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THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF TERRORISM ON INDIVIDUALS IN KAMILA SHAMSIE'S BURNT SHADOWS (2009)

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Abstract

Significantly, the atomic bomb of Hiroshima (1945) changed the world. It is an odd effect on individuals; however, there are some other tragedies such as: the invasion of Afghanistan, the partition of India, the war on terror, and the last is 9/11 of America. The Pakistani author, Kamila Shamsie (1973), in *Burnt Shadows* (2009), succeeded in presenting ill experiences of women. She idealized life through portraying female characters whose existence is questionable. The Japanese protagonist, Hiroko Tanaka, witnessed the event, and was disfigured as a result. The effect is mostly psychological. The psychological impact is the core study of the paper. The paper will also examine the mixed cultures of women characters through the psychoanalytic approach. Alienation, displacement, strangeness are results of terrorism. The aim is to study the effect of the psychological damage caused by wars. The significance of the study is to explore the role of the contemporary trauma fiction in portraying real life. The paper consists of an introduction, background, the theoretical aspect, trauma fiction, identity and shattered self, the autobiographic element, and a conclusion.

Keywords: Kamila Shamsie, Atomic, Disfigured, Alienation, Terrorism.

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Introduction:

Post 9/11 literature plays a distinctive role in reproducing the attacks happened on September, 11, 2001 and aftermaths. What fiction teaches us is the danger of the event and its impact on individuals and society through a literal interpretation of the incident. The importance of human life is deeply dealt with and reflected in literature. The influence of place and events is taken into account by novelists. Therapeutically, the concept of trauma is emphasized. 9/11 novels form a bridge between what precedes the event and what follows. Even those who did not witness the event might imagine the collapse of the towers, planes crashing, buildings falling, and people buried under ashes. In his book (1993), Edward Said criticizes the late 19th and 20th century novels in terms of imperialism, colonization, and culture, justifying his thought that he finds them "estimable words of art and learning, in which I and other readers take pleasure and from which we derive profit" (Said, 1993P: xv).

Literature written by Pakistani writers is rather similar to that of the Middle East and East Africa. It is so because the suffering of people in those colonized countries is the same. Their traumatic effects are assimilated too. Writers, such as Kamila Shamsie, Mohsen Hamid, Mohammad Hanif, and others managed to write in certain themes such as trauma, identity, loss, religion, poverty, cultural spheres, injustice, crimes, immigration, exile, hybridity, etc. The purpose is to mix between past and present in a form of inter-textuality. It is to display political issues historically concerning cultural trauma caused to the Indians and Pakistanis.

Kamila Shamsie (1973) is one of the post wars writers. She is a postcolonial Pakistani author. Her mobility from Pakistan to America and after that to London is to look for placement. Shamsie is affected by the hegemonic forces of terrorism imposed on her country and the wars against, such as the WWI, the invasion of Afghanistan by Russia, divisions of India, Jihadi movements, War on Terror, and the latest is the 9/11 disaster. All of which forms a background for Shamsie's epic novel, *Burnt Shadows*.

Historically, narratives idealize the experiences of women. It is concerned with the familiarization of women with their surroundings. The hard experience of Kamila Shamsie is broadly reflected in her novel. She has created her female characters as cultured, sophisticated, unconstrained, and liberated. The representation of such characters is to confirm the idea that the East is colonized by the West; the West is imposed in the East. Chauelhary, in his study (2013: 33), investigates the resistance of women in general and woman writers in particular against a patriarchal society. He states that the importance of literature lies on giving the females "voice" through the conflict with the outside surroundings. "A feminist analysis of literature allows the reader understand the role of the female figure within the society in which she is being described, along with the social changes around her". On the other hand, Immerman said that *Burnt Shadows* is a work of historical fiction. It also may be a therapeutic means to recover the trauma made by wars.

