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Gender Trauma in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*

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Letter of Approval

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Abstract

The central goal of this research is to throw light on the harsh realities regarding how much a woman can be traumatized by patriarchal ideology in Kazuo Ishiguro's A Pale View of Hills. *By applying the concept of gender trauma, this research explores gender discrimination, betrayal, effects of war, national humiliation of Japan following the Second World War as some of the important causes of women's trauma. To prove this research, the researcher has used the idea of Urvasi Bhutalia, Kamala Bhasin, Ritu Menon, Judith Herman, Kali Tal, Helen Moglen, Cathy Caurth and Dominick LaCapra who are known as the theorist of Gender Trauma. Keiko is unable to keep control over her life after the separation of her father and mother. Her mother picks up a British citizen and goes to live with him in London. Etsuko calls Keiko to come with her. But Keiko is so fascinated and trapped in her solitary cast of mind that she ultimately commits suicide. Etsuko's inability to understand Keiko is responsible for Keiko's suicidal end. Sachiko's daughter, Mariko, also commits suicide due to the similar problem faced by Keiko. In her narrative mode of dialogic interaction with Niki, the defeat of Japan and the loss of thousands of lives in atomic explosion create traumatic shocks and gaps. While living with Jiro, she witnesses constant threat of self-annihilation and unfamiliar violence. In a fierce encounter, Jiro dies. The horrible death of Jiro paralyzes Niki's mother completely. The trauma of Sachiko and Keiko is told and retold by Etsuko so that she could get rid of the agony and effect of traumatic experience. Over time she is surrounded by uncontrolled pain, agony and abnormality. Etsuko regards Japanese culture as the sole cause of increasing phenomenon of youth's suicide*.

Keywords: trauma, antisocial, patriarchal, psychic, psychological

This research probes that the issues of gender trauma in Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills* by analyzing the story joined in the novel and attempts to explore the traumatic effect over all the characters of this novel. In the novel, Etsuko muses on her own experiences as a young woman in Japan and how she fled to live in England when her daughter Niki is visiting. According to her account, after having a daughter with her Japanese spouse Jiro, Etsuko traveled to England a few years later to live with him after meeting a British man. Keiko, her older daughter, was brought to live with her and her new husband in England by her. When Etsuko and her new spouse produce a girl, she wants to name her something contemporary, but her husband prefers something Eastern-sounding. As a compromise, they settle on the name Niki, which sounds at least vaguely Japanese to her husband but perfectly British to Etsuko.

Keiko grows more reclusive and antisocial in England. Growing older, Keiko would lock herself in her room, according to Etsuko, and come out only to retrieve the dinner plate her mother would leave for her in the kitchen. Keiko commits suicide as a result of this unsettling behavior, as the reader is already aware. Niki hears Etsuko say that she was rather idealistic at times. He genuinely thought that here, we might provide her with a good existence. See, Niki, I was aware of this the entire time. I always suspected she wouldn't be content here.

Etsuko mentions to her daughter Niki that Sachiko was a friend of hers when she lived in Japan. Mariko, Sachiko's daughter, is portrayed in Etsuko's memories as being incredibly reclusive and antisocial. Etsuko remembers that Sachiko had intended to bring Mariko to America together with an unnamed American soldier named Frank. There are unmistakable parallels between Sachiko's narrative and Etsuko's.

Sachiko murmurs and weeps in the moment of complete helplessness. She leaves no stone unturned in tracking down her missing husband. All her efforts end in vain. She then is offered to live as a concubine of a rich man. At first she is shocked to listen to this offer and refuses to accept it. The continuing outbreak of war and violence, sexual abuse and vulgar nature of her sex partner haunt her endlessly. She comes to develop the impression that she is dwelling in hell from which she never comes out. She is so traumatized that when her son comes to meet her with extreme difficulty, she is unable to recognize him.

This research examines how the traumatized characters like Etsuko, Keiko and her daughter Sachiko choose the mode of narrativization to minimize the unpleasant memory of traumatic agony. Directly or indirectly, most of the characters of the novel, *A Pale View of Hills*, are harmed by the effects of war, national humiliation following Japan's defeat in the Second World War. In particular, it explores the role of two female characters that are often overlooked in Ishiguro's scholarship. Two female characters in the novel, Etsuko and Sachiko are the traumatic character that undergoes difficulties while living in their homeland. After the atomic bomb was dropped, Etsuko, a Japanese woman, grows up in Nagasaki, marries a fellow Japanese guy, and has a daughter named Keiko. Etsuko leaves her first husband, immigrates to Britain with an English serviceman whom she later marries and also has a second daughter, Niki. After Keiko, the eldest daughter, hanged herself in her London flat, her daughter Niki is paying her a visit.

This research intends to expose undeniably harsh realities regarding how much a woman can be traumatized by unfaithful patriarchal perfidy. Keiko is adversely affected by the threat of the disintegration of family, betrayal by her lover, increasing humiliation and the defeatist mentality. Her self-satisfaction and simplicity is

shattered to pieces. Hysteria and laughter, painful agony and inordinate intoxication cause problems in her life. The use of the perspective of gender trauma yields the finding that she is a pathetic and touching victim of disloyal patriarchal games and the uncontrolled vulgarity of demoralized person.

The major concern of the research is to find the hidden heartrending realities of gender trauma in *A Pale View of Hills.* As the emotional pictures of trauma get manifested, the author becomes the spokesman to the gender trauma. He grows up in community where powerless have no history as powerful have. He presents gender trauma as the important characters in *A Pale View of Hills,* which is the objective of research.

