people. They are referred to as the Eyes of God. The great symbol on American currency, which resembles a Masonic eye, served as the inspiration for "The Eye." It also arrests and punishes the people who try to break the laws and norms of the Gilead. Commander Judd is head of the secret police force and they have power next to Commanders and authorities in the regime. Gilead is more of a police state—a society or state where the government uses a police force to control all the aspects of the people.

Gilead seems able to overwhelm many potential opponent, as Mustapha Mond's Brave New World can consume the Savage, the Benefactor of the One State re-convert D-503 to reason (in Zamyatin's *We*), and Oceania crush Winston Smith (in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*). To suppress individuality and maintain the regime, Gilead re-writes history, asserts governmental control of television newscasts, forbids books, magazines, and newspapers, and leaves only gossip (with its combination of accuracy, slippage, and disinformation) as an independent source of knowledge. (Stillman 72)

In *Identity, Complicity, and Resistance in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale* the authors Peter G. Stillman and S. Anne Johnson, wrote about the themes of identity, complicity and resistance in the novel *The Handmaid's Tale*. The paper describes that "The Republic of Gilead" is similar to Orwell's 1984 and Huxley's Brave New World, these societies and regimes control almost all aspects of their people and society.

Atwood's Gilead is similar to the totalitarian regimes like the Nazis and Soviet Communists: the destruction of information, burning of documents and books and killing of their opponents. These methods make it harder for future generations to authenticate the totalitarian rule of the Republic of Gilead and force them to depend more on other alternative sources. In her narrative, Aunt Lydia recognises the totalitarian practice of rewriting history: "The corrupt and blood-smearred fingerprints of the past must be wiped away to create a clean space for the morally pure generation that is surely about to arrive. Such is the theory" (T 4).

Politics and religious principles are the two primary methods used to govern every aspect of a nation. The government occasionally makes laws based on religious principles and even makes statements to maintain spiritual status. The government in the setting of *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Testaments* is a repressive totalitarian regime. The rules and the theocracy are based on the fundamental perspective of the Christian Bible, particularly the Old Testament. The society adheres to the puritan norms of New England. Theocracy is defined as the rule of God. However, in its context, the term refers to a nation where religion seems to be the dominant force. God is not believed to have direct control over the world's governments. The authority in power who claims to speak and act in God's name. While the totalitarian political system holds that all citizens should be subordinate to the policies of the state.

Gilead is a theocratic state, which implies that its government and religion are connected on every level and that the rulers consider themselves to be representatives of God. Thus, it uses passages from the Bible or other religious teachings as justification for its brutal oppression and violence, which are all committed in the name of God. Despite the brutality of the totalitarian government's actions seeming extreme, Atwood drew them everything from real historical events, turning Gilead into a frightening morality tale about the dangers of theocratic governments and the misuse of religious authority. While the book does not claim that all religions are intrinsically immoral, it does highlight the power and danger of religious abuse that has been experienced historically.

Gilead's power structures, which were initially established as a "Puritan theocracy," are justified by certain Bible verses, illustrating how religion can be used to establish and maintain totalitarian states. Since only a few people are privileged to read it, Gilead's authorities regard the Bible as a source of authority and control the Bibles are kept "in the darkness of their locked boxes, glowing with arcane energy" (T 35), implying that Gilead's common people associate them with a mythical sense of power. This gives Gilead's leadership more influence because they can claim that any disagreement is a betrayal not just of Gilead but also of God. They believe that obeying God is equivalent to obeying the government.

Atwood never mentioned anything against Christianity; instead, Gilead is referred to as a nation of "religious fanatics" and its religion is called the faith of Gilead. This implies that Atwood is attempting to highlight religious extremists and Christian violators and that she is not opposed to Christianity. Even when Becca and Agnes witness Gilead's wickedness, they continue to believe in the biblical verses. Even though Gilead cites the Bible and displays some aspects of Christian ideologies, the story's subtle handling of religion suggests that the book is not criticising religion or even Christianity in general but a reminder against its inclusion into government to support the totalitarian rule, evidently numerous times across history like the New England Puritans.

The religious fundamentalists who established the totalitarian theocracy regime in Atwood's novels think that women should be given the traditional duties of childbearing. The Sons of Jacob, therefore, share an ideology with Christian fundamentalist movements from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Republic of Gilead is similar to totalitarian and dystopian characteristics

The reasons for the rise of Gilead are due to global instability, financial crises, prices, and tax upheaval in the United States. A common characteristic of a totalitarian regime, Gilead controls the economy of society. as a patriarchal and misogynist society. The first and foremost action of the Gilead government is to terminate women from their jobs. The government particularly targets working women. All organisations and properties belonging to women are either nationalised or transferred to their husbands. As a judge, she was targeted by the patriarchal government.

