

Beyond the Battlefield: Investigation of Trauma and Psychosomatic

Legacy of War in *Born under a Million Shadows*

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Abstract

*This research explores the psychological and psychosomatic traumatization of victims depicted through diverse narrative voices in fictional works, with a focus on war trauma. By examining the literary representation of trauma, this study aims to illuminate its consequences identify potential pathways for healing and prevention, and promote resilience. To achieve this, the study presents a close examination of Busfield's *Born under a Million Shadows* (2009) which reveals a nuanced exploration of victim's experience, coping mechanisms and resilience. Grounded in the theoretical framework of coping mechanism as posited by Herman, this research delves deep into the complex psychological and psychosomatic dynamics of trauma, shedding light on victims' struggles to process and integrate their traumatic experiences. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of trauma's effects on individuals and communities, highlighting the role of creative expression in facilitating healing and promoting resilience. The findings will benefit trauma survivors, guiding them to understand traumatic developments in their personalities, and make effective interventions for recovery and reintegration. It will also be helpful for the readers as well as future researchers investigating repercussions of war globally, with a particular focus on Afghanistan.*

Introduction

The aftermath of war in the Muslim world is marked by a profound and complex experience of psychological and psychosomatic trauma, characterized by universal themes and motifs that transcend cultural and geographical boundaries. As Islamophobia and Muslim genocide persistently escalate worldwide, the psychological and psychosomatic toll of such atrocities and the articulation of resulting trauma have become increasingly pertinent concerns (Keefe, 2016). Likewise, Afghanistan's tumultuous history over the past few decades has also been marked by political transformations, prolonged wars, and socio-politico-cultural instability. The Soviet Union's invasion, the Taliban's reign, and the subsequent US invasion have left an indelible mark on the country and its people. The cyclic nature of war and trauma, as

noted by Goepner (2018) has resulted in a significant increase in PTSD cases, mental and physical diseases, and substance abuse.

Analyzing literary texts we can discern the long term effects of such traumatic encounters on the survivors including a pervasive presence of fear, the erosion of values and disintegration of character (Inayatullah, 2016). War results into vulnerability on the part of individuals and communities, perpetuating a cycle of suffering that resonates across generations (Hirschberger, 2018). In this context psychological trauma in war riven communities has emerged as a pressing contemporary issue necessitating a nuanced understanding of its assorted nature and the development of effective strategies for mitigation, healing and post traumatic growth (Mackinnon, 2000).

This research delves into profound and lasting impact of war trauma on individuals and communities, as depicted through the diverse narrative voices in *Born under a Million Shadows* (2009) by Busfield. By a close examination of the text the study aims to make war trauma visible, probe its consequences and identify potential pathways for healing and prevention of trauma. This study also seeks to examine the unique approach of the author in offering the nuances of victims' experiences, coping mechanisms and most important, resilience in face of trauma. Grounded in the theoretical framework of coping with trauma mechanism, as propounded by Herman (1992), the study throws light on complex psychological and psychosomatic dynamics of trauma, revealing the victims struggling to process and integrate their traumatic experiences.

Noting the Euro-American exclusivity of existing research, this study has shifted its focus to less developed and marginalized countries like Afghanistan. There is a considerable gap in research about these countries, particularly in this literary paradigm (Schönfelder, 2013). Furthermore, by focusing on civilian authors writing about civilian trauma, the study investigates the effects of war and PTSD on the non-combatant victims, including young and child survivors, for whom the trauma is more hurtful than soldier or war veterans as they are not trained for the adversities.

Research Questions

1. In what ways do memory and trauma intersect and influence the formation of individual identity, and how do individuals draw upon these experiences to develop

resilience and coping strategies, ultimately shaping their sense of self and ability to navigate adversity?

2. To what extent individual trauma be understood as a manifestation of collective trauma, and how does this collective trauma shape an individual's sense of belonging, identity and social positioning within the community?

