

A Study of Trauma in *The Shadow of Crescent Moon*

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**Abstract**

The present study aims at conducting a close analysis of the representation of trauma in contemporary Pakistani fiction. Drawing on the debates of Caruth, LaCapra, and Herman among others, this study analyses *The Shadow of Crescent Moon* by Fatima Bhutto in order to trace the experiences of the characters undergoing the trauma of war and forced migration in the novel. The novel depicts the people who migrate to a fictional area Mir Ali in Pakistan in the aftermath of the 9/11 war on terror, but these people remain under constant threat of death due to the ongoing tussle between the army and freedom fighters. The study explores the trauma of migrants who are dragged to war grounds against their will. Overall, this study helps in illuminating the human cost of forced migration and trauma, as well as the resilience and adaptation of individuals and communities in the face of adversity.

**Keywords:** War, Forced Migrations, Loss, Trauma, Pakistani Fiction

**Introduction**

Trauma and sense of loss are two of the most prevalent themes in contemporary novels. Several authors have portrayed the aftermaths of traumatic events, such as war, violence, abuse, or loss of a loved one, and how these events shape and affect the lives of individuals. They often shed light on the complexities of human emotions, relationships, and the impact of trauma on individual and community lives. Loss, forced migration, and trauma are recurrent themes in Pakistani fiction as well, reflecting the country's tumultuous history of political upheaval, social unrest, and religious conflict. Pakistani fiction has played an important role in illuminating the human costs of forced migration and trauma, as well as the resilience and adaptation of individuals and communities in the face of adversity since the independence of Pakistan.

*The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* (2016) by Fatima Bhutto portrays the impact of war and trauma on a family living in the tribal region of Pakistan near the Afghan border. The novel serves as a critique of the post-9/11 war on terror, and the ways in which it has affected individuals and communities in the region. The novel portrays the lives of three brothers, Aman, Sikandar, and Hayat, as they navigate the complex social and political landscape of their community, which has been deeply affected by the war. The brothers are grappling with their own trauma and loss, including the death

of their father, a political activist who was killed by the military, and the disappearance of their sister, who was kidnapped by a fundamentalist group. The novel highlights the complexity of the social and political dynamics in the region and the ways in which different groups and individuals are affected by violence and conflict. The study explores the sufferings arising out of the trauma of loss of religious and cultural roots, loved ones, language and identity among the characters as depicted in *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon*.

The study explores *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* (2016) through the lens of trauma theory propounded by Caruth (2016), LaCapra (2014), and Herman (2015). *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* (2016) overlooks boundaries and borders to narrate a shared view of trauma and pain in the 'War on Terror'. Bhutto has shown the intricate nature of human life in this work. She puts emphasis on the psyche of the characters in this novel. The characters have undergone tremendous stress and disturbance. The characters of Malalai, Sikander, Samarra, and Mina have faced the psychological impacts of the loss of their beloved ones. Their lives are replete with pain and sorrow which are the outcome of the war. Mina and Sikander's relationship is shattered after the death of their son. They are haunted by the memories of their lost child. The grief of loss overwhelms all the other characters in the novel. The narrative depicts a war-ravaged area where people are afraid to join gatherings and processions due to fear of death in terrorist attacks. The novel is non-linear and replete with flashbacks of traumatic incidents in the life of the five major characters.

### Literature review

The trend of trauma studies has greatly influenced the literary spheres after 9/11 and various books and articles have been published reflecting the impacts of trauma on the psychological behavior of the survivors and victims. Freud (1895) talks about similar experience while studying the traumas of soldiers who suffered from phobia of war after coming back to their homes from the battlegrounds. He has discovered a terrible link between survival and trauma, answering to why soldiers of war are never satisfied with the title of "survivor" after returning from the war. South Asia has witnessed the ravages of 9/11 in the form of forced relocations and sufferings due to the 'War on Terror'. The impacts of wars are documented in the literature of East of South Asia to its Western regions which involve Kashmir, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Tribal Belts.

