

## Spatial Memory, Traumatic *Unspeakability* and the War in Afghanistan: Selected Literary Witnessing in Focus

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### Abstract

*I have used psychological trauma theory to analyze Afghan literature in a bid to problematize the oft-quoted interplay of spatial memory and the inherent unrepresentability of trauma. Borrowing from the works of Caruth, LaCapra, Felman, Tal, and Whitehead, my purpose is to analyze the characters' reaction to the trauma of war as well as to apply the coping with trauma mechanisms by Kai Erikson and see the inherent traumatic latency, if any. The study investigates Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* to highlight that the Afghan cultural productions bring forth the traumatic history of the people. The study contrasting historical accounts, highlights that trauma fiction concerns with a specific traumatic experience from a more personalized, unified and comprehensive scope. It brings forth what is recorded with an added detail of first hand witnessed historical version that is kept safe in an undiluted form, in the mind of the survivor.*

**Keywords:** Trauma, Coping Mechanism, Spatial Memory, Working Through

### 1. Introduction to the Study

As a battleground for invaders from various parts of the world, the landlocked South Central Asian Afghanistan has, for centuries, stood invincible in front of all foreign aggression. (Hegghammer, 2020; Lee, 2018; Ghobar 2018; Tanner, 1999; Maass, 1999; Katzmann, 2010; Imran & Xiaochuan, 2015; Goodson, 2001). Afghan generations growing up, while witnessing systematic violence meted out to them due to the wars and conflicts, have experienced not only an indelible rupture in the overall fabric of the society (Ewans et al, 2003), leaving millions homeless (Ewans, 2002; Dupree, 1977), but have also seen thousands with mental health issues, such as the Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (Thoompail & Tacchi, 2020; Ullah, 2020; UNAMA, 2015; Oxfam, 2009; Zimmerman, 2015). The belatedness in the recall of these traumatic memories, which

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Freud's (1896) terms as *Nachträglichkeit*, refers to the PTSD survivor's delayed reaction to the traumatic event (Caruth, 1992; Bistoën, Vanheule & Craps, 2014; Luckhurst, 2008; Fassin & Rechtman 2009; Young 1995).

Notwithstanding the fact that non-literary records to such traumatic events do provide the relevant details in terms of the loss of life as well as damage to the infrastructure; however, the fact remains that the inherent *unrepresentability* (Caruth, 1992; Tal, 1996) as well as incomprehensibility (Freud, 1896) of the traumatic experience makes it impossible for the survivor to tell the world of what s/he has witnessed, resulting in the aforementioned delayed response that is produced only through the process of LaCapra's (2004) working through, thus necessitating the importance of literary studies to cater for this delayed recording of the event (Ankersmit, 2010). Such a belatedness is significantly visible in the accounts of the Holocaust survivors, the Vietnam War veterans and beyond (Codde, 2009; Vickroy, 2002). This belatedness or afterwordness at the heart of the traumatic experience necessitates the analyses of the relevant cultural productions in a bid to supplement the oft-quoted factual/historical portrayals. (Pihlainen, 2002) In the same vein, this study concentrates in the understanding of the Afghan trauma of war with reference to time and space.

## **2. Understanding Trauma with Reference to Time and Space**

The concept of examining trauma has its roots back in 1880 when Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud investigated hysteria in one of the hospitals of Paris with the association of French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot (Herman, 1994). In a letter by Freud to his colleague named Wilhelm Fliess between 1887 and 1897, there is an indication that the establishment of the seduction theory of neurosis resulted in the idea of *Nachträglichkeit* or belatedness.