Objectives of the Study

1. To discover the interplay of memory and trauma in the development of individual identity.
2. To probe the role of memory in devising resilience and post traumatic growth.
3. To identify the extent to which individual trauma can be seen as a manifestation of collective trauma.

Significance of the Study

Trauma theory in psychology is pretty old and fully established discipline but in literature its emergence is comparatively new. Especially the recent wars and crisis in the Muslim World with growing Islamophobia and Muslim genocide, the question of the traumatic after effects of war, is becoming more and more pronounced. So, this study is quite timely and significant and will contribute to the understanding of war trauma and its impacts on the victims.

The first and foremost significance of the study is advancing the understanding of war trauma by exploring the relationship between individual and collective trauma thereby shedding light on how trauma impacts individuals and communities. The study aims at the investigation of resilience and coping strategies employed by the victims of war trauma. This way the study can inform effective interventions for promoting individual and community resilience. The research can also contribute to interdisciplinary research bridging across disciplines like sociology, psychology, political science and anthropology providing a comprehensive account of trauma's impact on individual and communities.

Literature Review

A brief overview of the literary history reveals that psychological and psychosomatic legacy of trauma made its way to literary representations since the 2nd decade of 20th Century specially owing to the tragic and harrowing incidents in this Century such as World Wars, Holocaust and Muslim genocidal campaigns which go on to date (Balke, 2002). Side by side,

the continued othering of the third World by the imperial powers and violence and voicelessness of the women gave birth to post-colonial and feminist trauma.

Trauma constitutes a profoundly distressing or disturbing experience that can claim physical, emotional and psychological imbalances as its paraphernalia (Caruth, 1996, p. 18). According to American Psychological Association this complex phenomenon can arise from a range of events such as, physical or sexual abuse, accidents or natural disasters, wars or combats, loss of a loved one or serious illness or injury (Santner, 1992). Trauma can lead to psychosomatic manifestations like anxiety, depression, uncertainty, sluggishness, guilt & shame as well as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares, hypervigilance and silence. Trauma leaves intense effects on interpersonal relationships, daily functioning, impaired cognitive or emotional regulation or a pervasive sense of despair (APA, 2000). In contrast resilience refers to the adaptive recovery by the victim in the face of highly stressful and traumatic experiences (Ilfson, 2015). The concept encompasses the forceful interplay of individual strength, coping mechanisms and environmental factors that facilitate post traumatic growth and recovery.

Studies have investigated the presentation of traumatic experiences in fiction as literature incorporates and explores a wide variety of human experience. What literary gadgets and literary devices are employed for presentation of traumatic experience in the works of fiction; how language is exploited for the purpose and what are the salient features of trauma narratives; is discussed in this chapter, with special focus on how the present study deviates and/or adds to the existing reservoirs of research. Most of these studies, as reviewed, are on the works of fiction about real life incidents from the events of 9/11, WWI, WWII, Great Depression of 1930's and Cold War etc. One such example is Saal's (2011) investigation of trauma in the events of 9/11 as presented in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Safran Foer. Mackinnon (2000), also takes the recent upsurge of trend in war trauma as departing point and analyses four novels from the latter half of the 20th Century—John's *The Thin Red Line*, Vonnegut's *Slaughter house Five*, *The Things They Carried* by O' Brien and Pat Barker's *Regeneration trilogy*— in which war trauma is addressed most pronouncedly. Agnew (2016) studies Agha Shahid Ali's work in perspective of the Indian occupied Kashmir. Ali's work is based on his personal experience as a Kashmiri poet writing in American diaspora replicating his life and locales, present and past.

Shulga (2008) also uses trauma literary theory to examine the renowned fiction by Vasili Grossman and Iurii Dombrovskii, to find out the ways in which trauma theory helps represent the shattering and tragic experience in the Russian Fiction. Nabutanyi (2013) examines post-1990 African fiction for the representation of pained childhood memories. The study considers the portrayal of disturbed childhoods as encountered by the youngsters presenting distinct kinds of infringement comprising physical, mental, psychological and sexual mistreatment. O'Brien (2018) investigates Khaled Hussieni's *The Kite Runner* (2003) as a demonstration of national tragedy and collective as well as individual trauma suffered by Afghan general public during the Soviet invasion (1979-1989). *The Kite Runner* is ranked as the first Afghan novel in English which garnered the attention among literary circles in post 9/11 political climate because of its potential insights as offered by its setting, form and subject matter.

