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Trauma, Memory and Identity in Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*

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Abstract:

The paper invokes to dig out the impacts of multiple devastating historical events—Nagasaki bombing (9 August 1945), Partition of India (1947), Soviet-Afghan War (1982-1983), and 9/11 attacks on USA (2001-2002)—its indelible effects of trauma in the lives of different characters, especially of Hiroko Tanaka, as portrayed in Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*. This is basically an attempt to highlight the perspectives of post-war trauma, influence of political and social history in personal lives, incessant recurrence of memory, traumatic and cultural displacements, the crisis for stable identity, and an endeavour to represent trauma in global level. History and its memories are like “burnt shadows” on Hiroko Tanaka's back, which can never be erased. The enduring impact of traumatic displacements fractures her self and identity from within. Getting captivated in her own fragmented identity she is continuously searching for a stability to get rid of every bitter past. Wars are not only about disintegration of nation, but also about degeneration of inner selves of both a community and an individual where characters like Hiroko are imposed with multiple baggages.

Keywords: Trauma, memory, identity, history

I

Is the trauma the encounter with death or the ongoing experience of having survived it? (Caruth 7)

Etymologically, in Greek “trauma” or wound refers to injury inflicted on a body, but in psychiatric literature the term “trauma” is psychic wound or affect inflicted upon mind. Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* is a novel which attempts to foreground or highlight the impacts and indelible effects of both physical and psychological trauma in the lives of Hiroko Tanaka, Sajjad Ashraf, and Raza Konrad Ashraf. This paper is intended to analyze the traumatic agitations and aftermath reverberations of varied historical events—Nagasaki bombing (9 August 1945), Partition of India (1947), Soviet-Afghan War (1982-1983), and 9/11 attacks on USA (2001-2002)—in the existential struggle of these three characters. It is basically an endeavour to portray and interpret their lives in the vista of post war trauma.

II

The influence of political and social history in the personal domains of relation represented through incessant recurrence of memory i.e., both agonizing and unattainable with cultural displacements producing a crisis of stable recognizable identity thereby universalizing trauma at a global and broader level. Memory of a historical event not only incarcerates the psyche of an individual, but also fractures the identity of a concrete self. Cathy Caruth, in her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, renders that history and memory “... of trauma, then, as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality—the escape from a death, or from its referential forces—rather attests to its endless impact on a life” (7). The multifaceted associations of history and its memory perpetrate fragmentation of selves as well as perpetuate trauma in their life and

psyche respectively. These fragmented selves are primarily haunted by trauma of "... the profound link between the death of the loved one and the ongoing life of the survivor" (Caruth 8).

Death as an incident and its memory as a manifestation not only affect the mind of an individual, but also change subsequent existence: "The constant memory of the dead person became the foundation of the hypothesis of other forms of life, and first gave him the idea of life continuing after apparent death" (Freud 188). The "venom" of history, ceaselessly gnaws one's life through its repetitions in dream, flashback, and present happenings. History or gruesome past, as Caruth argues, through the notion of trauma, we can decipher that a rethinking of references of past does not aim at eliminating history, but at resituating it in our understanding. Freudian idea of history elucidates that contemplation of history through reminiscence of the characters need a continuous rethinking the possibilities of history, as well as our ethical and political relations to it. Persistent confrontation with violence in the present digs out the past historical trauma.

Memory and revisiting past through the escalator of nostalgia are both evocative of trauma of the unattainability of the desirable, and unavoidability of painful reiteration of horrendous events through flashbacks and present circumstances. Memory creates an intricate relation between trauma and survival where "... the return of the traumatizing event appears in many respects like a waking memory..." (Caruth 60). Freud insists, only memory can etch "the old features into the new picture; in fact the old materials or forms are removed and replaced by new ones" (179). For him, as analyzed by Caruth in her essay "Recapturing the Past: Introduction," trauma is not in the repression of an event experienced and its return, but in an inherent latency within the experience itself. Unforgettable traumatic experiences, instead of being suppressed in unconscious, kept latent in memory. "Latency" features an elapsed time "between the accident and the first appearance of the symptoms" (Freud qtd. in Caruth 7) of trauma. The experiences of traumatic events recur continually. Caruth comments that: "The historical power of trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all" (8).