Shamsie's novels deal with real national and international issues. The feature is vivid through her first novel, *In The City of The Sea*, (1990), and *Kartography* (2004) which is a wide description to the country she lived in "land that is always on the edge of the riot and despair" (54). Significantly, when we study Shamsie's works, we will thoroughly, study location. Mostly, she has written novels in relation to place. Kamila's fourth novel, *Broken Verses* (2005) is rather political, she said that: "It was difficult to be in Aasmani's head. One time I had to go for a long vigorous swim to clear my head. But because I am writing about actual Pakistanis, rather than stereotypes, the knock-on effect is to confront those stereotypes come up and

tell me that my novels give them a very different idea of the place" (Brown, 2005) *A God in Every Stone* (2014), a novel in which Shamsie argues the influence of people by history and recurrent policies through depicting various themes such as colonized and colonizer; war and gender. The emphasis is on women rights in the past compared to the present time. Similarly, in her biographical novel, *Salt and Saffron* (2008), she emphasized nostalgia; the return of the protagonist to her birth place, Karachi after a period of study in America. The novel describes "different perspectives" of cultural notion (Nyman, 2009:109)

The text which is the focus of study is about a Japanese woman wanted to find a sense settlement/placement, culture, and identity. The process of becoming is marked by migration and dislocation. Psychological and social factors have creatively participated in shaping the current identity. *Burnt Shadows* is a biography means burnt desires, intimacies, and dreams. The concentration is on a female character and how she deals with a horrible surrounding. As Shamsie is female; she portrays her character as sympathetic, pitying, and horrified. As a Pakistani writer, she suffers from inferiority and scarcity of women. The marginalization of women in most societies creates in the women writers a motive to express themselves in a patriarchal society. Modern era manifests itself as an era of insecurity. Insecurity generally involves outside factors which affect the inner nature of individuals. Two years after the protagonist was disfigured by the atomic bomb of Japan, Hiroko attached herself to a new fiancé spending honeymoon in Istanbul, refusing to return to Delhi or Nagasaki because of the British policy in partition of India, that colonizers used to look people down, a new kind of trauma. Hiroko is the embodiment of all women in Japan and India. She is nationless and placeless. Although, she was able to prove herself by moving from one place to another. Her mobility provides her with power and strength to prove herself as a modern woman. She has shown her success by her marriage. The novel exposes deeply the traumatic impact of bombing practiced by the characters.

1. Background:

The eventual event of Nagasaki is not the only atrocity in the Islamic world. There are many other atrocities but this event is seen differently by authors. They described it according to their own perspectives. For example, Kamila Shamsie, has a firsthand experience in Pakistan because of wars. In *Burnt Shadows*, she wants to show the hidden side behind the attacks against innocent victims. She resists all types of crimes committed against humanity from 1945 till 2001. She says that it is "Diamond cutting open the earth, falling through to hell" (2009:27). That is because she lost her father and lover in the bombing. When she saw her father bombed, she astonished "my father, I saw him in that last seconds of his life, and I thought he was something un-human" (200:99). He was covered in scales without head or skin. The ugly scene which traumatized her most "no one in the world should ever have to see their father covered in scales" (ibid). The psychological scars remain within herself. Her trauma creates displacement in Japan as an impact of explosion. The worst type of trauma is the loss of a lover or lovable memory from the glorious past and the only thing which remains is to re-experience the event. Nagasaki represents both meanings to Hiroko: the good before the event; the bad after. The calamity is persona and cultural as well.

Beginning with the title, it is suggestive refers to the three black birds burning, imprinted on the back of the protagonist because of the bombing "melting of charred silk, seared flesh" (2009:27). This image is concealed from others but not from Hiroko because it is a truth and the truth is never to be concealed. The sign of the birds is an evident to the policy of the West which is imposed on the East. This is

seen in the field of education that the textbooks of schools in Pakistan are concerned with political and religious crises.

The complete picture of the scene is given to the reader through the use of the visual devices. Shamsie creatively described cultures, hegemony, modern man, cities, and above all situations. Situations are important in Shamsie's fiction. They are described in a way that gives a reader an insight to imagine and understand the picture. For example, in a scene in which she described the atmosphere of Afghan after the cold war, she succeeded in portraying the truth evidently:

The sky and ground were indifferent centuries. One cut open by the blades of a Huey chopper, the other smothered by a collapsed fort and the remnants of mud Houses. After two decades of war, barely anything lived here other than juniper Bushes and small groups of villagers. (279).

The shift in place and time indicates the interaction between history and imagination; reality and fiction. Psychologically, Hiroko is damaged but in fact she is not defeated. She is inspired by her dead Fiance's words.

Displacement does not "occur in place" merely but also in time, and "literature that reflects variety of displacement provides historical visions, which are real and vibrant as compared to the more encompassing person" (Loomba,1996:147).