Shah (2012) attempts to review broadly the issue of Kashmir and details various techniques which the Kashmiri society engages in to record their experience of war, trauma and violence, such as memory, commemoration, oral and written history, language, theatre and narrative telling etc. to create and live collective trauma in order to ascertain their identity and struggle for the perceived cause.

These studies indicate that trauma has invariably been studied for the advanced countries. This absorption with the representation of trauma of developed countries is against the very nature of trauma; which in Caruth's worlds "implicates us in each other's trauma" (1995).so, this study concerns itself with the traumatic experience of less advanced countries like Afghanistan. The above reviewed studies also indicates that the process of narrative making is one of the central interests in the works of trauma fiction, creating stories in language that paradoxically put non-narrativizable experience into words. The current study mainly concerns with this problem of representation of trauma and investigates how meaning making is done out of meaningless and purposeless episodes of transgression and violence.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative metissage of analytical approaches integrating trauma theory, psychoanalysis and reception theories to investigate the representation of trauma in *Born Under a Million Shadows* by Andria Busfield. For the selection of the data for study the

research uses convenience sampling method which is readily available and relevant source. Random sampling technique is used to select instances of trauma, memory and representation within the text.

The primary source, *Born under a Million Shadows*, is a novel written in the context of war in Afghanistan, providing a unique perspective on trauma and its effects. The secondary source, Herman's work on trauma, offers a foundational understanding of trauma studies and informs the analysis

This interdisciplinary study combines psychological trauma and literary analysis, using a deductive approach to examine the instances of trauma in the novel. Intensive reading techniques are employed to identify and trace the elements of trauma throughout the text. The analysis focused on the depiction of violence, characters' experience of working through trauma, and the identification of memories and disillusionment.

To ensure reliability and validity, the research was restricted to close examination of the recurring themes, memories, disillusionment and resilience in the novel's text. The narrative analysis considers speech and content, including philosophical meanings and the socio-politico-cultural contexts, to provide a comprehensive understanding of trauma representation in the novel.

Theoretical Framework

As mentioned earlier, the present research tracks down the behavior of trauma survivors using Herman's triphasic model of trauma and recovery for investigating the representation of trauma in *Born under a Million Shadows*. Herman contends that reactions to trauma are developed in an individual when human actions are restricted so much so that neither escape nor resistance can be logged. This results into long term modifications in memory, cognition, emotions and provocation of psychological reactions. Herman, in this connection, expounds that an individual can also suffer intense emotional response without even having a clear recollection of the incident. He can also suffer a clear consciousness of the event with no emotional response at all (1992, p. 34). While contemplating on critical pathology in Hysteria, Herman aids her argument by stating Janet's ideas which highlight dissociation. She also alludes to Abram Kardiner's work, who proclaims that the moment an individual is overpowered by frightening event, his faculties of understanding phenomena become

inaccurate; he cannot judge and discriminate between fact and fictitious. His faculties of reasoning disorganize and prevent him from relating to the situation in hand (1992, p. 35).p

Herman classifies the traumatic symptoms in a triphasic model which consist of hyper arousal, intrusion and constriction. In the first phase, hyper arousal, the victim's mechanism of "self-preservation" resorts to "permanent alert" and the calamity seems to come back at any moment (p. 35), as a result, the victim easily startles at very petty things, behaves irritably and cannot sleep properly (p. 35). The second stage, intrusion, happens when the danger has been subsided and the victim is no more suffering the traumatic event, it initiates the re-enactment of trauma. This is the phase that restricts the trauma survivors from reuniting to the normal lives. The third stage is constriction which involves that the trauma survivor, by now, yields or gives himself to the trauma and grows entirely powerless. Here the defense mechanism of the survivor stops functioning, making the survivor shift his state of consciousness.