Sheeraz and Abid (2019) explored the extent and nature of the Pashtonization of English lexicology in *The Shadow of Crescent Moon* and *I am Malala*. This study relies heavily on post-colonial theory. The framework for the study is designed as such to highlight cultural and semantic contexts which aid to make indigenization necessary and possible. Another study has been conducted by Murtaza et al. (2021) on *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* (2016) and *The Miraculous True Story of Nomi Ali* (2019). The researchers explored feministic features based on White Western Feminism of Mohanty. This study explores the positioning of women in specific politically historic praxis. It shows how they are

assumed as free beings on one hand in individuality of thought and speech, whereas on the other hand, they are considered as agents playing role in demystification of Western essentialism.

Lamichhane (2017) has explored cultural hegemony in the novel by employing Stuart Hall's Theory. It also sheds light on the conflict between the heart and minds of individuals to choose between the legacy of their previous generations and their own plans for choosing their destinations. It challenges some of the idealized assumptions about the superiority of foreign people and cultures. The study explores the manipulations of beliefs, culture, values, perceptions, and explanations by the ruling class in the novel. It displays how the culture and norms of the ruling class become the dominant culture and their ideology becomes justified politically, economically, and socially. The study reveals both the overt and covert operation of ideologies of the powerful to crush the freedom and choices of the common masses.

Farooq and Ahmad (2021) explored state failures and hybrid regimes in *The Shadow of Crescent Moon*. They discovered how liberal democracy is incorporated into the autocratic regime. The study further digs out the condition of disharmony and lawlessness in the country where people are deprived of their basic rights ultimately leading to state failure in uniting people together. Zainab et al. (2020) analyzed *The Shadow of Crescent Moon* for the depiction of war on terror resulting in loss and suffering in the life of individuals. The study highlighted religious hypocrisy and political hegemony prevailing in the narrative world. It explored how injustice with the main characters, leads them to take different dispositions in life by laying emphasis on the feelings and sentiments of the character. The study revealed the experience of disastrous wars and search for the loved ones in the novel.

Despite all these studies, the novel remained unexplored from a psychological point of view. The present study aims at bridging this gap by studying the traumatic experiences of the after-effects of war among characters. The study focuses on the psyche of the characters by keeping trauma theory in mind and exploring the causes of trauma, their effects on the characters, and the response of the characters to cope with such traumatic experiences.

In light of the above discussion, the study seeks to find out:

- i. How do the catastrophic events in the lives of war-inflicted migrants result in trauma?
- ii. How the characters are acting out, working through, and coping with the traumatic experiences?

The study draws upon the theories of Caruth (2016), LaCapra (2014), and Herman (2015) for exploration of the text. Caruth defines trauma as an experience of "catastrophic events (p.11) in which the response to the events occurs in the often delayed, the uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (p.12). Caruth's trauma theory focuses on the retention of "unwitting" traumatic events in the memory and on the notion of "not known" and not "locatable" trauma (Caruth, 2016, p. 4) and its context. Caruth argues that trauma is an

experience that cannot be fully assimilated or integrated into consciousness, as it often involves overwhelming and fragmented experiences that resist narration and meaning-making. She contends that trauma can disrupt the coherence of an individual's sense of self and time, and can continue to haunt the individual in the form of recurring symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares, and dissociation. Caruth emphasizes the importance of bearing witness to traumatic experiences and the role of literature and other forms of art in giving voice to those who have been silenced by trauma.

LaCapra (2014) approaches trauma from a more historical and philosophical perspective, emphasizing the ways in which collective traumas, such as war, genocide, and political violence, can shape cultural memory and affect the way societies remember and memorialize the past. He argues that trauma can challenge and transform traditional forms of historical representation and that it is important to engage with the ethical and political implications of trauma in order to prevent its recurrence. He has highlighted two states with reference to trauma i.e., acting out and working through. Acting out means the state in which the person is traumatized and engulfed in his fears of past and is unable to get out of that situation, he relives the same traumatic experience again and again and is unable to come out that fear.

Herman (2015) focuses on the psychological impact of trauma, particularly in the context of sexual violence and abuse. She emphasizes the ways in which trauma can disrupt an individual's sense of safety, trust, and intimacy, and can lead to long-term psychological effects such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Herman stresses the importance of recognizing the social and political context in which trauma occurs, and the need for a supportive and compassionate response to survivors of trauma.