Trauma, as described both by Freud and Caruth, is a response to unanticipated overpowering ravenous events that are not fully grasped when they happen, but return to them in recapitulating flashbacks or dreams from the unconscious, the storehouse of memories. Again, Freud explicates war trauma through an enigmatic alliance between trauma and survival in the sustenance of those who not only withstand the moment of happenings, but also surviving it all through their life. Trauma is a "... temporal delay that carries the individual beyond the shock of the first moment" (Caruth 10).

Kali Tal, in her seminal book *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*, forms a completely disparate concept regarding the "connection between individual psychic trauma and cultural representations of the traumatic events" (3). Her ideas about survivors and their circumstances are time and place specific. She tries to establish a unique recognition for the literature of trauma survivors, who can produce autobiographic subjective witness of trauma. The distinction between an individual traumatized by his personal experiences and another who has not faced such haunting problematizes the process of representation of trauma in literature. "Accurate representation of trauma can never be achieved without recreating the event..." (15). Therefore her theory is, basically, concerned about the distinct "literature of trauma" written by the survivor and not by "nontraumatized authors."

Trauma and memory of violence have an intricate and invariable link with the identity of an individual where multiple identities of one are subsided by a particular identity. War has always universalized a solitary affiliation of an individual that eventually leads to violence and prejudice against him. Stuart Hall also theorizes that identity “is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think” (222) where it is frequently related with different problematic of identity created by traumatic situations and perpetuated through single overpowering identity. Identity is never static or “an already accomplished fact,” instead, identity as a construct is incomplete, and is relentlessly in a process of formation in its cultural, temporal, and spatial associations. He opines that identity does not proceed in a linear “straight, unbroken line,” but operates in a “dialogic relationship” between “the vector of similarity and continuity; and the vector of difference and rupture” (226). The continuity of past or history through its different resonances ground one in it, and the discontinuity with the event reminds one of its dissociation from it. Continuity and disjunction persist simultaneously and consecutively which, at large, influences an individual and his multiple affiliations.

Further this relation of identity and violence with trauma is conceptualized by Amartya Sen in his groundbreaking book *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*. “One’s sense of identity,” as Sen argues, “can be a source not merely of pride, and joy, but also of strength and confidence” (1). Identity of an individual contributes to the strength of warmth among members of one community, and excludes many people from their multiple affiliations. But war and violence not only disintegrates Nation, but also decentralizes inner selves and identities of both an individual, and a community. The very sense of identity instigates violence by “... the imposition of singular and belligerent identities on gullible people, championed by proficient artisans of terror” (Sen 2). The retrieval of memory and history simultaneously foster crisis of identity in one’s life, who is suffering from the trauma of loss and displacement. Sen also points out that a person has multiple affiliations, and plural associations. One’s identity is required for getting recognition in society or community. But particularizing and prioritizing one identity of an individual over the other, either through the choice of his particular community, or his own, is inescapably conducive of violence. “Plural affiliations” are inflicted upon with the baggage of one single identity thereby dispensing all the other in the backdrop of varied events of tumult. Sen critiques these very act of universalizing of one identity effacing the others of an individual, or a group that consequently produces existential crisis.

III

For history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it somewhat differently, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence. (Caruth 18)

“History of trauma” that Hiroko encounters from the very beginning of the novel in Nagasaki leaves many loosened ends of historical traumatic threads to be experienced properly in the later years. “War fractures every view” (Shamsie 6) where everything “distilled and distorted into its most functional form” (7). The wartime Japan creates an enigma in the life of people, an enigma in experiencing trauma “... not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known, but in an inherent latency within the experience itself” (Caruth 17). Hiroko recurrently resides with the exploits of the blast through her latent agony. She is a bearer of historical truth, where both the physical and psychological ineradicable marks of charred history recuperate repeatedly conducting trauma. The opened

up disgorged hell of commotion has transfigured her father, Matsui Tanaka, into a death body of scaly reptile, and her fiancé, Konrad Weiss, “a long shadow” stuck on a stone. She is transmogrified into “a figure out of myth,” myth that is both personal and national. She is collectively preserving Japan, its disaster, and Konrad’s soul within her. The ugly relic of burnt marks on her back even sets into motion her intimate moments with Sajjad. She is iteratively haunted by the thoughts of loss propelled by unfamiliar images of death: “I keep thinking of Nagasaki. You said to me once that Delhi must seem so strange and unfamiliar, but nothing in the world could ever be more unfamiliar than my home (Azalea Manor) that day” (Shamsie 99).