When critiquing the unwelcoming condemnation from the surrounding community of the survivor, Herman also intimates that a blind acceptance of the survivor will also affect him in negative way. Thus, Herman suggests a mediated attitude of the people around the survivor which is neither criticism nor unprecedented favor in order for the survivor to accelerate the process of recovery. Herman recommends a vital role played by society in acknowledging the trauma of the survivor, suggesting to the community around the survivor to take certain measures in order to make the survivor believe that he is also part of the community and therefore, not aloof from it.

According to Herman, the major goal of the coping mechanism of trauma is the establishment of sense of security in the victim. This means physical as well as mental safety to the survivor, that it, the victim should have physical safety and, at the same time, should have the consciousness that he is safe. For this to happen, the survivor needs to free himself from the clutches of continuous fear, and believe to be out of danger. The second goal of Herman's model is to make the survivor mourn over and remember the event and be able to relate what he has been through which helps the survivor, says Herman, "transform" the retention of trauma, in order to integrate it to the story of the victim's life (1992, p. 175). To make the mourning possible, the victim must come out of what he has been in and realize that he is out of danger and in safe environment. The third goal of the model is to make the survivor, passing through the process of remembering and mourning, feel healthy to revive back to

normal life. At this stage the survivor fully realizes and distinguishes the past from the present and is no more haunted by the flashbacks and nightmares of the traumatic past.

In addition, this study considers the psychosomatic toll of trauma, which refers to the physical and emotional symptoms that manifest as the result of traumatic experience. For this study psychosomatic symptoms such as depression, doubtfulness and sluggishness are studied in various characters. So, psychosomatic toll of trauma is a critical aspect of this study which acknowledges the embodied experience of trauma and the need for holistic healing. By considering Herman's model and psychosomatic toll of trauma, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of trauma representation in the selected novel and contribute to the existing research on trauma and literature.

Analysis and Discussion

Born under a Million Shadows, by Andria Busfield is a powerful novel that explores the psychosomatic trauma experienced by Afghans, particularly children, during the prolonged wars and political instability in the country. It represents the war riven especially a post 9/11 Afghanistan. The Taliban have subsided and the rule of tyranny is over. Shattered Afghans are struggling to synthesize their mental and physical faculties amidst the tragedy. Although a jiffy normalcy is restored, the life of an ordinary Afghan is far from being normal. Stories of dead and missing relatives have made the air rusty. No Afghan family is intact by the effects of war. People are struggling with PTSD, deaths of family members, homelessness, abduction, rapes and madness.

“My name is Fawad and my mother tells me I was born under the shadow of the Taliban”. (Busfield, 2009, p. 11). The perceptive, intelligent and funny, Fawad, the protagonist, is a young boy in his preteens, who has known nothing but grief since he was born. The title of the novel bears the burden of the whole population born under the shadow of war and terror. The author also portrays the simplified view of the politics and the history of modern day Afghanistan through the eyes of certain characters such as Pir Hederi and Fawad's mother. They tell us how the Taliban, defeating the Soviet army, rose to power; what came in the wake of their rule; what they left behind after they departed. Amazingly the novel interweaves such detail in the mainstream of the events of the story with remarkable excellence avoiding to make it a historical document.

I am only a boy, but I recognized our life was difficult. Of course it had always been the same for me, I knew no different. But my mother with the memories of deep red cushions and yellow roses, was trapped in a past I had little knowledge of” (p. 16).

These are the words of a retrospective young, sensitive boy, Fawad, in his preteens. He comes of an average happy family which is disrupted when his father joins the Northern Alliance against the Taliban leading to a series of traumatic events including the tragic loss of his sister, abducted by the Taliban, and brother, and rap attempt on his mother. The life then didn't remain the same and “things then went from bad to worse than bad” (157).