Numerous researchers have investigated the 'delayed reaction' phenomenon in trauma. (Young, 1995; Fassin & Rechtman, 2009; Luckhurst, 2008; Bistoën, Vanheule & Craps, 2014; Awan, 2013; Ullah, 2020). Likewise, several empirical researches were executed in the same field that validated the significance of this deferred action with regard to the broader scope of memory studies (Andrews, Brewin, Philpott, & Stewart, 2007; Carty et al., 2006; Berninger et al., 2010; Yehuda et al., 2009; Awan 2010, Bistoën, Vanheule & Craps, 2014; Ullah & Kamran, 2016; Hanif & Ullah, 2018; Ullah, 2020). An in depth study was carried

out to determine that on average, 38.2% and 15% of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) cases in military and civilian setups, respectively, exhibit delayed reactions after they experienced trauma (Andrews et al., 2007). Apropos, when a person experiences any random incident, it does not meet the requirements of being traumatized until and unless the said conditions are satisfied.

The introduction of Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), provides the readers with the comprehension of one more method to examine trauma with the return to Freud's composition in section three of "*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). She elaborates two passages from Tasso's romantic epic of *Tancredi and Clorinda*. Here she converses about a demonic mode for the representation of trauma in a continuous repetition. Freud sums up the two scenes of the Gerusalemme story which deal with the narration of the account of the attack of Jerusalem by the Christians in their first campaign in 1099 and the fights between the Christians and Muslims:

The protagonist Tancred kills his beloved Clorinda. After her burial, he enters an enchanted forest that so frightens the army of crusaders. He hits a tall tree there with his sword and blood flows from the wound. Magically, Clorinda's spirit enters into that tree and Tancred hears the voice of Clorinda accusing him of harming his beloved. (Freud, 2003, pp. 60-61)

Freud shows twofold unintelligent hurting of the beloved by Tancredi. First time in battling when he is unaware of the fact that she is in the shield and second time in the forest when he misrecognizes her as she is buried in the tree. These instances of unknowingly hurting of Clorinda establish a passive nature of repeated trauma in which the victims have a continuous flashbacks of the same tragic experience just as "a daemonic current [is] going through their whole existence" (Freud, 2003).

In the discourse on trauma framework, Caruth focuses on Tancred's experience of the trauma to what he couldn't respond on occurrence. Later on, as she narrates the story of Tasso she believes that the story has a moving portrayal of "an interminable redundancy of the same destiny" (2003b, p. 60). She finds Tasso's account similarly as a striking example of "the moving and sad voice that shouts out, a voice that is incomprehensibly discharged through the trauma" (1996a, p. 2). Finally,

Caruth sums up her discussion as she stresses on the moral grounds of trauma in the delayed setting of creative expression.

### **3. Summary of Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner***

In *The Kite Runner*, Amir narrates an occasion that happened twenty six year back, during his childhood in Afghanistan. According to him, his entire life was shaped by that unfortunate incident. He has a luxurious house in Kabul, Afghanistan where he lives with his Baba. Their servant Ali belongs to an ethnic minority called Hazaras. He has a child named Hassan. Baba has a friend named Rahim Khan who visits them on regular basis.

With the exile of the Afghan king the situation of the country changes for the worse. It is the time when an important incident takes place as Wali, Assef, and Kamal do not let Hassan and Amir play. Assef beats Amir as he believes that the punishment is justified for playing with a boy who belongs to Hazara. Hassan saves Amir by stopping Assef with the help of his slingshot. After in this incident, in Afghanistan, a kite flying competition is organized during midwinters. The boys who take part in the competition use varied ingredients to cut the strings of the kites of their opponents. Once they are successful in cutting the strings of the kites of their rivals, they run after those kites to get hold of them when they drop down on the earth. This running after the kites to grab them has been termed as kite running in the novel. Amir wins this competition by successfully cutting the string of his opponents and Hassan runs after that kite to get hold of it. As the time passes, Amir realizes the absence of Hassan and sets off to look for him. In the same quest of Hassan, he reaches an alley and to his shock, he sees his friend being molested by Amir, while Wali and Kamal hold him tightly. Amir leaves the site of the unfortunate incident instead of rescuing Hassan. Hassan is seen to hold the kite in his hand when encounters Amir after that incident. Amir behaves as if he is unaware of the ill-fated incident at the hands of Assef and his companions.