2.The Theoretical Aspect:

Scientifically, a theory is a framework by which a researcher can describe the phenomenon which is based on a hypothesis. Theories, evidently support a research as they present an idea or a set of ideas. The major function of a psychological theory is to describe behavior and predict the behavior of the future. The focus is on perceiving and explaining psychological behavior. Kamila Shamsie has concentrated on the psychological element when dealing with the manner of living of her characters especially the protagonist. The prediction of the future is vivid. The mixture between the two time spans gives an insight of how the future will be. The mobility of traumatized characters expresses the psychic wounds rather than the wounds of the body. It is one application of the psychoanalytic theory of trauma experience. The wounds of the past are repeatedly imposed on the psychic nature of the individual in present. Women in general are portrayed as victims of history. They are rebellious, courageous, and sufferers. Psychologically, Hiroko suffers from the transcriptions on her body. It is a struggle between nationalism and colonialism. It is a kind of psychological displacement though she is physically located. It is also an internal migration and inner conflict meet in herself.

3.Trauma Fiction:

To write trauma fiction is to translate the live tragic event into images and words to stimulate the public to the disaster that happened "A trauma that is so real can be experienced as a kind of fiction." (Houen, 2002:419). When a person has experienced "an event that is outside the range of human experience" (Brown:121), is called a traumatized individual. Modern literature becomes more realistic in form and content, dealing with the real life of the last two decades. The form is captured to modernist techniques, and the content deals with common themes. Novelists "breakdown of social norms and cultural sureties, dislocation of meaning and sense from its normal context, valorization of the despairing individual in the face of an unmanageable futures, disillusionment, stream of consciousness and free indirect discourse" (Algazali, 2009:72-3). This movement in literature goes beyond the boundaries of reality concerning historical and social changes and the impact behind that. Authors intended to reflect certain themes in their works such as alienation, exile, migrations, and so on. They shared common approaches also.

According to Phillip Tew, fiction published post 9/11 is considered as "traumatological rather than postmodern bent" (2007:190). By traumatology, he means that it is based on certain historical conditions participate in shaping of the identity in relation to social order. He differentiates between traumatology and trauma fiction that the first aims at analyzing the responses of a group to a common catastrophe within the same time and place. While the last is rooted to the private story of individuals, affecting by the circumstances surrounded (ibid:192). Hence, The Burnt Shadows appreciates the postmodern society using the power of the real experience of women, it teaches people how one might act against terrorism.

Since the novel consists of four main parts, dealing with the era of terrorism from the bombing of Nagasaki to the period of 9/11 and aftermaths in America, Part one tackles the attacks of Nagasaki (1945). Part two is concerned with the partition of India. Part three tackles the catastrophe of Pakistan. Finally, the last part is about the traumatic event of 9/11.

The novel begins with a description of the Nagasaki atomic bomb. The Japanese lady, Hiroko Tanaka, is in love with Konrad Weiss, a German male who passed away in bombing "the light is physical. It throws Hiroko forward, sprawling. Dust enter her mouth, her nose, as she hits the ground, and it burns. Her first response is a fear ..." (Shamsie, 2009: 26). There is also a description to the moment before bombing, mainly when Hiroko was excited to build her life with her lover, Konrad "everything is beautiful to her" (ibid:2).

The novel is composed in a way concerning many viewpoints. Colonization is obvious in the idea of the West which has hegemony on the East. Feminism can be also studied for the protagonist is a woman who is ready to face any risk within different circumstances. Post-colonialism can be applied on the novel. The novel is written in a very crucial time when parties and wars occurred. Therefore, Shamsie does not address her native man; on the contrary, she put in mind all people in the East.

Burnt Shadows has become so popular since it was published. It has moved outside Karachi. It tackles topics such as: Japan within the era of WWII, India before partition, Pakistan during the 1980s, America post 9/11, and Afghanistan when it was bombed by Russia. Thus, the epic novel deals with two different cultures and nationalities. The element of colonialism is strong in the novel that it deals with the struggle caused by the hegemonic nature of imperialism (Duce,2011: 6).

The multi identities depicted in the novel such as Indian, Japanese, American, English, Pakistanis, and Afghan, give an insight that all share the same historical interweaving (Dagninos, 2003:282-284)

4.Identity & Shattered Self:

Identity crises and the notion of belonging are discourses of the modern literary theory. Identity is ultimately shaped by society. Literature, to some extent, seems to represent crises. Authors may reflect their own experiences in life through their protagonists. They create them as sufferers of ill experiences affected negatively by surroundings. One of the crises of modern societies is an identity crisis. To study these aspects is to examine language, setting, location, and family and marriage relationships with the guidance of the literary theory. It demands the study of culture, gender, and racism as well.