Freud renders that war, and violence, at large, bound to efface the conventional attitude towards death, where on the one hand death is something serious abolition of life of loved ones, and on the other hand it is reduced to casual nothing as if we were well aware of the inevitability of its happening. The death of the loved ones of Hiroko in Nagasaki somewhat makes her feel both haunting and inexorable. But these pasts impact on her present. After her marriage with Sajjad, her past does not allow her to get accommodated and accepted in Sajjad’s family. The radiation effect of blast even kills her first unborn child and her bomb affected identity with distorted past transforms her son Raza into a “bomb-marked mongrel.” She is suffering from the “... stigma of being defined by the bomb. Hibakusha” (Shamsie 222). “... Nagasaki had taught her everything to know about loss but in truth it was only horror with which she had become completely familiar” (Shamsie 239). Whenever she tries to collect the fragments of her past to decorate her present, the trauma of history shatters it. Her story is not about bomb only, but about “voyage” or survival after it. The unfurling wings of history engulf anything thereby creating trauma that cannot be relinquished.

The Hindu-Muslim riots during the Partition of India encapsulate the life of Sajjad and Hiroko in 1947. The atrocities against Muslims have coerced them to migrate in newly formed nation, Pakistan. These political events have encroached on the personal domain of Muslims inasmuch as threatening Sajjad to leave his family and homeland. These events are inextricably connected with the mind and psyche of these victims: “The breach in the mind—the conscious awareness of the threat to life—is not caused by a pure quantity of stimulus, Freud suggests, but by “fright,” the lack of preparedness to take in a stimulus that comes too quickly” (Caruth 62). The upheavals of Partition create the “breach” in the mind of Ashraf ruminating on: “My Dilli. But today it was absence, not belonging, that the Old City echoed back at him” (Shamsie 103). He takes refuge in Istanbul with Hiroko to avoid the carnage of the riots. These massacres are like “stimulus” that frightens him too quickly to react properly. Sajjad relates, “They said I’m one of the Muslims who chose to leave India. It can’t be unchosen. They said, Hiroko, they said I can’t go back to Dilli. I can’t go back home” (Shamsie 125). On the spur of a moment, he decides to leave so that he will not directly face the threats impinged on the lives of Muslims.

Caruth claims that trauma in the mind is related to the threat of death, not in direct experience, but in missing of the experience, not being experienced in time, but fully known to it. The “Dilli” haunts him, and makes him aware of the wilderness of loss. The complete whole of the family of Ashraf crumbles and falls apart. Some are brutally murdered, and some distanced from their family. War can only dissociate and disintegrate family relations and different bonding. The relations of Weiss-Burtons and Tanaka-Ashraf also get troubled by the havocs of turmoil. Ashraf comments, “... we both had too much loss in our lives, too early. It made us understand those parts of the other which were composed of absence” (Shamsie 163). The history has only fabricated trauma in his life.

Raza Konrad Ashraf, a polyglot, not only amalgamates in himself plural linguistic consciousnesses, but also assimilates multiple histories, and their traumatic discomfiture. He is a hybrid child of Muslim, and Japanese blood with Indian origin residing in Pakistan oscillating between Ashraf and Hazara identity. He is mired in the loss that he has inherited from his parents. Through him history is re-presented. In the land of migrants, Karachi, he somewhat unconsciously gets involved with the Mujahideens during 1980s Soviet-Afghan War. Salma exposes her discriminating mind through these words that: “Nagasaki. The bomb. No one will give their daughter to you in marriage unless they’re desperate, Raza. You could be deformed” (Shamsie 189). The shadow of the blast has not only casted him out of Mujahir community, but also get him rejected by Salma. His posing of Hazara identity, for a while, changes his life utterly. His father was shot dead; he got estranged from his mother, and even suspected as the murderer of his only emotional recourse, Harry Burton. His self chosen identity and sense of responsibility compelled him to get arrested instead of Abdullah. His dream of becoming a lawyer has been supplanted by different historical crisis. The wakes of 9/11 attacks, the Soviet-Afghan War, and the derogatory outlook for Muslims as a whole have formed a perennial impact on his life. His multiple identities in the backdrop of two devastating historical events have affected his life and psyche to the fullest.