Amir avoids Hassan after that as he burns in the fire of guilt of not rescuing him when he needed his help the most. Amir decides to get rid of Hassan who is a source of continuous flash back of his guilt. He plans to put his cash and watch under the pillow of Hassan to make people believe that he has stolen his belongings. When Baba asks Hassan about the

matter, he admits that he has taken the things although he has not done anything like that.

Rahim Khan contacts Amir through a telephone call telling him about his health issues and requests him to see him in Pakistan. After a week, Amir reaches Pakistan and meets Rahim Khan. They discuss the destruction caused by the war in Afghanistan. Rahim Khan tells Amir that Afghanistan's situation has worsened with the expansion of Soviet forces in the country. He tells him that the very expansion resulted in Taliban's violence in Afghanistan. He tells Amir about his relationship with Amir and requests him to help him in finding Hassan's house. Then he narrates a heart wrenching incident in which Hassan and his wife were killed by Taliban after entering their house leaving Sohrab in an orphanage of Kabul.

Amir tells the Taliban official during a meeting that he is looking for a child named Sohrab. The Taliban official tells the guard to take Sohrab in the room. After some time, Sohrab enters the room dressed in a blue silk dress and Amir notices that he is wearing mascara. The Taliban official attacks Amir and breaks his ribs and bruises his lips. Sohrab hits the official using his slingshot and rescues Amir when he needs his help. Finally, Amir and Sohrab successfully escape from the prison of the Taliban. Amir convinces Sohrab to shift with him in USA to live a peaceful life.

#### **4. Trauma, Identity, Unspeakability and Coping Mechanisms**

Baba has been introduced as a colossal Pashtun, a power of nature. He has once wrestled with a dark bear that makes him something of a legend with a story (Bond, 2003) that is a story no one distrusts. He is the strongest character who is almost higher than life that makes him assuming the role of a god (Whipple, 2003). For Amir, the god-like attributes of his father is upsetting as he cannot reach to his standard to satisfy his father.

LaCapra (2001) proclaims that the survivor of a traumatic incident should be capable of to take the incident as a part of life and to differentiate the very traumatic incident from the ordinary life. Baba is portrayed to be haunted by the past grandeur, but he is going to change in future. His individual quality traits outlive but the circumstances make him lose quite a bit of his previous acclaim. He strives for providing his son with the opportunities for living and progressing in a free country.

According to Herman (1992), the survivor needs to reconnect to life as fast as possible to recover from the impact of trauma. Baba makes a concerted effort to release himself from devastating power of the traumatic incident by looking beyond the incident and to reconnect to the routine life. He does not mourn the loss of his grandeur instead, he focuses on betterment of his son's future as he says: "I didn't bring us here for me, did I?" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 172).

As Baba leaves Afghanistan, traumatic incident, caused by the war in the country does not influence him with the expected intensity. With the change in the circumstances, the relationship of Baba and Amir also changes. Baba depends on Amir and it is not abnormal when parents depend on their children. Baba reconnects to life as he starts to think about the future of his kid as Herman (1992) states that the last stage in dealing with the trauma is that the hapless tries to reconnect to normal life. Baba puts his trust and wishes to his child. Unexpectedly, the profession of authors gains importance in Afghanistan and the relationship of Baba and Amir reaches its climax when Baba starts to read Amir's stories which he refused to read in Kabul (Hosseini, 2007, p. 150).

Caruth (1992) proclaims that the victims of trauma experience flash backs of the past memories that will continue to haunt them. Baba also experiences the same flashbacks of his honor and force despite the fact that he is privileged that to change his environment the new environment is better than the previous one. He finds it difficult to get rid of his splendid past and accepting a new identity in the new situation is equally challenging for him. It is hard for him to accept the reality that he has been deprived of his grandeur due to the war and political upheaval in his country. He cherishes his past memories and remains true to his values and refuses to accept his present position in the new country.