One of the foremost characteristics of a totalitarian regime is the hierarchy, which was common in most totalitarian regimes. Authorities in power categorize people according to their class or status. Mostly they were categorized by their jobs. To serve the ruling class in the new society, Gilead develops an official language that excludes and misrepresents reality. Men and women are classified based on dresses. With unusual exceptions, males dress in military or police uniforms, which limits their identity. Even women were given certain colours of dresses based on their work and class. According to colour psychology and metaphor, all social classes of men and women are determined by the colours they wear which is similar to Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. People sent to colonies, who clean the radiated area, are dressed in grey.

The Gilead's men are divided into four groups based on their occupations: Commanders, Eyes, Angels, Guardians, and other common men. The commanders are at the top of the hierarchical pyramid in society. They are often called the commanders of the faithful. They dress in black to convey their dominance. They have contributed to establishing the rules and norms of society. They must defend and protect Gilead. They are the privileged class of the nation. They have a hegemonic family with a wife, a Handmaid if required, Marthas, and Guardians because of their rank. As a member of

the elite class, they are expected to reproduce, although many may be sterile due to pre-Gilead exposure to a biological factor. But in the Gileadean patriarchal and misogynist society, though men are incapable of procreating, they are never blamed or called sterile by society. Only women are mentioned as infertile women, whether they are wives or Handmaids.

The powerful commanders are Commander B. Fredrick Judd, from *The Testaments*, and Commander Fred Waterford, from *The Handmaid's Tale*. Both belong to the elite class, have a dominant position in society, have control over people and share the same name, Fred. Both have dark secrets and indulge in illegal activities. Commander Judd is the head of Gilead's secret police force, the Eyes, and the head of the Sons of Jacobs. He is the one who planned and arranged the massacre of the United States president and supported the rise of the totalitarian regime, Gilead. He began a class called "Aunts" with the help of his supporters. To attain the single goal of Gilead, which is to raise the birth rate of society and to clean the society from corruption, with the help of Aunt Lydia, he started the category of women called Handmaids to bear children for the elite class of men if their wives are infertile. Similarly, Commander Fred, from *The Handmaid's Tale*, is also an elite class. He has magazines which are banned by the government, and he also visits Jezebels, which is prohibited and illegal in society.

The next men stand in the hierarchy of the class is the Eyes. The Gilead is a totalitarian theonomy society that has a secret police force and security. Eyes are the undercover police force that constantly watches the people. They are referred to as the Eyes of God. The great symbol on American currency, which resembles a Masonic eye, served as the inspiration for "The Eye". It also arrests and punishes the people who try to break the laws and norms of the Gilead. Angels are soldiers who take part in the battle to defend and enlarge the nation's frontiers. Angels could be allowed to get married.

Soldiers who are employed for ordinary law enforcement and other daily duties. They wear a green-coloured uniform. Besides Eyes incognito, guardians are unintelligent or aged or quite immature, unfit for other jobs in the republic of Gilead. Nick is the Guardian of the commander.

After declaring it unlawful for women to work, Gilead establishes a hierarchy of positions. Women are only identified by their gender roles as Wives, Handmaids, or Marthas, while men are only defined by their position and by their jobs in society.

The highest class of women in Gilead, just below the Commanders, are called Aunts. The responsibility of the Aunts is to teach and monitor the Handmaids. They defend the Handmaid's role as one that is honourable and respectable and as a means of forgiveness for women who have committed any sin. Aunts dress in brown. The only position where unmarried, childless, and mostly older women can enjoy any liberty is as aunts. It helps them to stay far away from the colonies. They are the only group of ladies who are permitted to read, since they must perform various responsibilities, including administrative ones, as part of their career. Aunts named in the novels include Aunt Lydia, Aunt Elizabeth, Aunt Vidala, Aunt Estee, Aunt Helena, and Aunt Sara. Their individuality is permanently removed.

A particular class of fertile women known as Handmaids are those that Gilead has considered sinful to marry, typically because they were not virgins when they arrived in Gilead. When a wealthy man's wife is determined to be infertile, handmaids are brought in to have intercourse with them, in the name of Ceremony, and bear their children. These men are typically commanders or men who belong to high ranks. The culture of Gilead despises handmaids because of their status; they are regarded as immoral and despicable women. and have no freedom to move their bodies, speak, or even express their emotions.