Hiroko suffers of an identity crisis "I want the world to stop such a terrible place" (Shamsie:292). All of the characters in the novel suffer of the same condition. For instance, Sajjad is the one who endures. He is a victim of Hindu-Muslim struggle. Like Hiroko, Sajjad has lost his land, family, and friends in the bomb and has never been accepted in Pakistan. Both feels with foreignness in England.

Psychologically, strangeness creates a kind of struggle and displacement. They are neither here nor there. Double loss is felt, too "I was made to leave ... when I was little younger ... I know the pain of it. What do you know about leaving? Young whose family has lived in Delhi for centuries?" (ibid:83) Raza, the only child of Hiroko is hybrid. His aim is to create an identity for himself. Thus, he joined a group of Al-Jihad made by Muslims; Arab and non-Arab. He, by this, misled his way in life, mistaken to make his identity in a broken society, particularly, the Pakistani, with the prevailing of education. As a matter of fact, Pakistan is a homogenous country; therefore, Raza and his similarities of different origins find relief in accompanying extremists. Hence, Raza feels as alienated and detached from his society. He failed in shaping his identity which becomes questionable and he could not get his basic rights of acceptance and recognition. As a result, hatred is constructed. In his essay Identity Issues (2010:6), Louis Kriesberg states that an identity of leadership and government is significantly seen in the novel. Language and religion are imposed on societies to shape the colonizer identity which is imposed on the colonized societies. Lost identity, as the desire of coming back to Nagasaki reached its climax in the novel. Japanese has the desire to live in their native countries where they adore so much but the way is hard; it is only a wish. The fact that s/he was a part of all. Japanese, from the psychological point of view, relive there by memory. They recall the past events of childhood through flashback and nightmares. It is too difficult to erase a memory from the mind of a child. Lost identity is also seen in another situation, when the trans-migrant characters move from one place to another for psychological, mental, and physical protection. The shattered self and frustration make Hiroko relive the past and re-experience the loss of Konrad. She suffered from another loss which is her son's, followed by the death of Sajjad. She at last, recognized the unfortunate life she lived, returned it to fate.

The developing action; the journey from Nagasaki to India and then to Pakistan and Afghanistan, ending in America 2001 shows that Hiroko is trans-migrant. In every station she attributes the idea of belonging to the culture she imposed in. Her existence is shaped by alienation and conflict in its two shapes; internal and external. Hiroko is the embodiment of all immigrant women in Japan and in the world at large. Her existence is questionable, like any modern human. She is a victim of a multi cultured society.

Familiarization and settlement are self-deserved needs. The recurrent stream of the environment has imposed certain rules of conduct on individuals. Thus, Hiroko Tanaka proves her familiarization to the surroundings through her relationship with Konrad Weiss. She finds herself able to be guided by his values "for Hiroko to know was to want". She wants to confirm herself freely with him. His visit to her is to wander the acceptance which has been already achieved "we talked about travelling around the world ... do you think I was agreeing to go with you ... as your wife".

After the city has been bombed, Hiroko had a wish to forget all pains caused by wars because bombs remind her of her closest people whose marks that are still engraved on her heart and mind. She becomes a real victim to the event, she is traumatized "her trauma is inscribed in her body " (Ichiro, 2014:201)

After the partition of India, people decided to escape. When everyone in Delhi was talking about his/her future to prove identity, Hiroko kept silent. She did not decide whether to stay or move to Pakistan "Hiroko could not find a place for herself in any talk of tomorrow-so instead she found herself looking back and further back" (Shamsie:96). This may be interpreted as an outcome of trauma that silence is a major concept of trauma theory.

5. The Autobiographic Element:

At the time after the atomic bomb, people felt alienated suffering from harsh life. Hiroko is one of those who endured their living. Her alienation is felt from the beginning; it is from her society, family, and culture. The place where she spent her childhood, her loved friends, neighbors, even school are now all to be ignored. No matter where to live. The major aim is to look for a place where she can change her life. She now suffers from strangeness and indifference. "It was a fear of reduction rather than any kind of guest that had forced her away from Japan. Already she had started to feel that word 'hibakusha' start to consume her life. To the Japanese she was nothing beyond an explosion-affected person; that was her defining feature" (49). Hiroko is lurking between cultures. The change is from the German husband to the Indian one, and then to the English, mixed with her Japanese identity.