She has discussed the various stages in which the survivor of any traumatic incident responds to it and also the coping mechanism which he follows to overcome these traumatic effects. The first phase of trauma management mechanism is insurance of safety of the victim. The safety does not solely mean physical safety, but the survivor should feel safe mentally, too. It implies that the survivor should emerge out of the constant fear of the horrible incident and feel safe in the present moment. The second phase of her coping mechanism includes the remembrance of the traumatic incident in order to mourn out the pain and furies related to that particular incident, leading to the third phase, where he can reconnect to his normal life. The researcher has merged the three models to carry out the study.

### **Analysis**

This analysis has been divided into four parts. The first part deals with the portrayal of various catastrophic events which cause trauma among the characters in *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* (2016) with special emphasis on trauma theory. The second part deals with the effects of psychological and physical trauma on the lives of the five major characters under the light of Caruth's *Unclaimed Experiences* (1995). The next section deals with the mechanism through which the

characters counter, cope with and overcome their traumas with reference to La Carpa's acting out and working through and Herman's three stages to cope with trauma models. The last section deals with a discussion of the novel by keeping in view the research objectives, and research questions.

### **Causes of Trauma in *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon***

Trauma is a painful response to a horrible incident and can have various causes such as loss of beloved ones, survival in a horrible accident, rape, sexual abuse, murder and many others. This part explores the causes of trauma among the various characters in *The Shadow of Crescent Moon* (2016) under the light of work of Caruth (2016). Aman Erum, who is on his way to mosque for Eid prayers, is continuously haunted by flashbacks of his childhood, when he wants to flee from Mir Ali, by hook or crook, in order to establish a career outside this area, where people are suffering from the war and death can fall any moment. Nobody knows who is the real enemy and people remain constantly scared. He aspires to run away from his very roots because they give him the feeling of being left alone and isolated. He wants to move to America to study Commerce and build a career there because Mir Ali is a hopeless place for him. The traumatic experience of his rejection in the military test, the fierce and violent remarks of his father about his appearance in the military test, and the continuous repression of his desires to have a lavish and luxurious lifestyle, where he cannot see the war-ravaged people and society, continuously, haunts and traumatizes him.

He is suffering from both public trauma and private trauma. The public trauma of living in a society under the claws of uncertain death, and the private trauma of having a poor and low lifestyle. Aman Erum shares a similar experience with all the people who have migrated to land for peace but unfortunately, they are still living with the same fears of being killed anytime and who can kill them is also a mystery. They have become part of war against their wills and all their efforts to get rid of this situation are proving meaningless since they are left with no choice.

On the roofs of the town's buildings, snipers lie in their nests, surrounded by sandbags, their military rain ponchos cold and clammy against their necks, and wait for the day to begin..., you chose your mosque carefully. Fridays were no longer about the supplicants (Bhutto, 2016, pp. 9-10)

Death is the biggest fear of life but when one remains under the threat of death all the time, this fear intensifies and takes shape of trauma and impacts the minds of the individuals. Through memories of the traumatic incident, the survivor knows for the first time that he has survived the trauma. "It was to such an extent that he did not humorously think of his death which is approaching rather, he contemplates his mysterious survival in such a horrific situation" (Caruth, 2016). The repetition of flashbacks and hallucinations are actually an attempt to comprehend the fact that the individual has survived the ravages of the incident (Caruth, 2016). Thus, everyone who has survived

the attacks from mysterious sources in Mir Ali is contemplating the mystery of their survival in order to accept the fact.

The biggest fear of a person who leaves his land and migrates to another country is that of loss of his identity and cultural roots. Aman Erum and his family also fear their roots being cut down and the loss of their identity at the hands of the military which is omnipresent in Mir Ali. He is making a continuous struggle to flee from this place in order to get rid of the traumatic fear of being killed anytime by anyone. 'They will have put their fingers everywhere, even on the ground on which we stand and the fibers through which we weave our stories.' (Bhutto, 2016, p. 20)

This fear of loss of cultural identity and generational roots has also impacted the youngest brother of the family who has remained under the influence of his father. The father always narrates the story of a king to his son who was betrayed by the king of another state who was greedy and self-centered. Hayat starts to accumulate the same fears inside himself that haunt him and make him crave to seek revenge for all the injustices done to him and his people. Sikander and Mina are two other characters who become the victims of similar trauma of the loss of beloved ones. They have lost their only child Zalaan in an attack on the hospital. Zalaan is very dear to them. The traumatic survivor of such an incident experiences a double trauma (Caruth, 2016). There is a general view that after taking in necessary therapies, medications, and guidance, one becomes happy and content after trauma no matter how difficult life becomes but that is not the case with Mina. Her trauma continuously haunts her throughout the novel.