IV

Walking the lanes of memory, especially in traumatic repetitions, and retrievals, Freud says, “... wake the dreamer up in another fright.” In the incident of Raza being called “deformed” by Salma, all “Hiroko could think was: the bomb. In the first years after Nagasaki she had dreams in which she awoke to find the tattoos gone from her skin, and knew the birds were inside her now, their beaks dripping venom into her bloodstream, their charred wings engulfing her organs” (Shamsie 222). This haunting memory of being a “Hibakusa” and its recurring in her dreams can be identified with Freud’s story of a father’s dream about his dead son in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Caruth explains the dream with Freudian remarks that the dream is not related to inner wishes, as one can find in Hiroko, but it is a direct relation to a catastrophic reality outside like the radiation effects of the bomb in her life. The dream, the latent memory points to the horrible reality of child’s death. These dreams of Hiroko even when Raza was in her womb form “the very relation of the psyche to reality” (Caruth 95). These memories of loss, death and its reverberations seem to “... strung together different memories of Nagasaki as though they were rosary beads” (Shamsie 96). Her life is irreparably trodden by the trails of these memories.

Memory also generates trauma by forming a chasm between the present situation, and the unattainability of something coveted suppressed in memory. Hiroko yearns to experience:

... the faint sound of her father preparing paint on his ink stone, the deepening purple of a sky studded by clusters and constellations of light in an evening filled with the familiar tones of her neighbours’ voices, the schoolchildren rising to their feet as she entered the classroom, the walks along the Oura with Konrad, dreaming of all that would be possible after the war.... (Shamsie 96)

Her treading on the path of memory which she “want,” she desires, are all burned, destroyed and demolished, and now she does not want to go back to Japan that reduces one into a bomb survivor. Memory always produces nostalgia in the mind of Hiroko. The gap between the past happiness, and present sorrow of unfulfilment is evocative of nostalgia:

Strange, Hiroko thought, that ... she had never allowed nostalgia to take up more than the most fleeting of residencies in her life, despite all that glittered

in her memory—the walks through Nagasaki with Konrad, the ease of life in the Burton household, the Istanbul days of discovering love with Sajjad. (Shamsie 129-130)

She is captivated in a memory of lost shadows of different relations and bonds. The cold blooded blight of Nagasaki creates a “parable of wound” in her life. It “... is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available” (Caruth 4). The recurring harpings on the images of different losses through memory emerges into trauma in the life of Hiroko.

The harrowing history of Partition of India frames a collage of throbbing memories in Ashraf’s mind. He craves for that “world of his Mohalla,” “Dilli,” which is already vanished. The “Old City” only echoes absence. Relocating in Karachi is a compulsion for him. He is left with the fragments of memory of his friends, family, and his familiarity with “Dilli” streets thereby only holding few “kite strings attached to air at either end,” or memory of those days. He has abandoned the security of living in a joint family, a home in the wilderness of loss. Partition has snatched his dreams of becoming lawyer from him, but he has kept that alive in his memory with a hope to relive it through his son Raza’s becoming lawyer. Leaving home as a Mujahir is an immense loss hovering in the psyche of a survivor like Sajjad. The unleashed dilemma of religious riots prioritizes only his Muslim identity over his Indian roots. But religion is not, and cannot be, a person’s all encompassing identity: “... Sajjad realized that atrocities committed on Muslims touched him far more deeply than atrocities committed by Muslims—he knew this to be as wrong as it was true” (Shamsie 88). Muslims are seen through “the narrow prism” of their religious beliefs.