This research only sticks to the issue of the notion of the gender trauma. The insight of trauma in *A Pale View of Hills* is used neglecting other aspects to make the thesis prove the hypothesis. The characters of the stories represent the status of oppressed people that also confirms the features of Cultural Studies. However, the delimitation of the research is that it only sticks to the notion of the Trauma.

Some of the recurring motifs in Ishiguro's novels are questioned by Jessica Langer. Personal trauma, suffer or pain is a theme that appears repeatedly in Kazuo Ishiguro's writings. Langer's views in this regard include:

> Excruciating agony as the world falls apart is classic Ishiguro territory, and in many ways he seizes the drama with both hands. It's amazing how the horrifying 1930s bombshell at the start of the novel transforms into something much deeper as it goes along. The single problem with the book is the prose, which, for the first time, is so lacking in local color as to be entirely inappropriate to the task in and. One can't only admire a book's structure.

> There is something troubling about Ishiguro's prose style that took me a while to pin down, and it's this - he hardly ever uses a phrasal verb. (42)

The novelist was particularly drawn to the historic-cultural events that emerged during the postwar period. Langer believes that Ishiguro's focus on the same thematic idea compromises his intended clarity and simplicity of thought. Jessica Langer notes that Ishiguro's particular thematic predilection has resulted in significant constraints for his novels. James Markfield is yet another well-known Ishiguro critic. He dwells upon the stylistic aspect of *A Pale View of Hills*. Markfield demonstrates that the speaker or narrator's voice is not perfectly clear. Markfield expresses the following opinion:

> Kazuo Ishiguro is an unusual novelist all around. Even in the most emotional situations, his speech is consistently formal and pleasant, while remaining studiously nameless. He resists and dislikes what most novelist's relish, the particular concrete detail which pins down a scene to a locality and a time. He also opposes the metaphor, which is the other most tangible component of writing. Towards the end of *A Pale View of Hills*, it reveals itself to be a variation on Great Expectations, but a less Dickensian novelist can hardly be imagined. Dickens only constructs a plot, one feels, so that he can write about the characters' shoes, the particular color of someone's shirt, and the particular smell of a full larder. (67)

Markfield concludes that the particular detail is interfering and irrelevant. All of his virtues are architectural. His timing and event coherence are almost unparalleled. In various passages of this story, the subversive and unconventional stylistics overshadow the central subject content.

Brett Cooke describes *A Pale View of Hills* as a detective novel. The central plot point of this story is the main character's investigative search for her lost parents. The protagonist's search yields numerous thematic conclusions and hints. Cooke puts out the following viewpoint:

> Ishiguro's fifth novel, *A Pale View of Hills*, tells the story of a Japanese woman who faces lots of upheavals in her life. She pursues her lifelong quest to find the true happiness. She was born to two English parents in Shanghai's International Settlement and lived there until she was nine years old, when her mother and father vanished without explanation a few weeks apart. In the absence of her parents, Keiko is shipped to England to live with her aunt. (84)

According to Cooke, Keiko finally discovers her parents' destinies. The tale concludes with Keiko, now over sixty, reflecting on her life and his pursuit. Ishiguro begins by eliciting a sense of temporal displacement in the reader. He situates Keiko's story in one time period and then shifts to another.

Draper Hall emphasizes the significance of perspective in Ishiguro's novel *A Pale View of Hills*. The perspective chosen in this novel is related to its core thematic subject. Hall believes that Keiko's point of view reveals important details about the psyches of characters who are afflicted by the impact of traumatic experiences. Hall's view is briefly discussed in the following citation:

> The entire narrative is told in the first person, with Keiko as the narrator. This perspective is critical, because Ishiguro's intention is to show the unreliability of memory and the misperceptions of self. There are several times in the book when Keiko is annoyed, because someone from her past describes her as being other than whom she remembers herself to be. Keiko perceives herself to be

> one who, for the most part, has been able to keep up a good front, always maintaining respectability. (17)

According to Hall, memory is the least reliable source. It is terrible to be completely reliant on recollection. Similarly, self is deceptively strong. It is difficult to trust them in the interests of comprehensive reform. During times of crisis and disorder, memory and self appear to be readily broken. However, at times of peace and enjoyment, these two sources of power are the most important aspects for survival.

Jane Maduram identifies a number of hallucinatory narrative elements in Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*. Etsuko's increased commitment to professional ethics and eccentricity results in an eruption of insanity. Regarding this feature of Ishiguro's novel, Maduram notes the following:

> In the dreamy, almost hallucinatory world of the narrator, scenes take on an unnatural sense of resolution. The only passion existing in Etsuko's bleached life is her profession, an adult extension of the childhood games she used to play in Shanghai. Everything else seems unreal to Etsuko, who is gifted with an unusually exceptional memory. Despite this, she has been obliged to accept, in other words, that with each passing year, her life in Shanghai will grow less distinct, until one day all that will remain will be a few confused images. (47)

The backdrop of *A Pale View of Hills* is undeniably weird. No rational attitude is likely to succeed in such a setting. It is difficult to act rationally when the overall working conditions are certain to result in decline and degradation. The extraordinary power of Etsuko's recollection contrasts with the bizarre surroundings. As a result, the superiority of memory begins to falter in an embarrassing fashion.