According to Freud (1895) and Caruth (1995), it is very hard for any human mind to register trauma at the point of its occurrence, however, the impacts of this trauma are worse when they disturb the human mind at the time of their appearance. Furthermore, Caruth (2016) claims that the thing which disturbs a survivor the most is his disruptive survival more than the traumatic neurosis of the traumatic incident which hinders him to go back to normal life. It is very hard for Mina to accept the death of her only son and she keeps on looking for her son everywhere. Freud (1895) talks about similar experience while studying the traumas of soldiers who suffered from phobia of war after coming back to their homes from the battlegrounds. He has discovered a terrible link between survival and trauma, answering to why soldiers of war are never satisfied with the title of "survivor" after returning from the war. This is because the disappearance of close and beloved ones worries them and their very "survival becomes a crisis" (Caruth, 2016, p. 9) as we can see in the case of Mina and Sikander. Sikander survives the attack in which he has lost his son and now nothing haunts him more than the fact that he has survived the accident which has confiscated their beloved son.

Samarra also faces similar trauma of the loss of beloved ones. The people who are close to her heart leave her all of a sudden without any reason. Her father bids her farewell one day without any information of where he is going and when is his return. She is treated as ethnic minority. The

ethnic minorities in Pakistan suffer many ideological and cultural complexities after their settlement. They fail to access the basic facilities of health, education and accommodation.

The journey of Inayat from one hiding to another, the torture that he bears in the torture camps, which are anonymous, displays the basic picture of trauma that ethnic minorities bear while living under the oppression after exile from their native country. Like Aman Erum, the rest of the people of his tribe also fail to connect with the environ of host country. They are questioned by military police and some of them are picked up by claiming them to be connected with terrorist, even if they are not.

### **Effects of Trauma on the Lives of Characters in *The Shadow of Crescent Moon***

Trauma puts an impact on human minds but sometimes the impact is delayed as Caruth puts “What returns to haunt the victim, these stories tell us, is not only the reality of the violent event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known” (Caruth, 2016, p. 19). The victims remain unaware of these impacts until they reoccur in the form of flashbacks, nightmares, and hallucinations. These characters “live it twice” (Caruth, 2016, p. 20). The second experience of reliving the trauma is more painful than the original suffering. The characters in the novel go through symptoms such as flashbacks, hallucinations and nightmares, panic attacks, restlessness, and anxiety. These traumatic incidents also lead to the silencing of some of the characters.

Aman Erum remains under the continuous fear of losing his worth, his skills and his capabilities. He makes many efforts to get out of Mir Ali and settle in America but Aman Erum’s invitations never came without a price (Bhutto, 2016, p. 23). He has to give up his freedom, his love for Samarra, and his loyalty towards his creed in order get out of this abyss. Despite achieving all that he wants, the loss of beloved ones traumatizes him and keeps him restless. The memories of the time, he has spent with his family and Samarra haunts him but he remains unaware of this. The fact that access to the traumatic event is not possible in normal consciousness means that it will reside in the unconscious mind in a timeless and wordless state that causes continuous pain and damage to the psyche (Caruth, 2016, pp.160-63).

The traumatic experiences of Samarra initially make her numb. She loses her ability to speak and think. Language loss is one of the basic elements that play a significant role in the study of trauma and is as old as the study of trauma, itself. The trauma of losing virginity is not simply a wound of the body that can heal (Caruth, 2016, p. 4) with time rather it occurs to unexpectedly to be known by the character. LaCapra (2014) also talks about the victims of trauma through his concept of ‘acting out’ and ‘working through’ to show the response of those who have witnessed all the horrors of painful incidents and survived. He puts forth "a person is disturbed or occupied by the past and is forcibly caught in a forced repetition of traumatic scenes, tensions broke out and it was as if one had returned and repeated a sad scene." (LaCapra, 2014, p. 21). Samarra remains in a constant state of tragedy and fear while experiencing the trauma of a traumatic incident that she underwent. She loses