Raza Konrad Ashraf fuses within himself myriad pasts in the form of diverse cultural and ethical memory that influence his life. Though he has never experienced the history of his parents, he is a reservoir of inheriting their traumatic memories. His very name holds two histories of Nagasaki bombing, and Partition of India. Shamsie narrates that:

There was something she had learnt to recognize after Nagasaki, after Partition: those who could step out from loss, and those who would remain mired in it. Raza was the miring sort, despite the inheritance he should have had from both his parents, two of the world’s great forward-movers. (Shamsie 146)

Caruth says, “... the repetition of the traumatic experience in the flashback can itself be retraumatizing...” (63) as we find in Raza. His identity of Japanese parentage is pitied by Salma that creates an inescapable sense of trauma and of unjust treatment. Hiroko has never exposed him to fairy tales but engaged him in apprehending the real histories of terrible massacres and flashes of violence: “He knows there was a bomb. He knows it was terrible, and that my father died, and the man I was engaged to died” (Shamsie 178). The stench of tormenting history is inherited by him. Being “a bomb-marked mongrel,” he recognizes the reality of the destructive forces imposed on his psyche, as Caruth claims, “... the formation of history as the endless repetition of previous violence” (63) only produces trauma.

The idea of “Postmemory” of Marianne Hirsch used in her essay “The Generation of Postmemory” illustrates the “inter- and trans-generational transmission of trauma” (107) in second generation Holocaust survivors for whom though the events are over, its trauma is transmitted through history, and myth. Hirsch has drawn Eva Hoffman’s notion of “hinge generation,” or “the second generation after every calamity” from her book *After Such*

Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust. Hirsh describes Postmemory as "... the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right" (103). Raza is a "hinge generation" possessing the history of Nagasaki and Partition that he has never lived rather communicated in "flashes of imagery" and "broken refrains." Raza characterizes experiences of those who are dominated by narratives that precede their birth, whose own belated stories are displaced by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that they can neither understand nor recreate.

Hirsch has conceptualized the "Post" of "Postmemory" as being both "specifically inter- and trans-generational act of transfer and the resonant aftereffects of trauma" (106). It is not typical experienced memory, but memories encountered through flashbacks and stories, as Raza learns from reading history books. Raza is situated in "an uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture," between past and present, where the name Raza Hazara seems to him more balancing than Raza Konrad Ashraf. But this concept of "Postmemory" can be critiqued taking recourse to the ideas of Kali Tal. She opines that trauma of memory cannot be truly represented until and unless one experiences it personally. Textual representations like public history "... are mediated by language and do not have the impact of traumatic experiences" (15). The meaning of a particular "sign" always gets dislocated whenever it is transmitted from the survivor to the "reader." Therefore, the "reexperience of trauma" in Raza will always be derived from his own experience, and not from the read experiences of history or his mother.

Trauma haunts the entire life of Raza: "Hiroko saw that he would be haunted now, by this, for the rest of his life" (Shamsie 243). The memory of losing his father due to his faults will haunt Raza all through his life. His guilt has distanced him from his "adorable" mother. He stays in Afghanistan away from America and Hiroko because he does not want to face his embedded guilt borne out of his father's death. He cannot even forget the "terrible afternoon" of 1983 with the Pashtun commander. He blames himself all through his life for turning Abdullah into a Mujahideen. This sense of responsibility emerged from his lived experiences of his traumatic past haunts him for long twenty years. His decision of leaving his house at the age of seventeen with Abdullah to join Afghan insurgents group and the death of Sajjad during his search for Raza suggests that "... the shape of individual lives, the history of the traumatized individual, is nothing other than the determined repetition of the event of destruction" (Caruth 63). Freud points out that we take recourse to mourning to overcome from it after certain period of time where "... ego is left free and uninhibited once again after the mourning-work is completed" (205). Whereas Raza is suffering from Melancholia that is:

... characterized by profoundly painful depression, a loss of interest in the outside world, the loss of the ability to love, the inhibition of any kind of performance and a reduction in the sense of self, expressed in self-recrimination and self-directed insults, intensifying into the delusory expectation of punishment. (Freud 204)

He is under the duress of melancholic depression that sways on his self esteem to the fullest. His feeling of remorse engulfs his conscience and traumatizes his whole existence.