The researchers of trauma studies find it difficult to imagine the feelings of Baba who lives far away from Afghanistan and hears all the news of executions and penalties in Afghanistan. He presumably has no confirmation about his other child. He cannot resist anticipating Hassan as the guilt of a survivor is like a two edged sword. On the one hand he keeps on thinking about his survival of the tragic incident and on the other hand, he regrets his survival to bear the burden of witnessing the plights of the victims of traumatic incident. Baba keeps on thinking about Hassan who is left behind during the war in Afghanistan.

Amir truly becomes Baba's child in the quest for recovery. Amir is undoubtedly one of the major characters of *The Kite Runners*. His wrongdoing moves power of the novel. In the beginning of the novel, the readers yearn to find out Amir's mystery and sin. Johnson (2012) states that Amir is a fixed major character of the novel who is purported by various characters of the story. He is dragged to participate in the sequence of the events by alternate characters. His character can only be study with reference to the external factors impacting his personality and tagging him as a stuck character.

The trauma makes Amir feel himself responsible for the unfortunate incident happened to Hassan. This feeling is in fact, his sense of guilt and the inability to have LaCapra's (2001) work through capability as he leaves Hassan in turmoil when he needs his help the most. He seems to be unable to cope with the trauma and continues to narrate I as: "There was a monster in the lake. It had grabbed Hassan by the ankles(...). That was the night I became an insomniac" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 86).

Amir hysterically aches for having knowledge about his mother. He discovers during a conversation with a man that his mother liked to take almond cake and nectar. She loved to take hot tea. He was told that she was concerned about her happiness (Hosseini, 2007, p. 219). It is, undoubtedly, a very little knowledge about his mother but it is undoubtedly, a dear memory to keep with him for Amir. It is, of course, more information about his mother that his father ever provided him. As Amir recalls that Baba depicted her in expensive strokes like: "She was an incredible woman. (...)Then again perhaps his misfortune had been so extraordinary, his torment so profound, he couldn't stand to discuss her" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 219).

One of the major variables for a poor relationship between Amir and his father is the fact that the father avoids discussing his mother with him. Amir admits the fact that his father accuses him for the demise of his mother and this accusation cannot be overlooked by the father (Hosseini, 2007, p. 49). Being a Youngman, it is not tolerable for Amir that he is responsible for his mother's death but he understands that he doesn't satisfy his father's desires that can also be one the reasons for disapproval of his father. He overhears the conversation of Baba and his intimate friend Rahim Khan to affirm this thought: "If I [Baba] hadn't seen the specialist haul him out of my wife with my own particular eyes, I'd never

accept he is my son” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 20). This sentence should be taken at the top of the priority list while discussing Amir’s future mistakes mainly because they are enough to damage a kid’s spirit.

The initial pages of the novel make the readers feel that Amir experiences lack of enthusiasm and affirmation from his father. As Flanagan (2012) states it, shadowed by a dim cloud; a disturbed association with his [Amir’s] inaccessible father. He strongly believes that his father does not appreciate him. The past memories continue to haunt him as he recollects: “I will always remember Baba’s valiant endeavors to disguise the sickened look all over as we drove in quiet” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 19).

The above discussion on the relationship of Amir with his father does not mean that Amir doesn’t love his father. He undoubtedly loves him immensely and he feels privileged to be his son: “He [Baba] motioned to me [Amir] to hold his cap for him and I was happy to, on the grounds that then everybody would see that he was my father, my Baba” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 13). It is only the warmth from his father that Amir craves for the most in his life and he wonders whether he will ever get that intimacy with his father? (Johnson, 2012). He realizes that the only way to get that warmth is to fulfill his father’s dream.

Amir makes some disheartening endeavors to win the appreciation of Baba, a soccer or Buzkashi competition is among one of those efforts. In the response to those failed attempts, Baba suggests: “I think perhaps you win the [kite flying] competition this year” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 49). It is the most crucial moment for Amir to fulfill his father’s desire. Baker (2003) states that the yearly kite-flying competition, where young people fight for their pride, is may be the last opportunity for Amir to earn his father’s admiration. Amir is determined to win this competition and he has a conviction about winning the competition. He is a decent kite-flying competitor. He believes that his success will change a lot of things between him and his father. Amir is determined to win the contest: “I was going to win. There was no other practical alternative (...) Reveal to him for the last time that his child was commendable” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 49).