her peace of mind because she not only has dreams but also flashbacks of her traumatic past. She believes that she lives in the past where she was suffering at the very moment of the traumatic event. Thus, she has no understanding or feeling for the past, present, or future. The unspeakable nature of trauma and the intensity of the experience behind it can severely impact language and awareness. It causes everlasting harm and requires remarkable narrative skills to find expression for suppressed feelings. The fact that access to the traumatic event is not possible in normal consciousness means that it will reside in the unconscious mind in a timeless and wordless state that causes continuous pain and damage to the psyche (Caruth, 2016, pp. 160-163). The idea of unspeakable injuries adds perspective to the narrative of trauma experiences among migrants and other marginal ethnic groups. These injuries, due to the painful impact they had on the psyche, must remain beneath the surface and separated from cognizance. The universal effects of trauma on memory and identity can be seen and better understood by collecting individual and collective experiences of trauma. This is especially the case as involves the breakup of consciousness. Fragmentation and the trauma's latency produce a chronological gap in which the impact of the incident and its meaning are disconnected.

### **Coping with Trauma and Connection with Everyday Life**

It takes time for the characters under the impact of trauma to shift from the stage of acting out where they repeat the incidents again and again and fail to make difference between past and present to the stage of working through where they break away from traumatic past and connect with everyday life. Herman (2015) also suggests various stages through which a victim passes while responding to the traumatic incident and mechanisms that he uses to cope with its traumatic effects.

The first step according to Herman (2015) is safety. Safety must be ensured in the life of a person who undergoes some traumatic incident. It means that the victim should not only be safe physically, rather he must feel secure mentally, too. It means that the survivor must emerge from the constant fear and should not fear the danger again. The second phase talks about the capability of the trauma survivor to memorize the incident and mourn the agony of the event, leading to the third phase where the victim connects with everyday life. We can see a similar journey in the character of Mina. She becomes victim of unknown after the death of her son but after the latency period (Freud, 1985), she finally becomes able to mourn and express out her pain when she encounters terrorists.

Similarly, Samarra also goes through such a mechanism to get to working through stage in order to connect with everyday life. Initially, when she is left alone by her father, Ghzan Afridi, she does not greet the incoming guests. The betrayal of Aman Erum also breaks her to the core. The most humiliating incident is that of rape which silences her and takes away her ability to comprehend what has happened to her.

She enters the working phase and develops the ability to leave the past behind and live in the present. This is the moment where she becomes able to distinguish between the past and the present. She



begins to think that the traumatic incident is a matter of past and at the same time develops the courage to consider present as more important than the past.

Samarra cuts herself from the repetition of the painful incident by facing the reality and challenging it at the face value. She musters up the courage to express her traumatic pain and to heal her wounds by moving on in life with Hayat who is her constant listener and support system. She breaks away with the past, in order to live in present, thus, following the three staged mechanism of Herman (2015). Hayat, on the other hand, also musters up the courage to narrate his agonies, the pain of losing his culture, his identity and his men in the war prevailing in Mir Ali. He transcends from unspeakable to speak-able to get rid of the thoughts that are howling on his mind.

### **Discussion**

This section discusses the non-linear plot organization of the novel *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* (2016) in order to show how flashbacks of the traumatic incidents are inculcated by Bhutto. It also addresses the research questions under the light of stances of Caruth (2016), LaCapra (2014) and Herman (2015). The instances from the text are referred to provide substantial detail to the discussion of the questions. Moreover, it also talks about how this study has bridged the research gap. The plot of this trauma fiction is nonlinear because flashback survivors experience flashbacks after an incident. In some cases, there are large space and time gaps when characters are restored during trauma. This happens when the survivor, trying to reconnect with a normal life or telling about an incident, opposes the temporary situation and feels that he is living in a time of trauma.

The non-linear plot that leads to the holes in the stream of action, as well as the unconventional end of the story, as opposed to closing, are typical features of trauma fiction. Holes show historical gaps. In addition, flashbacks to trauma fiction carry the importance of repeating such stories. As a stylistic part of trauma fiction, the repetition of images, plot, and language occurs more frequently in such stories. In explaining recidivism, Whitehead (2004) states that recurrence, which is a naturally ambivalent act, essentially describes imitating the situation of the traumatized person he or she is experiencing.