Handmaids are covered in red attire and their head is covered by the bonnet. The red colour symbolizes their lives in danger, and it also symbolizes their fertility. "...The red gloves are lying on the bed. I pick them up, pull them onto my hands, finger by finger. Everything except the wings around my face is red: the colour of blood, which defines us" (HT 14). Atwood's concept for the Handmaids' attire worn by Offred and other handmaids in Gilead comes from the terrifying woman wearing a bonnet, in the Old Dutch Cleanser advertisement (the 1940s). This class of women is the highlight of Atwood's novels. "We were the people who were not in papers. We lived in the blank white spaces at the edges of the print. It gave us more freedom. We lived in the gaps between the stories" (HT 62-63). The plot of the story is around the Handmaids' class, their struggles, loss of fundamental freedom and rights and their silent resistance.

Women who are married to higher-ranking officers and members of the elite class are known as "Wives." Of all women, they hold the highest social position. Wives dress in blue attire. The colour blue refers to early Christian art's renowned depictions of the Virgin Mary.

The Pear Girls is a missionary who travel to Canada and other countries from Gilead in search of young women to convert to Gilead's faith and bring to Gilead. However, Pearl Girls frequently play a role of spy. A Pearl Girl becomes a complete Aunt when she returns to Gilead with a new convert, also known as a Pearl. This missionary was started by Aunt Lydia, with the support of Commander Judd, to extend the women's community in Gilead and to spy on other countries to gather information, especially to collect information regarding the Mayday resistance group in Canada and their plans to topple the totalitarian patriarchal nation. Through these Pearl Girls, who act as spies, the Commander gets information regarding two active Mayday resistance members, Melaine and Neil, and they were killed by the Gilead's force.

A supplicant is a position before becoming an Aunt. Young girls from elite-class families are expected to marry a high-rank man when they attain a certain age. Young women who are not interested in marriage life have the option to become Aunts. But before getting a position as Aunts, they serve and assist the Aunts as Supplicants and learn all the values and responsibilities. Agnes Jemima and her friend Beck, are not interested in marriage, and they are given the choice by Aunt Lydia to become supplicants.

The other women classes of the Gilead are minority groups-Marthas, Econowives, Jezebels and Unwomen. Marthas are mature, infertile, obedient women who possess domestic abilities, making them appropriate as housekeepers. They wear green uniforms as attire. The name Martha gets her name

from the Bible when Jesus meets Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha; Mary hears Jesus while Martha works. Cora, Rita, Vera, Rosa and Zilla are the Marthas of the novels.

In Gilead, women who are forced into prostitution are referred to as “Jezebels.” They are only subject to the rights of the commanders and their visitors. They underwent forced sterilisation, a practice that is against the law and forbidden for other women. Despite the totalitarian society’s official ban on this culture, men of higher levels secretly approved of it and took part in it. Moira, a rebellious woman who escaped from the Red Centre and tried to escape the Gilead is given a choice to become a Jezebel or threaten to send to the Colonies.

Econowives are women who are not privileged and who have married lower-rank men. They are compelled to fulfil all traditionally feminine roles, such as household duties and raising children. To symbolize their various responsibilities, they dress in a variety of colours.

Women who are infertile, single, divorced, homosexual, feminists, nuns, or socially rebellious are all viewed as Unwomen in the Republic of Gilead due to the rigid gender stereotypes that exist there. Gilead sends Unwomen to “the Colonies,” which are areas exposed to radiation dangers and polluted environments.

Even babies born in Gilead are categorized-healthy babies are babies without any defects. The next category is Unbabies- they are referred to as shredders. Babies which are born with defects, physically disabled and miscarried babies are called Unbabies. Ofwarren’s (Janine’s) baby is mentioned as Unbaby in *The Handmaid’s Tale*. As the nation’s birth rate falls very low, the goal of Gilead is to raise the rate of childbirth. So, Gilead prohibited women to have abortions and made it illegal.

“Better never means better for everyone... It always means worse, for some” (HT 218). In a dystopian novel, one person’s utopia is another person’s dystopia, this could be a challenging fictional world to handle. Furthermore, every dystopia may also contain a smaller utopia and vice versa. In a story, it is necessary to have a society which is idealised for certain classes of people and for other classes of people it seems to be a nightmare to live in. Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* has such type of dystopian society called “The Republic of Gilead.” It is a patriarchal society, which is an idealized world for The Commanders, people in authority and their families, whereas the society seems to be a nightmare for other people to live in under the totalitarian regime.