V

One's identity is often decided by the community to which an individual belongs: "To Japanese she (Hiroko) was nothing beyond an explosion-affected person; that was her defining feature" (Shamsie 49). Her "Hibakusha" identity creates a lot of discriminations in her and Raza's life. The manifold enduring affect of history, memory, and its trauma on her identity disintegrate her self from within. The "burnt shadows" on her back are the witness of her unstable bitter past that can never be erased from her identity. Sen quotes:

"The Jew is a man," Jean-Paul Sartre argued in *Portrait of the Anti-Semite*, "whom other men look upon as a Jew; ... it is the anti-Semite who *makes* the Jew." (7)

The anti-Japanese attitude makes Hiroko Japanese. Hiroko is more a human than a radiation affected Japanese, but her Japanese identity overpowers all her other identities of survival. She is the "... misdescription of people belonging to a targeted category, and an insistence that the misdescribed characteristics are the only relevant features of the targeted person's identity" (Sen 7).

Hiroko Tanaka, getting married to a Muslim, is located in varied places which ingrains in her fragmented identity. Her identity is continuously developing by both connecting and dissociating from her past. Migration from one place or culture to another always problematizes one's identity. Constructing a pure single identity of a survivor like Hiroko is neither desirable nor possible. She is constitutive of multiple identities—a Japanese with half Fuller parentage, a Mujahir and Muslim Wife, an American, and the most important a mother without any national or ethical affiliation. "None of them can be taken to be the person's," as in the case of Hiroko, "only identity or singular membership category" (Sen 5). Diversity of her identity on the basis of residence, geographic origin, gender, class, politics, profession, employment even food habits make her an associate of heterogeneous communities. But designating and discriminating her only as a "Hibakusha" or a victim of radiation invariably denies her own choice of affiliations. One is identified and recognized by society, but at the end she has her own autonomous identifications that cannot be a part of broad monolithic identity without any specificity. "But I don't want you to think my life is haunted by the past," Hiroko continued, "I'm told most Hibakusha have survivor's guilt. Believe me, I don't" (Shamsie 179). She yearns for specificity of her identity, and not a common identity of being an atomic bomb victim.

A Japanese school teacher, with multiple linguistic consciousnesses, falls in love with a German man Konrad whom she eventually loses after the bomb blast. Even it leaves an indelible mark on her back, that distorts her physical identity. Her arriving at Delhi again identifies her as a "wounded bird" where her love with Sajjad relocates her as a Muslim wife compelled to migrate to Karachi. Here, Hiroko Ashraf oscillates in between her Mujahir Muslim identity, and bomb affected Japanese association. Neither was she accepted in Ashraf's family, nor in Mujahir community of Pakistan. And finally, her life in America with Weiss family ends in becoming a stranger. She can sense the "silence that followed was the silence of intimates who find themselves strangers. The dark birds were between them, their burnt feathers everywhere" (Shamsie 362). Instability perpetuated by socio-political circumstances has only fragmented her into variegated identities and affiliations without any autonomous fixed roots. She is a victim of ruptured identities and recognitions.

“I’m Indian,” declared by Sajjad Ashraf but not recognized by others. Sajjad says, “Either way it won’t matter me. I will die in Dilli. Before that, I will live in Dilli. Whether it’s in British India, Hindustan, Pakistan—that makes no difference to me” (Shamsie 40). Sajjad is ensconced between two affiliations—ethical or religious, and national. He is a Muslim, but has conceived India as his “home.” For him “Dilli” will remain same as it was earlier uninterrupted by any socio political riots. The splitting of the nation into India and Pakistan fragments him into Muslim and Indian. Either he can be Indian or Muslim. One’s identity is often decided by the group or community to which he belongs. The uprisings of Partition start prioritizing his religious identity over other identities, and exclude him from all other communal affiliations. Sen opines that each of us belongs to diverse affiliations and one “singular affiliation” cannot justify one’s belonging. The importance of our identity need not obliterate and “disregard” the importance of others. Sajjad is taken only as a Muslim thereby eradicating his all other belongings. The atrocities against Muslims have forced him to choose Pakistan with the world of his Mohalla engraved in his mind: “They said, Hiroko, they said, I can’t go back to Dilli. I can’t go back home.” His home is lost forever, he is “... a man who understood lost homelands and the impossibility of return” (Shamsie 313).