Alfred A. Knopf is appreciative of the personal style in which Ishiguro has managed to project his view on the harmful effects of violent social transformation. Two different tendencies clearly exist in the novel. One tends to give priority to the superficial details where as other tendency adds great importance to the external details. Knopf delivers the following view in a straightforward way:

> While the recitation of so many incidental and tangential details could easily stunt a lesser book, Ishiguro carries it off with wit and flair. The book combines the slow, highly personal style of an introspective piece with the incidental additions typical of a stream-of-consciousness novel. That the novel conveys emotion without descending into drivel is amazing; both genres are equally annoying when implemented alone. The success of this blended style is largely due to the narrator's sarcasm and peculiarities. (54)

Alfred A. Knopf pinpoints the fact that Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills* is characterized by fine wit and excellent flair for perfect decorum. In addition, Knopf claims that the use of stream of consciousness technique has kept intact the freshness of modernist voices. The blending of various elements and issues in *A Pale View of Hills* makes it undeniably matchless piece of art.

Sybil Hellerung contends that the texture of modern life is badly hindered by the sudden devastations which occur in society. According to Hellerung, postmodern society is a risk society. Hellerung maintains A *Pale View of Hills* exposes the damage of modern life when it is forced to stand face to face with threat of unfamiliar disaster. His view is mentioned below:

> It is rare that one finds so delicate and translucent a work as *A Pale View of Hills*, by Kazuo Ishiguro. In the author's hands, the texture of modern life fades away to the slightest essence of perfection, tempered by hindsight and

> mellowed by experience. The story effortlessly weaves together the present and the past of the narrator, Christopher Banks, a detective who has an unusually distinct view of people and society. As he wanders through the high society of England and as a child in Shanghai, Banks seems an outsider distant not only from society but from humanity itself. (31)

In comparison to the traditional life, modern life appears to be far more secure and stronger. This sort of general perception is countered by Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*. In a risk society, hazards and problems are likely to occur at any time. So long as human beings remains lacking knowledge and unconcerned, they can enjoy the limited sense of freedom. But once they awake to the painful reality about the inherent vulnerability of modern life, they would never remain as safe and comfortable as they pretend to be.

Zuzana Foniokova contends that Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills* investigates into the inherent gap between reality and surreality. He furthermore argues that the domain of reality is easily broken. It is self-deceptive. The perception of reality at normal level is challenged by Ishiguro in this work. Foniokova is straightforward in saying that various components constitute the core essence of reality. His view is mentioned below:

> The fictional world of the novel adjusts to self-deceived mind and his wishes, dreams and products of imagination become the reality. Although more options for the interpretation of the novel's second part exist, lives in a kind of surreality which connects the realm of dreams with that of reality. In this way, *A Pale View of Hills* challenges the reader's conception of reality and of its possibilities and shows new ways of representing reality in fiction. (29)

Traditional means of portraying reality in fiction is called into question in Ishiguro's A *Pale View of Hills.* In the contemporary era, it has become necessary to dwell upon reality by taking into account some unrealistic factors as well.

Monika Fludernik highlights Ishiguro's unique technique of allowing his major characters to experience freedom. Fludernik shortly presents her view in the following citations:

> Ishiguro lets Etsuko's experience in the freedom from the restraints of reality and this peculiarity marks off *A Pale View of Hills from* his earlier novels, in which the protagonists remain caught up in the fictional reality that makes them unhappy. However, the last – short – part of *A Pale View of Hills* shows a common feature with the writer's first three books. In this part, Etsuko has returned to the realistic setting of London and, looking back at the past, regrets missing her opportunities for a better life, in particular for the fulfillment of her love affair. (66)

Ishiguro is of the opinion that one should have the bitter experiences of getting trapped in bondage and subjugation. Then one feels inwardly pushed to make efforts towards the world of freedom. Transition from the world of entrapment to the zone of costly freedom must take place for the authentic realization of how important freedomis. Keiko is trapped in the psychological confusion and social disorder. It is in this state of achieving liberation that he undergoes authentic sense of experiencing freedom.

Bruno Zerweck notices the process in which the main character Etsuko is involved. Etsuko is involved in ego identity construction. To construct ego identity, she has to undergo a journey of internalizing non-social forces. Because both social and non-social forces are necessary to construct ego identity, Etsuko has no option to

undertake any kind of journey. That is why she forsakes her comfortable life in London and comes to Shanghai. Zerweck's view regarding to the process of ego identity formation is expressed in the following citation:

> In chapter two of the individual ego identity construction, the hero Etsuko constructs her individual self-identity mainly with the family memory within collective memory as a foundation. Because of her missing parents, her self-identity produced confusion and chaos, delaying the individual ego identity construction. In return to Japan, misleading by parents as a child and selective memory as an adult to the past, Etsuko failed looking for parents and the delay's self-identity burst. But during the exploration, by modifying the mistaken interpretation of memories, Etsuko finally makes positive thinking to future development of self and then gets a positive individual ego identity. (37)

So long as Etsuko struggles in London, she does not have a chance to think about Keiko's psychological plight. After achieving the essential level of social standard, she begins to think about her genealogical root. Social success and professional standard hardly make her contented. She has to cultivate the collective sense of being tied to the broader level of family heritage. Such an awakening marks the beginning of the formation of ego identity. Etsuko's self-identity produced confusion and chaos.