Continuing to look at the fact that traditional narrative models do not present trauma appropriately and those traumas have some exclusive features, it is worth saying that the use of such unknown ways of describing trauma is consistent with uniqueness. The study takes research a step further by looking at the above-mentioned acts of trauma and their impact on history and fiction and their depiction. In fact, authors around the world continue to refuse to ignore these themes, and the shattered images and broken structures that are common to much of the books viewed on the accompanying pages seem to be a good response to the riots, uprisings, and hatred. In any case, as evidenced by the number of contemporary fictions works that unite the silent figure, silence has become a recognized and successful tool for depicting recorded events of terror or trauma that continues to undermine the ethical boundaries of the imagination.

*The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* (2016) paints the picture of traumatic ethnic minorities who live under the clouds of oppression, even in the host country. Even the post-modern world judges these ethnic minorities on the basis of their language, colour, creed, tradition, religion, and culture as highlighted in the novel. The individual accounts of characters reflect that the concept of trauma of insignificant others and trauma's legacy in our society. The science of mourning out the pain works through a particular mechanism and division which confiscate the attention of traumatic powers of the society. Sontag (2003) notes the fact that no bill has been passed and no museum is established in memory of the tragic history of slavery or repression of ethnic minorities, while talking about the role of American society in creating memorials to the Holocaust and killing of Jews (p. 88). *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* (2016) depicts a similar biased standard of distribution of rights. The characters undergo traumatic experiences due to the double standards of the host society.

Death is the greatest fear in life, but every time we are threatened with death, this fear intensifies, causes injury, and affects the human psyche. Remembering the damage, the survivor realized that the wound had survived for the first time. He did not find it funny that his own death was coming but only thought that his life was not living in a dangerous situation. Remembrance of memory and delusions is the ability to understand that a person has survived the tragedy of the event. Samara also suffered the same trauma of losing a loved one. She was betrayed by those whom she trusted blindly. Her father spoke to her and left without telling her where he was going or when he would return. Her father immediately left their life, bringing darkness into her life. The fact that damage cannot enter the unconscious body means that it is always in an unconscious state and remains in the unconscious, causing long term pain and cell damage (Caruth, 2016, pp. 160-163). These wounds, due to their inflammatory nature, must remain underground and isolated from perception.

In a similar vein, the hurt of losing his roots and generational roots also haunts Hayat. He was still upset and frustrated. His fears sometimes distract him, and he loses his sense of reality. Samara lost her father, who left without telling her where he was. The disappearance of her father immediately made her anxious, and her only childhood friend, Aman Erum, was also trying to flee the country, adding to the anxiety. Concerning the second question of the study, the stance of LaCapra (2014) presents their transition from trauma engulfed character to a normal human being. LaCapra (2014) points out, "acting out" and "working through" are not separate, the terms 'acting', and 'past work' are as important as the speaking process to receiving wounds. Injury "triggers" occur when the victim "recalls the past" in the form of a life-altering event affected by things such as flashbacks, occurring immediately, compulsive or reversible behavior, and other factors that contribute to the injury. It's not consciously planned, it's erupting at the moment. The "work" creates the ability to "grasp the hurt, as well as its meaning", in a familiar way (Writing History, Writing Trauma, p. 144). It has been argued that the accident situation has now been restored "may or may not be true, correct or a representation of a prior event. it will include changes, hidden and conceivable changes and other changes related to the descriptive process" (pp. 88-89).

Mina's unique situation as an actor is described by LaCapra (2014). She lost her only son during a demonstration at the hospital where her husband works and cannot tell the difference between the past and the present. Mina's stress and thoughts associated with the injured child's funeral indicate her ability to distinguish between the current situation in which the child is missing and the time of the injury, i.e., the circumstances. According to Herman (2015), victims should share their knowledge of the injury (for example, by describing the nature of the injury) with a trusted listener and the person hearing it. In the novel, Samara flees the recurrence of traumatic events by experiencing reality and facing it. Hayat, meanwhile, uses his courage to tell the story of his passion, his culture, his identity, and the pain he suffered when his men fell into a trance during the war that took place in Mir Ali.