Raza Konrad Ashraf alias Raza Hazara is a site in whom various cultural and national identities are clashing. He is a hybrid of Muslim and Japanese parentage with Indian origin and German connection in name. Owning multifarious languages simultaneously include their identities. He is not a pure Mujahir, but a “bomb-marked mongrel”: “He wanted to reach into his own name and rip out the man whose death was a foreign body wedged beneath the two Pakistani wings of his name” (Shamsie 191). The rejection from Salma due to his mother’s Japanese identity makes him feel like a cast out, a nomad like the Afghans of 1982 Pakistan. He vacillates between his dual identity of Raza Ashraf and Raza Hazara. His identity is further entangled when he is taken as an American espionage of CIA by these Afghan insurgents. At a tender age of seventeen, Raza is victimized by his crisis of instable identity where multiple problematic affiliations intersecting one another. Sen retorts:

We do belong to many different groups, in one way or another, and each of these collectivities can give a person a potentially important identity. We may have to decide whether a particular group to which we belong is—or is not—important for us. (24)

Raza fails to decide the relative importance of one particular belonging. His joining the Mujahideens not only tolls his father’s life but also costs him his future dreams: “Identities can be focused on the past what used to be true of one, the present—what is true of one now, or the future—the person one expects or wishes to become, or the person one fears one may become” (Oyserman 69). Raza’s past in Karachi where he went to Pashtun Mujahideen camp with Hazara identity, his present identity of translator in A and G system in Afghanistan during 9/11 terrorist attacks, and his future identity of being accused as a Jihadi Muslim helped in killing Harry Burton are the three different levels of development of his identity. His past guilt forms his present but his future is also etched by his past. His past fault of going to Mujahideen camp transforms him into a Taliban in the suspicious eyes of Steve. In the wake of 9/11, an aura of Islamophobia enmeshes the mind of Americans. They reject the specificities of Muslim community. Kim when helps Abdullah to reach his family she starts attacking Islam. Abdullah gets disappointed that “... everyone just wants to tell you what they know about Islam, how they know so much more than you do, what do you know, you’ve just been a Muslim your whole life, how does that make you know anything?” (Shamsie 352). Even Raza feels the “powerlessness of being merely Pakistani.” America is paranoiac and prejudiced about Muslims. Kim’s false suspicion coerces her to call police for

arresting Abdullah. But the sense of responsibility conducive of his Hazara identity makes him get arrested instead of Abdullah. Identity breeds responsibility. Sen says:

... the denial of plurality as well as the rejection of choice in matters of identity can produce an astonishingly narrow and misdirected view. Even the current divisions around the events of September 11 have placed Muslims on all sides of the dividing lines, and instead of asking which is the right Islamic position, we have to recognize that a Muslim can choose among several different positions on matters involving political, moral, and social judgments without ceasing to be, for that reason, a Muslim. (67)

Specificity of an identity and one's multiple associations with its responsibility should not be disregarded.

VI

Thus, this paper intensively analyses how in the heterogeneous world of *Burnt Shadows* multifarious traumatic history, its memory, and polarized autonomous identities merge to contend and relate with each other. Identity of an individual always gets problematized and universalized in a traumatic situation etched out of violence and history. History and its haunting traumatic memory not only degrade one's psyche, but also fracture his identity thereby supplanting multiple affiliations by a particular singularized identity and generating utter existential crisis. Shamsie's novel portrays itself in the very Epigraph that quotes Agha Shahid Ali's words from his poem "A Nostalgist's Map of America": "... a time / to recollect / every shadow, everything the earth was choosing." It recollects every shadow of history through the memories of these three characters of Hiroko, Sajjad, and Raza, their crisis, and their overcoming of it. It is a tale which delves deep into the appalling ruinous effects of historical events of Nagasaki bombing, Partition of India, Soviet-Afghan war, and 9/11 attacks on their lives. *Burnt Shadows* is a novel about grim realities of these survivors who can retrieve the direful impact of loss and violence through their Memory. History is past but its trauma is indelible and heinous at present. Therefore, trauma lies in its ongoing survival and ceaseless affects.

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