Although all of these critics and reviewers have evaluated this work from various perspectives and reached various conclusions, none of them addressed the problem of trauma narrativization in Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*. The researcher says that the narrativization of trauma is worth examining because it is an undiscovered area. The trauma of Sachiko and Keiko is told and retold by Etsuko so that she could get rid of the agony and effect of traumatic experience. By mobilizing

the theoretical insights of theorists of cultural, historical and gender trauma, the researcher examines this topic.

The researcher has developed the concept of Gender Trauma. The researcher quotes most of popular gender trauma theorists and their ideas. With this methodological conception, the researcher proceeds to produce thorough the analysis of the text. Regular library visit and consulting the proper websites can facilitate the research work. In addition, the researcher will consult different websites and external links to collects the pertinent ideas. The researcher collects all the advices and inducements from the respected teachers and professors.

This research aims at exploring how traumatic memories are articulated through narration in Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills.* In this novel, the suicidal end of Keiko inflicts traumatic shame and humiliation in her mother Etsuko who leaves her Japanese husband, marries a British man and comes to live in London. The instability of recollection is central to Etsuko's account of postwar Japan in *A Pale View of the Hills*. It is evident in the unexplained gaps and omissions, many of which are voluntary, as well as the narrator's and the other characters' general reluctance to discuss the past in detail.

In *A Pale View of Hills,* Kazuo Ishiguro subtly explores how gendered trauma impacts the female characters, especially in the context of post-war Japan. The novel's women suffer both from their personal losses and the societal expectations placed upon them as women, mothers, and wives. This reflection on gendered trauma is especially evident in the experiences of the two main female characters, Etsuko and Sachiko.

Etsuko, the narrator, is a Japanese woman living in England, grieving the loss of her daughter, Keiko, who committed suicide. Her reflections reveal not only the trauma of motherhood, particularly the trauma of losing a child, but also the gendered pressures she faces. As a mother, Etsuko is expected to be the nurturer and protector, yet she reflects on her emotional distance from Keiko, who struggled with adapting to life in England after their move from Japan.

Etsuko's trauma is deeply intertwined with her role as a woman. Throughout the novel, she grapples with feelings of guilt and inadequacy as a mother, emotions that are compounded by societal expectations of motherhood and womanhood. Etsuko's gendered experience is magnified by cultural expectations in both traditional Japanese and Western contexts. In post-war Japan, women's primary role was still seen as domestic, and Etsuko's failure to meet these expectations—especially her inability to save Keiko from her fate—results in profound psychological distress.

Sachiko, a woman Etsuko befriends in post-war Nagasaki, offers a contrasting experience of gendered trauma. Sachiko is a single mother, attempting to navigate the uncertain terrain of post-war Japan while dreaming of escaping to America with her daughter, Mariko. Sachiko's story reveals the difficulty of existing as a single mother in a patriarchal society. She is viewed with suspicion and pity by those around her, and her decisions regarding her daughter are constantly judged.

Sachiko's trauma is closely linked to the societal pressure to conform to patriarchal norms. She has no stable male figure in her life and is left to raise Mariko on her own. Her relationship with an American soldier, Frank, offers the false hope of escape, but it also reflects the unequal power dynamics between Western men and Japanese women in post-war Japan. Sachiko's trauma is further exacerbated by her inability to protect Mariko from the dangers around them, such as the mysterious

"woman in the river," a shadowy figure that may represent the trauma of displacement or the loss of traditional cultural identity. Sachiko's desire to leave Japan for the West can be seen as an attempt to escape both the personal and gendered trauma she faces in a society that marginalizes women.

Mariko, Sachiko's young daughter, also reflects the trauma of living as a female in post-war Japan. She is a withdrawn and disturbed child, deeply affected by the instability of her mother's life. Mariko's trauma can be seen as an inherited form of gendered trauma, passed down through the unresolved psychological issues of her mother. Her isolation and distance from her mother, Sachiko, are symptoms of the broader societal neglect of women's emotional and psychological needs.

Mariko's detachment from her mother mirrors Keiko's eventual detachment from Etsuko, suggesting a cyclical pattern of trauma that is transmitted across generations of women. The trauma experienced by these characters is not solely personal but is also shaped by their societal positions as women in a patriarchal world.

The novel as a whole reflects the gendered trauma of women living in post-war Japan, a society struggling to rebuild itself while holding onto traditional values. Women like Etsuko and Sachiko are caught between the demands of tradition and the uncertainty of modernity, leading to profound psychological consequences. The novel subtly critiques the way these gendered expectations contribute to the trauma experienced by women, particularly in their roles as mothers and daughters.

Through the depiction of Etsuko, Sachiko, and Mariko, Ishiguro sketches how trauma is not just a result of personal loss or suffering but is deeply shaped by the societal roles imposed on women. Their struggles with motherhood, societal judgment, and personal guilt are all compounded by the gendered expectations of the post-war world they inhabit.

In *A Pale View of Hills*, Kazuo Ishiguro delicately portrays the ways in which women's trauma is linked to their gender roles and societal expectations. Etsuko, Sachiko, and even Mariko represent different facets of gendered trauma, particularly in their roles as mothers, caretakers, and women living in a patriarchal society. Their suffering is not only personal but also a reflection of the broader societal pressures and cultural shifts that define their identities. By exploring these themes, Ishiguro sheds light on the often invisible trauma experienced by women, shaped by their gender and the roles they are expected to play in society.