Amir wins the exciting kite competition with the backing of Hassan. Hassan is portrayed to be the best kite runner in the entire Kabul who starts to search for their rival’s kite whose string was cut by Amir. Amir is



excited with the imagination to bring the kite, he and Hassan have cut and found.

Hosseini has set forth the portrayal of everyday life in Kabul in a skillful manner. The love bond between a son and a father, the occasion of kite flying, the pinching nonattendance of a mother in the life of a devastated child, and the alliance of two children have been portrayed as ordinary events of everyday life of ordinary human beings in an extraordinary and unusual manner. Hosseini, later on, presents the trauma of war experienced by his characters in an astonishing way. He sketches a sharp contrast between two extremes experienced by the people of Kabul. In the beginning he portrays them to lead peaceful lives and advances with the post-war scenario of Kabul highlighting that the people desperately longing for going back to their country that they left to avoid the curse of the war.

Hosseini depicts Amir's happy life and then creates a reversal of fortune highlighting impacts of war on Amir's joyful life. The expression of lived happily ever after is rare outward the cosmos of tall accounts of stories. Amir's triumphs in the competition makes him lose something significantly indispensable. For Hayes (2007), it is Amir's loss of innocence followed by a burden to bear for the rest of his life. As she proclaims that: "Growing up was no more progressive. He had all of a sudden been pushed into adulthood (Hayes, 2007, p. 12).

Amir misses the element of guilt and considers himself deceitful and dishonest. He believes that the shrewdness is not there only in his surrounding as Assef exhibits while assaulting Hassan but it is there within him too, when he leaves Hassan at a time when he needed his help the most. Amir desperately needs to recover from the trauma by admitting to himself but he is unable to pick up desired reclamation. Consequently, he remains silent due to the unspeakability of trauma (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1974; Van der Kolk & Bessel, 1987). The dilemma of Amir is not only being unfaith to his friend but the real trauma for him is that he is unable to speak about the incident. He remains haunted by recollection of the traumatic incident.

Amir considers himself to be responsible for the unfortunate incident that happened to Hassan. Herman (1992) asserts that the hapless reconnects to routine life in the third stage of recovery from the trauma. In case of Amir,

whenever he tries to reconnect to life, he finds it difficult to cope with the traumatic experience. As the hapless usually considers himself responsible for the tribulation and feels guilty for surviving the incident. Amir also condemns himself in rage: “I hurled the pomegranate at him. It struck him in the chest, exploded in a spray of red pulp... ‘Hit me back!’ I snapped... I wished he would. I wished he’d give me the punishment I craved, so maybe I’d finally sleep at night” (Hosseini, 2003, p. 92). This is typical state of trauma survivors in which they reflect on taking the responsibility of the traumatic incident.

The longing for the intimacy with Baba begins to chill off once again. Amir cannot stand being close to his friend Hassan, after the incident. He puts his cash and wristwatch under Hassan’s pillow and tells a fabricated story about it blaming Hassan that he has stolen his belongings.

Keeping in view all the events, gaging all the dreadful qualities of Amir and the piles of mistakes that he makes one after another have been expressed as: “Amir is a profoundly defective young man, failing to possess the mettle which his father has so inexhaustibly, yet I likewise felt him to be exceptionally amiable and sympathetic” (Bond, 2003). The readers do not judge him but they feel compelled to understand his position and circumstances. They feel obliged putting themselves in his place, they are impacted by Amir’s perspective and they must be humane as they are also liable to the same situation. Amir blames himself for being an evil person. His memories are imprinted on his mind and he is unable to get rid of them even in his adulthood.