In the Republic of Gilead, the authority created some “customs and practices.” Some customs were inspired by the Old Testaments and others were created by the totalitarian patriarchal government. The other major custom and practice followed in the Gilead is ceremony. “...I do not say making love, because this is not what he’s doing. Copulating too would be inaccurate because it would imply two people and only one is involved. Nor does rape cover it...” (HT 100-101). Women’s body is objectified and rape is institutionalized in the name of Ceremony, in the totalitarian regime of Gilead. Handmaids have no right even on their bodies. The Ceremony is an extremely formalised rape in which high-ranking males, (commanders) their wives, and handmaids engage to conceive. The other customs and practices are prayavaganza, particiution and salvaging.

As a totalitarian and authoritarian society, Gilead has more opposition from other countries. So, the government appoints spies in other nations to gather information regarding their plans. Also, if there is any dictatorship or unlawful act in the nation, there will always be some kind of protest or rebellious act to oppose it. As a nation of dictatorship and patriarchal society, Gilead has an opposition group called the Mayday Resistance Group. The Mayday resistance group is against the illegal and unlawful ideologies of Gilead. They aim to protect and help women and children from Gilead to Canada. The Mayday operates from Canada. Ofglen from *The Handmaid’s Tale* is one of the members of the Mayday resistance group. She acted as a spy for the group, gathering information that helped to topple the totalitarian regime. In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, it is unknown who took Offred from Commander’s house and what happened to her, making it unlikely that she is alive or not. Atwood cleared up these queries in the sequel, in which Offred fled Gilead to Canada with the help of the Mayday resistance group. Melanie and Neil were active members of the Mayday resistance group, who were part of smuggling Baby Nicole to Canada. They protected Baby Nicole as their daughter and raised her under the guise of Daisy. Later, they were killed by the Gilead force by throwing bombs at their car near their store, “The Clothes Hound.” The sequel also reveals that Aunt Lydia is the unknown source in Gilead providing information to the Mayday resistance group in Canada, by risking her life.

Baby Nicole is the powerful symbol used by Gilead to gain the patriotism of the Gilead people and to prove to the world that their ideologies are right and Canada interferes with Gilead’s ideology. Since Baby Nicole had been smuggled away from Gilead to Canada, the government of Gilead was reminded of the betrayal of its Handmaids. Aunt Lydia used Baby Nicole as the tool to create a complication and fight between Canada and Gilead. She gained the trust of Commander Judd, the senior officer of the Gilead, by assuring him of getting back the pride of the nation, Baby Nicole from Canada. Also, she seeks the attention of the world towards Gilead, and thus begins the downfall of the authoritarian nation. When Daisy discovers that she is Baby Nicole, she ultimately decides to use her legendary reputation against the exact dictatorship that established it since she is a young person who cares about social justice.

Atwood’s historical notes/ epilogues play a major role in both novels. The epilogue is about the 12th and 13th symposiums conducted on Gileadean studies 2195 and 2017. This shows that there is a separate study called the Gileadean study. Professor James Darcy Pieixoto, an expert, on Gileadean studies makes a speech that comprises the epilogue. He discusses verifying the tapes’ authenticity. The historical notes also prove that Gilead is a totalitarian regime.

Atwood mentioned in many interviews regarding her novel *The Handmaid’s Tale* that she never uses anything beyond the imagination, she always uses the technologies, customs and practices which already existed in past. Her historical facts made her works unique and successful.

“As they say, history does not repeat itself, but it rhymes” (Atwood 2019). This line of Atwood differs from the cliché phrase that history repeats itself. Atwood relied on history throughout *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Testaments* to show what happens when it is forgotten. Perhaps a more frightening history is not restored; it does not repeat. But rhymes can be found anywhere. People take a risk ignoring them. Atwood's works are honest reflections on the political events people are experiencing now and in the past. The historians mention the horrors of enslavement about 300 years earlier in the epilogue. In her acknowledgements, Atwood refers to current events in the United States and other countries. Although history doesn't always repeat itself exactly, the rhymes are apparent. Atwood through her novels tries to warn people about the possibilities of these kinds of regimes in future to the readers.

Through the qualitative research method, this paper reaches its objective. The textual analysis method is used to prove the objective of the paper. Through the deep analysis of primary texts and by referring to other critical and research works, based on the primary sources the paper proves that Margaret Atwood's novels, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) and its sequel, *The Testaments* (2019), portrays a totalitarian dystopian society.

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