Fawad's experiences are a testament to the devastating effects of war on civilians, especially children. His memories of the traumatic night when the Taliban attacked his village, resulting in the loss of his family members, are a stark reminder of the horrors of war for both Fawad and his mother. He recollects;

I heard the fear in my mother's voice when one night she shook me awake to pull me into her arms and carry me from my bed to the corner of the kitchen where my sister and brother were waiting. I remember it clearly now: my mother was trembling through her clothes and outside I could hear the sound of heavy trucks filling the street with the noise of their heavy engines” (Busfield, 2009, p. 157)

The recollections of the event wait with every bit of detail with which Fawad records the incident making it even painful and traumatic. “I was nobody, a tiny little nobody that nobody cared about and nobody saw, which is great if you are a spy, but I was not a spy, not really” (Busfield, 2009). However, as Herman says, this process of remembering and mourning enables Fawad to work through his trauma. Herman comments that by relating the trauma that he has suffered, the victim's traumatic memory is transformed which helps him integrate it to his “life story” (1992, p. 175). This process of mourning and remembering also helps Fawad establish the fact that he is no more in the danger zone and working through his trauma he can move towards recovery. Fawad further recalls his memory;

The screams of fear filling my ears gradually turned into howls of mourning as the men dressed in black ripped apart our lives, beating the old people with sticks and stealing the young from their arms. In the orange light of that night I

watched those men drag my terrified sister on to the back of a truck along with twenty other girls from our village and drive her away. (Busfield, 2009, p. 169)

The Taliban left, leaving behind the flood of fire and tears, and then he saw his mother coming out of the house with his brother on her shoulders. He stood from the bushes when she called out his name and seeing him her eyes sparkled in relief and, dropping herself on her knees, she let go of a blood curdling scream (Busfield, 2009, p. 160). Devastated, the family shifted to Paghman, at their aunt's place. Although nobody discussed the event ever afterwards but everyone seemed to be suffering his/ her own trauma. Fawad muses, "I can clearly see the look in my mother's eyes. It was one of death, and the blackness that went with it was mirrored in the eyes of Bilal" (160). His mother had become silent after they lost his sister, who was just eleven or twelve at that time., and his brother, Bilal visited by a sense of guilt over having failed to protect his family, "was now lost to the Afghan obsession with revenge" (160). "Even so, for the next few weeks Bilal covered himself in silence, hardly able to speak through his own shame and dishonour, until one day his place simply stood empty. "My only living brother had left our aunt's house to join the Northern Alliance...he gave himself up to war and revenge, and we never saw him again" (161). When the Northern Alliance walked into Kabul after the Taliban's departure, Bilal didn't return and Fawad and his mother silently accepted that he was dead.

Fawad's mother also suffers a similar trauma which she is trying hard to work through, and which, according to Herman, can enable her to take various events as part of life and help her recover from the trauma more easily. She is often seen fighting with her memories of the past and trying not to remember the pain and suffering she had to experience, but chance reminders of pain give vent to her aching thoughts letting the reader know the trauma she is undergoing.

Sometimes she is lost in her memories or haunted by whatever she has been through thus resisting the process of recovery. This stage Herman calls constriction in which the trauma survivor gives himself to trauma and becomes powerless. Her defence mechanism stops working and her cognitive processes are distorted and numbed. She also suffers somatic symptoms such as sluggishness and depression, reflecting the physical toll of trauma on her body. Initially struggling to come out of her trauma, she finally finds solace in Shir Ahmad's company. Her journey towards recovery is marked by a process of remembering and

mourning, followed by a reconstruction of her identity and a re-establishment of a sense of security and control, aligning with Herman's model of trauma and recovery. This process is evident when she begins to open up to Shir Ahmad about her past and her losses, and starts to rebuild her life with him. Her character is a marked example of resilience to navigate adversity.