Both Etsuko and her father-in-law, Ogata-San, express a "selfish desire not to be reminded of the past" and wish Etsuko to "forget these things." Mrs. Fujiwara exists only in limbo, reminding Etsuko that the tragedy is 'all in the past now'. The pain of the atomic explosion and its awful aftermath must be forgotten or remembered differently, as Etsuko's reminiscences of postwar Nagasaki confirm: a specific day in the harbor caught in the midst of frenetic reconstruction; the cacophony creating more optimism than revulsion.

She also recalled a period when her daughter Keiko was happy. In the reflective story *A Pale View of Hills*, Etsuko, a widow now residing in the English countryside, reflects on her life in postwar Japan. The story is set in the present. The tale of Sachiko and her daughter Mariko is another that parallels Etsuko's; as the plot clearly shows, it has a powerful undercurrent to Etsuko's memorable story.

Interestingly, the story of Sachiko and Mariko can be understood as a premonitory cliché in that it foreshadows Etsuko's departure (to England) and Keiko's death. The tough relationship between Sachiko and her daughter Mariko mirrors the difficulty between Etsuko and Keiko, who share the same sense of hopeless incomprehension that led to the latter's death. Some have stated that

Etsuko's life events are alternately represented in the subplot with Sachiko and her daughter.

Keiko's suicidal end leaves memorable traces of traumatic memories in Etsuko and her younger daughter, Niki. The suicidal end of Keiko is noticeable to the disintegration of Etsuko's family, her disappearance from her father, her inability to adapt to social atmosphere of Britain, national humiliation of Japan following the second world war are some of the factors that contribute to the suicidal end of Keiko.

The researcher makes use of the theoretical concept of Gender Trauma to analyze the text. The word 'trauma' derived from the Greek word, which indicates the 'server wound' or 'injury' that creates long lasting damage to the psychological development of a person often leading neurosis. The issue of trauma comes in the literature with the fragmented memory, which appears as the form of the writing psychological categories of the stories and the novel. In gender studies, we get complete information about human development, sexual differences, origin of discrimination and oppression on women and like that. Both gender and feminism are closely connected.

Trauma is the result of extremely upsetting, frightening, or stressful situations that are either beyond our control or too tough for us to handle. It could be a single incident or a series of related ones that take place over time. Trauma is a widespread issue. It happens when someone is exposed to an extremely upsetting or potentially fatal event or sequence of events that has a long-lasting negative impact on their functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, and/or spiritual well-being.

The text *The Other Side of Silence* by Urvasi Bhutalia, furnishes the essential ideas of gender trauma. She says "to begin with, many people have deeply submerged memories they would rather forget. Some have a lot to hide and to loss by publicly

recounting what happened to them" (42). In a moment of catastrophe tens of thousands of "women were abducted at the time, and forcibly married into households of men belonging to another faith. Some women were later returned in a rather poorly- conceived fashion through an agreement between two governments" (21). However, a lot of them converted before going on to hide who they really were. Digging up this past is not something that many are eager to undertake.

Like Bhutaila, Kamala Bhasin explains "women encountered several men who had been involved in various kinds of atrocities, including some who had murdered sisters, wives, and mothers in the interest of protecting them from violence by the other side" (87). The truth is that violence against women is intolerable. Ritu Menon states that women are susceptible to a range of "harsh forces like sexual molestation, harassment, exclusion, and subjugation" (75). Additionally, men who sexually assault minors are essentially shielded from punishment. Without corroborating evidence, prosecuting abusive individuals is difficult, if not impossible.

The most mysterious thing is that Keiko begins to alienate herself from others in London. She confines herself in a solitary room. She does not come out despite the continuous efforts of her mother, Etsuko, to socialize her. Only when Etsuko's second daughter, Niki, compels Etsuko to talk about Keiko, then Etsuko begins to recall how Keiko used to live, act and react in the midst of her growing alienation. The following extract exemplifies how Etsuko is forced to recollect the painful past associated with her elder daughter, Keiko:

> She seemed satisfied and with some vague comment returned to her book. In many ways Niki is an affectionate child. She had not come simply to see how I had taken the news of Keiko's death; she had come to me out of a sense of mission. For in recent years she has taken it upon herself to admire certain

> aspects of my past, and she had come prepared to tell me things were no different now, that I should have no regrets for those choices I once made. In short, to reassure me I was not responsible for Keiko's death. (10)

Keiko's suicidal end is caused by several factors which need to be enumerated. The separation of her mother from her father, Jiro, is one of the most important factors that mark the beginning of her traumatic life. She is born out of the union between her Japanese mother and father. Her mother abandons her when she goes to live with her second husband who is a British citizen.

The researcher can apply the notion of gender trauma because of Etsuko's unhappy and aimless life. When women are obliged to embrace conventional gender roles while also retreating from new modernist roles, tension and catastrophe develop. In their pursuit for new experiences and freedom, women face a number of challenges that both slow and accelerate their journey toward transformation. They are thus disturbed and disappointed by the contradicting approach. The most well-known researcher on gender trauma is Judith Herman. She reveals the following about the central principle of gender trauma theory:

> The adaptations and responses women typically develop throughout their lives as a result of chronic abuse are shaped and determined by multiple factors. These factors include gender socialization into traditional notions of femininity, sexism, racism, poverty and other social conditions of their lives. The ways in which women are socialized to internalize these experiences and women's greater social powerlessness resulting from gender inequality lead to significant gender differences in women's mental health issues and needs. (78)

The way women are raised in society sets them apart from men. No matter how hard woman works to be equal to males, they remain significantly different since they

grow up imbibing different types of standards and beliefs. Internalized standards and conduct compel women to act and behave in unique ways. The demonstration of diversity puts individuals at odds with society. That is why it produces traumatic suffering. These distinctions influence how women's problems are most commonly diagnosed inside the mental health system.