Discovering a falling kite even without looking at the sky is Hassan’s hallmark individuality as he best knows the art of kite running. Hassan is faithful in his friendship with Amir and it makes Hassan lie to save the reputation of Amir. Hassan takes the responsibility of the mistakes that Amir commits (Johnson, 2012). He tries to ensure Amir’s safety by taking the responsibility of Amir’s faults. As he says in his letter to Amir: “I dream that my child will grow up to be a decent individual, a free individual and a vital person” (Hosseini, 2007, p. 191).

Hassan seems to be an authoritative, free and decent individual. The capacity and prospect originates from within every person it is not created from the outside world. Additionally, Lencz (2003) asserts that there is considerably more sense and worth in keeping a genuine soul and heart

than being a government official who chooses among the lives of masses without really understanding the life.

Amir is shocked to know that back in Kabul, Assef paid for a Youngman from an overcrowded shelter. He requests Assef to let the young man go but Assef demands the battle until the very end. Amir gets a cruel beating from Assef making Sohrab shoot Assef with his slingshot. In this way Sohrab and Amir escape the place to be liberated.

LaCapra (2001) asserts that overcoming the trauma allows hapless to take the traumatic incident as part of his normal routine life makes the recoveries easier for the victim. Sohrab remains occupied with his past memories that continue to haunt him. Fahrid stops at the door step of the hotel room and bids Sohrab goodbye but Sohrab remains indifferent and seems to be lost in his own thoughts. Herman's description of the third stage of trauma where the victim reconnects to life suggests that Sohrab has not recovered from the traumatic incident because he is unable to reconnect to life.

The traumatic incidents of Sohrab's past continue to haunt him as Caruth's (1992) asserts that the hapless experiences flashbacks of the tragic incident. When she sees a "horse drawn cart clip-clopped by in the parking lot and little bells dangled from the horse's neck and jingled with each step," he experiences the flashbacks from his past when he was sexually assaulted. It reminds him of how the Taliban assaulted him. Sohrab's reaction shows that he blames himself for what the Taliban did to him. This is another symptom of PTSD.

Sohrab's character demonstrates self-blame as he inquires, "Do you think Father is disappointed in me?" He feels lonely in the absence of his parents and companions when they do not visit him. He cries on the thought of left behind by his loved ones. As Erikson (1994) proclaims that the trauma survivors find it very hard to trust their fellow beings, Sohrab faces the same difficulty and trouble trusting the people around him as he says, "What if you get tired of me? What if your wife doesn't like me? I don't want to go to another orphanage, he said. His tears were soaking the pillow (Hosseini, 2003, p. 327). The fact of the matter is that Sohrab dearly wants to be surrounded by the people whom he loves, especially Amir, to promise him that he will never leave him alone to experience the trauma that has already ruined him emotionally and physically. He

desperately wants safety that is the first stage of recovery from trauma according to Herman (1994).

Sohrab goes into a state of panic when he thinks that Amir has broken his promise to keep him in his house. He thinks that Amir will send him back to the orphanage. The flashbacks of his traumatic memories make him to start pleading, "Please promise, you won't! Oh God, Amir agha! Please promise you won't" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 303). As Erikson (1994) recommends, the survivor of a traumatic incident is always afraid to experience the same tragic incident again. Sohrab falls asleep crying with the flashbacks to those unpleasant memories. Amir realizes that is the way children deal with terror. Then they fall asleep.

Sohrab also attempts to commit suicide by hurting himself with Amir's blade just because he was afraid of going back to the orphanage. This is because of the immense trauma of the war that Sohrab has underwent. It keeps him worrying and he feels insecure as he fears that his loved ones will leave him alone to face the traumatic incidents of life. Erikson (1994) and Miller (2000) suggest that the way people in surroundings of the survivors of the trauma react towards the victim affects their recovery from that incident. Herman (1994) also asserts that the sense of safety is for the survivor of the trauma is the first stage of recovering from that traumatic incident that seems to be missing in Sohrab's case. He is not ready to reexperience whatever he has already experienced.