Fawad also suffers psychosomatic symptoms of trauma. One such example is scepticism in his behaviour. War has made an eleven year old boy suspicious of everyone and everything. He becomes a self-employed-volunteered "secret agent" into his own house whose mission is "to discover who in the house was working as a spy, and the identity of his masters" in whose house he and his mother had shifted lately as servants (p. 39). In spite of all these things his love for his country grows. He comments, throw a look at our beloved homeland and you see nothing but death and misery, yet, the people here "forgive her anything" and "cry over" its beauty "like lovesick teenagers" (114). This responsiveness to his motherland makes him resilient. Moreover, for Fawad, being unimportant and ordinary from all criteria, the tragedy that he suffers becomes an ordinary thing. Neither beautiful nor big brain in the class or a fast runner, or a good fighter, nothing makes him special in any way. So, he comments, "I was nobody, a tiny little nobody that nobody cared about and nobody saw". The only thing which makes him special is the power of retrospection as his mother says that he has the ability to "talk to the birds" (77). And this power of retrospection makes it possible for him to work through his trauma.

Pir Hedri, likewise, seems to have been arrested by the memories of the past and every now and then he gives vent to these memories. One day, wandering through the thoughts and details of war memories with its utter destruction and devastation on both sides, he gives a long account of war and loss when Russians had invaded the land. He says;

We lost a lot of good men that day...all committed to the cause of freedom...they had just carried out a dared daylight attack on a Russian base north of Kunar. Hundreds of enemy soldiers died in the assault, caught unaware by the sheer daring of our raid and knocked senseless...and as quickly as they appeared, rising from nowhere to unleash hell on the Russians, they melted away again, like ghosts drifting back into the landscape. (Busfield, 2009, p. 51).

He continues to his memories in the coming pages and recalls that they couldn't get away unharmed after the attack. Though traumatized severely, Pir Hederi has finally found a way to express his emotions and process his trauma through storytelling. His experience reflects psychological toll of war on civilians, particularly those who have not fought in the wars and the need for support and healing. Pir Hederi's account of war and loss is a vivid example of the trauma experienced by Afghans, and his struggle to come to terms with his past, is a testament to far reaching effects of war on individuals and communities. He also experiences psychosomatic symptoms such difficulty breathing and gasps while talking, especially about his traumatic past, highlighting the physical manifestations of trauma.

War has also catered poverty, along with disease and hunger, in the country which also adds to the psychosomatic toll of war. The characters' experiences are a reflection of this toll of war on civilians, particularly children. Fawad's friend Spandi, for instance, has lost his mother and sister and his father has been killed in war, leaving him alone and vulnerable. Jamila, another character, lives in poverty with her addict father who "is hungry for drug day and night while the rest of her family just remains hungry" (148). While, at the same time, "the orphanage of Kabul is filled with children" whose parents have been killed or lost. These events have claimed psychosomatic toll on their bodies, with Spandi and the other children experiencing social isolation; and Jamila struggling with malnutrition.

Haji Khan, a freedom fighter, has also experienced a similar trauma with the avenged rape and murder of his wife and daughter for his fight against the Taliban. According to Milgram (1986) the psychological trauma caused by war can result into a variety of reactions ranging from a slight temporary disequilibrium to deep psychological impairments. In case of Hajji Khan, he became not only self-destructive with a spiritual annihilation but also became destructive for others. He felt utterly destroyed and, unleashing the weapons of revenge, "fought like a madman after that" and killed many Taliban (98). The degree of psychic wounds reflects the terrible nature of devastation and losses caused by the war, and, are characterized by shocks, numbing, confusion, disorientation, anxiety, intense fears and a sense of abandonment etc. and such psychic impairments are actually the reality of Afghanistan as Fawad comments, "There is no one of us that is not touched by them in one way or another", and they have suffered the loss of one or the other family member or beloved ones on one hand, and, on the other hand, it has made them "poor and beggars" (99).

Another character who has suffered the trauma of war is Pir the Madman. Nobody knows what exactly happened to him and nobody seems interested in his story. He is just a mental “who managed to survive everything Kabul could through at him.” (237). But to Fawad his appearance seems to enhance his own trauma. Fawad imagines his story must have been a bad one and he comments, “It made me sad to think that at some time in his life he must have been a boy like me with everything to look forward to” (237).