Furthermore, the main analytical base is Kali Tal's concept of how women are traumatized in patriarchal society. Women are subjected to a variety of unpleasant influences, including sexual molestation and harassment; exposure to these hazards and pitfalls traumatizes them. Tal's book, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literature of Trauma*, focuses heavily on this element of women's suffering. Furthermore, men who sexually abuse adolescents are virtually exempt from punishment. A significant portion of the psychiatric profession believes that teenage girls fantasize about having sex with their fathers or stepfathers. These kind of fantasies are typical of development. Prosecuting abusive men is difficult if not impossible without supporting evidence.

The explanations offered by "wives or girlfriends who accuse their partners of sexually abusing their children are often questioned by civil courts, and their charges are looked upon with suspcion" (Kali Tal 87). Incest is seldom reported, and prosecution is rarely successful. Pornography obsesses about "rape as a pleasurable experience for the male rapist, and often casts female children in the role of the seducers" (76). These Tal concepts are consistent with the methodological foundation of this theory.

The effect of Korean war, presence of American forces in Korean peninsula, massive presence of American armies in Japan, aggressive attack on Japanese culture weaken those youths who want to move ahead clearly with their vision of success and

security. Etsuko herself laments “The worst of days were over by then. American soldiers were as numerous as ever-for there was fighting in Korea-but in Nagasaki, after what had gone before, those were days of calm and relief. The world had a feeling of change about it” (11). Etsuko remembers her past nostalgically in the following extract:

> My husband and I lived in an area to the east of the city, a short tram of journey from the center of town. A river ran near us, and I was once told that before the war a small village had grown up on the riverbank. But then the bomb had fallen and afterwards all that remained were charred ruins. Rebuilding had got under way and in time four concrete buildings had been erected, each containing forty or so separate apartments. (11)

The dreadful devastation of bombing on Nagasaki and Hiroshima tear apart the delicate psyche and sensibility of Japanese youths. It appears that the post-world war Japan tends to head towards an unclear destination. When the country itself suffers from uncertainty and confusion, its citizens are more likely to suffer from further pain and insecurity at individual level.

The victims of the trauma demonstrate classic symptoms. They are plagued by depressed tendencies, identity issues, guilt, and shame. Their existences are insecure and exposed to unpredictable forces. Urvashi Bhutalia defines trauma in the following way:

> Trauma refers to both the experiences of being harmed by an external agent as well as the response to that experience. Youth who experience trauma may also experience emotional harm or psychic trauma which, if left untreated, can have a significant impact. Trauma typically exists along a spectrum which

> ranges from global, when an event may affect many individuals to individuals, when the trauma impacts only that individual. (13)

Depthless trauma is defined by a series of traumatic experiences that occur throughout time. Simple trauma typically refers to a single incident, such as a rape or a shooting. However, gender trauma is created by other influences that are readily apparent in society. Simple trauma has a higher risk of causing post-traumatic stress disorder. Posttraumatic stress disorder is defined as the periodic explosion of a buried traumatic trace. Complex trauma causes a more profound and convincing set of changes. These changes include emotional dysregulation, skewed thinking, and behavioral dysfunction. It also includes bad interpersonal communication behaviors.

Etsuko is a reluctant narrator of her history, continually repeating that "there is nothing to be gained in going over such matters again" (94) and her reminiscences are very much "prompted by an intense and personal emotion in the present moment of narration" (131). The return to her past is less like idle reminiscing and more like a psychological trip to release her guilt and sadness over Keiko's death. Etsuko, too, attempts to cope with her loss and guilt. Her psychological journey into the past finally reaches a moment of great relief and reconciliation.

The destruction in Nagasaki, both physical and psychological, is beyond words, and survivors find the awful experience indefinable, wishing to erase memories of the explosion. "We were all shocked, those of us who were left," says Etsuko's father-in-law, Ogata-San, who had come to see his son and daughter-in-law that summer. Ogata-San begs Etsuko to "forget these things" (58). Mrs. Fujiwara, who lost her husband and many children in the explosion, tells Etsuko that the tragedy is "all in the past now" (76). People react to the atrocity with apparent forgetfulness

and overwhelming stillness. Many of the women who survived suffered the loss of their husbands and sons.

To address women's traumatic injuries, Kamla Bhasin proposes updating and modifying all conventional methods. Bhasin marks out those new challenges towards women have cropped up dramatically in the contemporary society. Although old troubles and setbacks have disappeared, new challenges have equally appeared threatening women to relinquish their hard earned freedom and privilege. Bhasin maintains that even the derogatory remarks and the horror of sexual abuse inflict injury which can take the form of trauma. The following lines represent Bhasin's view:

> Sensitivity to ant-woman issue is a necessary part of the landscape for providing effective therapeutic support to women abuse survivors with post-traumatic stress. Many traditional psychiatrics and psychological categories and approaches are not gender sensitive and do not account for or address the way in which abuse and trauma factor into women's lives and shape women's mental health issues. Many trauma survivors who have sought mental health services have been given multiple diagnoses such as bipolar disorder; schizophrenia, paranoid type, and border line personality disorder. (61)

Kamla Bhasin does not directly hold the rigid of social structure and harsh social practices as the responsible parts for the beginning of traumatic injury. Bhasin is in favor of taking proper cautionary measures to check the outbreak of dreadful symptoms of gender trauma. Moreover, Bhasin asserts that any psychic torture and trauma undergone by women reveals its harmful effects in their bodies. By nature women are not inclined to share their inner most agony. They lack any other coping

mechanism to deal with such a terrible shock save repression. That is why it is necessary to heal their traumatic laceration in early phase.