Aman Erum remains under the continuous fear of being wiped out due to war prevailing on the region between freedom fighters and the state apparatus. His own father and brother are part and parcel of that freedom movement. The application of LaCapra's acting out and working through can be best seen in the character of Mina. LaCapra in her work *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2014) talks about two states with reference to trauma i.e., acting out and working through. Acting out means the state in which the person is traumatized and engulfed in his fears of the past and is unable to get out of that situation. He relives the same traumatic experience again and again and is unable to come out of that fear. According to working through, the victim is able to differentiate between moments of trauma that he experienced in the past and moments of everyday life. Mina is a teacher at a local university but the tussle between the terrorists so-called, freedom fighters and the state army deprives her of her beloved son. Her son dies in an attack in the hospital, and she becomes unable to cope with the pain of the loss of her beloved son. She fails to get rid of the psychological imprints of this pain and starts to relive this traumatic experience again and again. She gives up on her job and rushes to the funerals of young kids who die in the bomb attacks in Mir Ali. Sikander tries hard to bring her back to reality, but she remains in the state of acting out, reliving the same pain again and again. Her recovery to normal life begins when she comes back to the working stage by following the coping mechanism of Herman (2015). She understands her loss, mourns the pain of her loss along with her aggression and gets rid of the suppressed emotions which keep her restless throughout the novel.

Sikander acts sanely throughout the novel but the trauma of the loss of his beloved son remains ingrained within him until the very last encounter with terrorists. Caruth presents her concerns about trauma in literature in her works *Trauma: Exploration in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (2016). Lastly, Hayat also gets rid of the trauma inflicted on him by continuous interaction with his father. The ravages of war are more prevalent in his character who remains restless, fidgeting his jacket quite often while thinking about the devastation that war has brought on his people.

## Conclusion

This study aimed at exploring the representation of the impacts of trauma in Fatima Bhutto's novel, *The Shadow of Crescent Moon* (2016). The study is done through the application of trauma theory to uncover the psychological impacts of war on the minds of the characters. The researcher has used the lens of stances of Caruth (2016), LaCapra (2014) and Herman (2015) to unravel the psychological traumas of characters in a war-inflicted area of Mir Ali. The analysis of the text informs that Aman Erum remains under the continuous fear of being wiped out due to war prevailing on the region between freedom fighters and the state apparatus. The application of LaCapra's acting out and working through can be best seen in the character of Mina. LaCapra in his work *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2014) talks about two states with reference to trauma i.e., acting out and working through. Acting out means the state in which the person is traumatized and engulfed in his fears of past and is unable to get out of that situation. He relives the same traumatic experience again and again and is unable to come out that fear. According to working through, the victim is able to differentiate between moment of trauma that he experienced in the past and moments of everyday life. Mina is a teacher at local university but the tussle between the terrorists so called, freedom fighters and the state army deprives her of her beloved son.

Her son dies in an attack in the hospital, and she becomes unable to cope with the pain of the loss of her beloved son. She fails to get rid of the psychological imprints of this pain and starts to relive this traumatic experience again and again. She gives up on her job and rushes to the funerals of young kids who die in the bomb attacks in Mir Ali. She gives them a bath and often annoys the family with her painful questions about the death of the child. Sikander tries hard to bring her back to reality but she remains in the state of acting out, reliving the same pain again and again. Her recovery to normal life begins when she comes back to the working stage by following the coping mechanism of Herman (2015). She understands her loss, mourns out the pain of her loss along with her aggression and get rid of the suppressed emotions which keep her restless throughout the novel. Sikander acts sanely throughout the novel but the trauma of loss of his beloved son remains ingrained within him until the very last encounter with terrorists. Lastly, Hayat also gets rid of the trauma inflicted to him by continuous interaction with his father. The ravages of war are more prevalent in his character who remains restless, fidgeting his jacket quite often while thinking about the devastation that war has brought on his people.

The concept of trauma is gaining more space in the contemporary world, particularly in literary spheres. The narrative of the novel is versatile, but it depicts the basic picture of trauma as faced by immigrants who are considered as insignificant others under the hostile host country environs during their exile from their own native land. These people are judged on the basis of their culture, colour, traditions, language and religion even in the contemporary post-modern world. The host

countries are not ready to acknowledge their rights and existence as human beings and show them a prejudiced attitude. The study examined the traumatic experiences of these immigrants in order to reflect their tainted identities that have shattered their souls and made them insignificant other. Such traumatic experiences snatch the victim capacity to perform well and escape from the traumatic experiences causing shock and creating an abyss for them. Consequently, this traumatizing abyss is a source of complete loneliness, embarrassment and confusion for these victims. The contemporary fiction is the best suitable tool to document the trauma experiences of those living in and fleeing from war inflicted zones.

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