It seems that Hiroko's non-stop suffering would damage her life. Shamsie explained. through this character, the story of a Pakistani woman who struggles to prove existence and achieve equality with men within the modern society. As Shamsie is an Anglophone author, she suffers diaspora. As a Muslim writer, she aims at clarifying the image of Muslim and Islam and the view of racism. Hiroko is the embodiment of all sufferers women in society. She considerably defends her rights. *Burnt Shadows* is Shamsie's fifth novel. In the novel, there is a relation between form and content; multi themes; multi problems. The hero suffers; the nation suffers. In the novel, she lived history in the present with the flavor of the past. (Duce,2011:6) The influence by history is evident. The mixture between personal and impersonal experience; past and present. The painful past leads to a depressed and anxious present. Psychologically speaking, the action and reaction of the protagonist express anxiety.

Hiroko wants to overcome her trauma which afflicts her soul and body by changing her location. So she decided to move to Delhi to see Konrad's relatives planning for a new life. Previously, before bombing, Konrad had observed her about Sajjad, the right man who will become a husband to Hiroko in the future. Sajjad has shared her grieves, loneliness, sorrow, and emotions. Her experience in life is described by GK Khan (2011:50) that "her physical body serves as a manuscript upon which national and political upheavals are literally and metaphorically transcribed, reflecting the novels demonstration of women's bodies as sights of conflicts between nationalism and colonialis. When Hiroko described the catastrophic effect of the atomic bomb to Sajjad, she said: "Those nearest the epicenter of the blast where eradicated completely, only the fat from their bodies aticking to the walls and rocks around them like shadows" (27). She added "I loked for Konrad's shadow. I found it or I found something that I believed was it. On a rock. Such a lanky shadow" (27).

Hiroko's view about her marriage to Sajjad as a series of "negotiations" because of the dissimilarity in cultures "The success of their marriage was based on their mutual ability to abide by the results of those negotiations with no bitterness over who had lost more ground in individual encounters" (132).

Location is a dynamic concept in trauma fiction in general and in post 9/11 in particular. It is emphasized in the novel through the presentation of Delhi as an outstanding position. It is seen by Raza as "The rhythmically beating heart of cultural India" (33)

As a result, Shamsie has succeeded in presenting the real image of Islam and Muslims that Islam is a religion of faith, patience, moderation, and tolerance. Moreover, Muslims are merely humans believe in their own religion far away from terrorism. They show their respect to their religion and other beliefs. Therefore, in

Islamic countries, the coexistence between different ideologies is, by all means, possible.

Conclusion

Burnt Shadows is an epic tale narrates the harsh living of two different cultures. Displacement is a dominant theme in the novel though there are some other themes. Shamsie succeeded in presenting her novel as a discourse of trauma crisis. Hiroko Tanaka, a traumatized survivor of Nagasaki bombing, engaged to a German born male, Konrad Weiss who is traumatized too. After his death, she escaped to his relatives in Delhi, establishing a new relationship with an employee there, Sajjad Ashraf. They are both Muslims. Although there is a kind of hatred between the two countries, Hiroko's belief remains unshaken. They moved to Turkey first then to Karachi, especially, after the divisions of India. There, Hiroko bore a son, Raza. When Raza grew up, he joined what is called Mujahideen. The novel is to explore the ability of females to face their fate in a manly dominated society and to find a link between the past and present. Multiculturalism is suggestive in the novel. The perspective of women is also emphasized through a setting of tragedies. Strong will proves existence. Hiroko is wise, rational, fearless, gentle, liberal, bold enough to face her destiny. She wants only to shape her own life to survive and achieve her dreams but nature stands against her. Far distance and different cultures do not forbid an ambitious serious woman to achieve her goals. Life is worth living for her. Technically speaking, the novel is an inter-textual of the past which comments on the present and the present is the continuous meaning of the past. The description of Nagasaki since 1945 is as similar as Delhi and America post 9/11. From the colonial point of view, the two cities are seen as such: The hegemonic representation of the west, the expectation of the east, the viewpoints of both. From the psychological point of view, Hiroko is inspired by her dead fiance's words. She tries to recover her trauma by mobility from one place to another.

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