In addition, Nagasaki, which has been given new life in Etsuko's memories, is a city of hope. Mrs. Fujiwara, who has suffered unfathomable loss, pushes Etsuko to "put all things behind us" (76), exemplifying a forward-thinking spirit found in the despair and sadness of postwar Nagasaki. Etsuko evokes the spirit of reconstruction in her memories of an expedition with Sachiko and Mariko to Inasa "in the hilly area of Nagasaki overlooking the harbor" (103). The following extract is illustrative of the point under consideration:

> Noises from the harbor followed us across the water the clang of hammers, the whine of machinery, and the occasional deep sound from a ship's horn but in those days, in Nagasaki, such sounds were not unpleasing; they were the sound of recovery and they were still capable then of bringing a certain uplifting feeling to one's spirits. (103)

This awful noise, the clash of reconstruction, is remarkably clear and harmonic in Etsuko's memory, and may be reminiscent of Ishiguro's faded impression of his home city. It should also be noted that social and political debates over the nation's future are taking place alongside the sounds of trade and industry. The novel concludes in a confrontation between Ogata-San, a staunch advocate of Japanese militarism and social feudalism, and his former student, Shigeo Matsuda.

According to Helen Moglen, gender trauma is a literary device or a theory that is concerned in the mental illness which is caused by the opposite sex and gender discrimination. The general thesis of Moglen is known as the "bimodel narrative form." Helen Moglen is theorization of gender trauma that who is repressed or dominated and subdued by the males in the novel. Helen Moglen, inn her book The

Trauma of Gender, writes how the women are historically subordinated till now. She states:

> No longer understand to be a variant of the males, as it had been since the work of Galen in the second country, a women's body was perceived as a fundamentally different from a man's. Nowhere was that essentialized difference, more remarkable than in the redefined areas of her sexual and reproductive functioning. Although female sexuality has been thought throughout the renaissance not only to have mirrored man's but to have been more intense than his more subject to the self-discipline of a female character that was naturally mature and morally developed. (19)

Helen Moglen claims that women's reproductive role makes them biologically and naturally predisposed to rearing children and taking care of the domestic sphere. In case of women's subordination, biology, instead of gender, is used to explain social difference between men and women.

Etsuko's memories bring the past to life, but it also has a physical manifestation. For example, during her five-day vacation with her mother, Niki reads through "her father's newspaper articles, and going through all the drawers and bookshelves in the house" (91). She appears to be making a concerted attempt to reproduce the time and location of her mother's memories--the Japan of the postwar era as seen and represented by her father. The following extract clarifies the point:

> This is her attempt to bridge her present existence to the Japanese past, no matter how inaccurate this past may be, as Etsuko rightly comments. She has little idea of what actually occurred during those last days in Nagasaki. One supposes she has built up some sort of picture from what her father has told her. Such a picture, inevitably, would have its inaccuracies, or, in truth, despite

> all the impressive articles he wrote about Japan, my husband never understood the ways of our culture. (90)

Niki's act of reading her father's articles about postwar Japan also represents her attempts to comprehend her mother and her mother's history. Before leaving Etsuko, she requests a postcard of Nagasaki, which she will give to a friend who has written a poem about her. Etsuko offers her an ancient calendar that had a picture for every month in the past instead of a postcard.

Similarly, one of the leading trauma theorists Cathy Caurth's famous ideas of latency argues that trauma as it first takes place in uncertain but that the survivor's uncertainty is not a simple amnesia. According to her, the person who experiences unbearable pain the psychological defense of dissolution allows life to go on but at a greater cost. Her theories support the notion that trauma is irreversible. It always comes in the form of memory. Giving a general definition of trauma in her essay entitled "*Unclaimed Experiences: Trauma and The possibility of History*" Caurth notes:

> Trauma describes over whelming experiences of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations of the soldier faced with an massive death around him, for example, who suffer this sight in a numbed state only to relieve it later on in repeated nightmares is a central and recurring images of trauma in our century. (181)

This definition of Caurth presents the catastrophic events that evoke the trauma in a person who are suffered from horror and terror that events are frequently repeated in the human mind.

Etsuko and Niki both feel bad over Keiko's suicide. On the second day of her visit to her mother, Niki asks if she can sleep in the spare room because her previous room is opposite Keiko's. The explanation for Niki's uneasy conscience is unclear. Niki serves mostly as Etsuko's reasoning voice. Niki says what any rational person would say to the mother of a suicide victim: you are not to blame. Niki states out what Etsuko cannot bear to admit to herself since she does not believe it. The following extract exemplifies the actual pattern of mother-daughter relation:

> Etsuko projects her feelings of guilt about neglecting Keiko and placing her own happiness over her daughter's onto the story of Sachiko and Mariko. Throughout the story more and more similarities between Sachiko's life and Etsuko's come to the surface. Sachiko wants to leave Japan for America in order to start a new life there, and she is not really concerned about Mariko's wishes. (85)

Etsuko left Japan after divorcing her husband, Jiro. Keiko never adjusts to English life. Etsuko only shares the narrative since it is relevant to her own story. Etsuko eventually left Japan, and she is concerned that if she hadn't, her daughter could still be alive. Not only Etsuko, but also Mariko, are characters that have been through trauma. It is apparent from the beginning that she is a peculiar and difficult youngster who does not respond to questions or judgment.