The novel also highlights the impact of war on the social and economic fabric of Afghanistan. The characters’ experiences reflect poverty, hunger and disease, and have become rampant throughout the country. The novel also portrays the rise of Taliban and their oppressive regime, which has further exacerbated the sufferings of the Afghan people. The big men in the north and the west still fight over territory and power...the Taliban fight goes on in the south against foreigners; and in the streets the adults beat boys, the boys beat smaller boys and everyone beats donkeys and dogs. (Busfield, 2009, p. 87).

Overall, *Born under a Million Shadows*, is a poignant novel which sheds light on the psychosomatic legacy of war experienced by Afghans during the prolonged wars and political instability in Afghanistan. It is a reminder of devastating effects of war on civilians, especially children, and the need for support and healing. The novel also highlights the resilience of Afghans and their ability to navigate their lives amidst chaos and trauma.

Conclusion

The study concludes that *Born under a Million Shadows* by Andria Busfield is a powerful novel portraying psychological and psychosomatic trauma suffered by Afghans owing to the prolonged warfare in the country. Through the protagonist Fawad’s journey, the novel brings forth the sufferings of the people in the ongoing war and portrays the character’s transformation through traumatic incidents. Fawad’s experiences, along with those of other characters like Pir Hederi and Peer the Madman, serve as a testament to the collective trauma of the whole country.

The novel’s portrayal of trauma and its impact on individuals and communities aligns with the theoretical framework of Judith Levis Herman’s theory of coping with trauma mechanism showcasing the characters’ responses and resilience to trauma as true to life the novel highlights the importance of social support and community in the healing process of trauma survivors, as seen through Fawad’s relationship with his mother, Pir Hederi and other

characters. The study also indicates that memory, trauma and individual identity interplay to create a mechanism of resilience and also shape the individual's sense of self. Hence, it answers the first question of research by emphasizing that individuals develop resilience and coping strategies through their experiences, influenced by social support and community, ultimately shaping their identity and ability to navigate adversity.

Fawad's experiences, such as the raid on his village and the stories he relates about death and destruction across the country, are prominent examples of collective trauma. Similarly the trauma suffered by Pir Hederi and Peer the Madman, also stand for the collective trauma of the whole country. Peer the Madman remains unnamed, suggesting that he represents every other victim of war in the country, making his trauma a manifestation of the collective trauma of the community. Thus, the study answers the second question of the research by demonstrating that individual trauma can be understood as a manifestation of collective trauma, which shapes an individual's sense of belonging, identity, and social positioning within the community. The novel shows how the collective trauma of war and political upheaval have affected the Afghan people, also highlighting the need for support and healing.

The study also reflects the research design, which aimed to explore the physical and psychological trauma suffered by Afghans. It also contributes to the understanding of trauma and its effects on individuals and communities, emphasizing the importance of literature in shaping our understanding of trauma and its repercussions.

Recommendations

The narratives of trauma, contrary to the historical documents, are more significant in investigating the effects of war on individual survivors. In the light of this fact, the study recommends other scholars to employ literary trauma theory to investigate other forms of trauma in different works of fiction.

Moreover, the study on war in the Muslim world with special reference to Islamophobia and Muslim genocide throughout the Muslim World is still under-researched. A few examples can be found in case of killings and exile of the Muslims of Burma, the war of Syria, Palestinian war and the wars of Bosnia and Herzegovina which have not much been studied.

On theoretical level the researchers are recommended to study the various trauma texts with respect to other aspects of trauma theory such as the theory of double trauma presented by Caruth and the theories of disillusionment and splitting by Linderman.

In order to explore the trauma of people whose mental health is not being serviced properly or, who lack representation or, are forced to silence, the upcoming researchers can conduct surveys or case studies to explore the possible stigmas and reasons for the reluctance of the victims to seek medical or psychological help.

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