

**Majoritarian discourse, masking and the female suicide bomber in
Chandrasekaram's *Forbidden Area***

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Abstract

Sri Lankan theatre productions featuring war rarely place importance on the suicide bomber. As such, Visakesa Chandrasekan's play *Forbidden Area* is unique as it revolves round a female LTTE suicide bomber who is on a mission. Thus, investigating the representation of female militancy is important with relevance to cultural studies as well as security studies given the pervasive presence of 'wars on terror'. Consequently, this paper attempts to discuss whether Chandrasekaran subverts majoritarian discourse which dehumanizes the female suicide bomber, and for this analysis I use the concept of masking.

Masking, as viewed by Elaine Savory (1999), is a series of codes signifying multiple levels of personality, indicated by ritual ways. While Urmila dons a 'mask of courage and defiance', as the time for the mission dawns she unveils mixed emotions. The complexity of Urmila's character is heightened as she subverts gender politics and 'femininity'; she also draws divine inspiration from the Hindu goddess *Kali*. Although Urmila's character doesn't fall short of being "human" her final action is far from being dialectical. In this text, masking functions as a protective and subversive strategy given her precarious situation.

Keywords: Dehumanization, Female Suicide Bomber, Masking, Tragedy, Gender