Amir tries to convince Sohrab that he will never go back to the orphanage when Sohrab is under observation in the hospital. As Erikson (1994) notes that the survivor of traumatic incident worries that the same may happen to him again. Sohrab is seen to face problems in trusting the people around him including Amir as Sohrab only, "holds [a] glance, and then looked away" during a conversation with Amir while he tries to please him. Sohrab has been experiencing the flashbacks of his past as a result of war in his country that he is unable to cope with his memories and consequently, he decides to commit suicide but luckily, he survives it.

Sohrab displays elements of PTSD when he shares with Amir that he is fed up of the whole thing. It suggests that he is annoyed with the general situation of his country. He touches his throat with his hand saying, "I want my old life back, I want Father and Mother Jan" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 354). He misses the time when life was beautiful and peaceful. Herman

(1994) proclaims that the victim of trauma has the realization of what he has lost and he mourns the fatalities, that is the second stage of recovery from the trauma. According to Herman (1994), at this stage, the victim starts his journey to reconnect to the life and this journey is ultimately towards the recovery from the trauma. It happens only, when Sohrab has been assured that he will be provided with the safety and he will not be sent back to the orphanage.

According to the third stage of Herman's model (1994), the survivor of the trauma tries to reconnect to everyday life. This third stage cannot be related to Sohrab as he finds it difficult to reconnect to his normal life. He prefers to remain silent and doesn't interact with the people around him. He makes the people around him to guess about huge sorrows that he has witnessed. Amir keeps on guessing if he had, "...seen the Taliban drag his parents out into the street" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 317). Sohrab silence demonstrates his unspeakability of the trauma. This immense trauma has shaped a new identity for Sohrab. Consequently, Sohrab isolates himself from the people around him and fails to reconnect to the life and seems to find it hard to recover from trauma.

Sohrab remains silent all the time even when he goes to the United States of America because his unspeakability of trauma is enormous that he is unable to handle. Amir takes this as the consequences of all the abuse that he has experienced because of the war in Afghanistan. According to Herman (1992) reconnecting to life is a must to recover from a traumatic experience and this element of reconnection is missing in Sohrab's case. He has hostile memories which do not let him reconnect to the life as they make him carry the burden of the traumatic experience.

Amir notices that Sohrab is unwilling to communicate the people around him. Some characters of the novels are depicted to be very eager to narrate the incidents of destruction that they have witnessed but it is hard for Sohrab and he becomes silent on his unrepresentable and unspeakable sorrows. Sohrab has formed an exclusive identity for himself due to unrepresentability on his part. It is the hallmark by the absence of structures through which he could articulate his traumatic experience. His silence shows that his trauma is of such exceptional nature that it, according to Caruth (1995), Laub (1992) and Trezise (2010), is being portrayed as unrepresentable, unspeakable, and that it is experienced as an absence.

## 5. Conclusion

The present study has explored that Afghans have experienced the trauma of tribulations that has a devastating effect on the Afghan community in general and Sohrab in particular as he finds it difficult to reconnect to life. Sohrab has undergone a kind of trauma that is too tremendous for him to comprehend upon occurrence and he represents Caruth's idea (199A) when she discusses the impossibility to understand trauma upon occurrence. The survivors of trauma who witness the incidents, find it difficult to narrate the incident mainly because of the nature and the magnitude of traumatic experience. It poses the question of unspeakability and unrepresentability creating hurdles for historians to maintain the record of the incident with exact facts and figures upon the occurrence. Consequently, fiction writers depict the trauma with a gap of a reasonable timespan stressing on the delayed reaction to the catastrophic incident. Therefore, the analysis of the selected text decisively uncovers the fact that the history cannot be recorded by historians on occurrence.

The study has brought into the limelight dissimilar responses of dissimilar characters of the selected novel to deal with trauma in their homeland during the war. The present study proceeds to demonstrate that literature skillfully showcases the unrepresentable trauma in its fictional narratives that speaks loudly as compared to the historical accounts. In this way fictional authors have made great success in removing the tags of unspeakability from their narratives.

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