According to Kali Tal, "Even after an abuse experiences ends, experiences of violations and fear are often present for women throughout their lives, by virtue of living in a society in which violence against women and children is persuasive" (175). Judith Herman, in her book *Trauma and Recovery*, describes "coercive control as a major cause of complex post-traumatic stress. She asserts that prolonged, repeated trauma typically occurs in families and in other relationships in which the women is

unable to flee because she is under the control of the perpetrator" (176). Women face a Herculean challenge in completely escaping from traumatic events.

Sachiko and Etsuko go in search of Mariko, who has vanished from sight. They locate her "lying, curled on her side, knees hunched" (41). Mariko frequently discusses a woman she occasionally encounters by the river. The girl's mother offers a possible explanation for her daughter's psychological problems. They were residing in Tokyo during the end of the war, when conditions were terrible and "everyone who lived in Tokyo saw unpleasant things. And Mariko did too" (73). Once, Mariko sees a woman in the river, having just drowned her baby. They eventually learned that the mom killed her infant and then took her own life. This would explain not only Mariko's hallucinations about a woman, but also Sachiko's drowning of the kittens. When Etsuko first begins narrating about her life in Nagasaki immediately after the war, she briefly discusses the housing situation. The following extract throws light on this aspect of Sachiko's predicament:

> The occupants of the apartment blocks were much like us - young married couples, the husbands having found good employment with expanding firms. However, the nostalgia does not seem to be because of those circumstances, but rather because of the then existing hope that the best was yet to come. And yet I remember an unmistakable air of transience there, as if we were all of us waiting for the day we could move to something better. Although Etsuko may be just talking about moving to another house, she is referring to the hope. (87)

Mariko had given up hope of ever moving on to better things. Her second spouse died. Her eldest daughter committed suicide. Her communication with her youngest

daughter is also limited, and she believes her life is finished. So she experiences nostalgia for a time when things were different.

In his book Writing History, Working writing, Dominick LaCapra discusses trauma and the symptomatic aftermath that causes challenges with historical representation and understanding. He also discusses the importance of post-traumatic testimonials. He discusses the theoretical and historical clarification of trauma-related difficulties, and he emphasizes the need of working through by using several examples from history. He further argues:

> Since working-through is itself an articulatory practice that counteracts the compulsive effects of past-traumatic symptoms without pretending to achieve full mastery or total conscious dissolution of past traumas, it is vitally bound up with social and political action in the present, including the attempt to create intuitional conditions and norms that further desirable forms of social bonding, the viable binding of anxiety, and the integration of affect and knowledge, including empathic or compassionate relations to others. (15)

Dominick LaCapra is attempting to underline that 'working through' is an articulatory practice or painful event. It works to oppose the resolution of past traumas. If someone has been traumatized by certain experiences, he or she can try to reduce the trauma by working through it. Currently, working through is linked to social and political action. If someone is traumatized, he or she attempts to reconcile with the past through social and political action. In ‘working through’, a person attempts to gain critical distance from a situation in order to distinguish between the past, present, and future. In this meaning, “working through” encompasses institutional conditions and norms that produce social bonding; the bonding of anxiety; and the integration of affect and knowledge. It includes empathic or compassionate relationships with others.

Overall, working through is a successful method or practice for reducing or overcoming an individual's psychological or traumatic conditions.

Keiko committed suicide in her Manchester room, which Etsuko continues "bringing to mind" (95). Etsuko has recurring dreams about a girl on a swing, but she eventually discovers, "the little girl isn't on a swing at all" (96). Keiko's hanging is the primary instance of the rope image. Her mother is plagued by a picture. At the book's conclusion, when Etsuko unexpectedly frightens Mariko, asking "why are you holding that?" (173). Etsuko's sandal has a rope entangled itself in it.

When the narrator comes to talk to Sachiko, she advises him to put on proper shoe and a jacket. She is completely unable to comprehend the position in which she is compelled to live and how heartbroken her kid is to see her in this state. Only a flash of remembrance crosses her mind, and she proceeds to tell him to put on a jacket and shoes. This is compelling and convincing proof that her plight elicits compassion from the narrator. She interprets important issues in a lighthearted, inconsequential manner. The narrator's vision of reality and the victim's reaction are becoming increasingly incompatible. The following lines are illustrative of how traumatic Sachiko is:

> I rushed to the doorway and again my mother laughed. Then she told me I would have to put on proper shoes and a jacket. I remember thinking of protesting about the jacket, but then deciding not to in case the adults changed their minds, not only about the accordion, but also about this whole lighthearted mood we were enjoying. I waved casually to my mother as Uncle Philip and I set off across the front courtyard. (72)

Sachiko has kept Mariko in a sort of domestic captivity. In the novel, it is not mentioned if Mariko's sexuality adds traumatic torture to her or not. Although it is not

explicitly stated that Jiro treated her cruelly under forceful supervision, the text contains sufficient evidence to conclude that Jiro was the one who entirely disconnected her from the outside world. Mariko's utter seclusion from the outside world, combined with Jiro's repeated sexual assault, surely put her under tremendous stress. Jiro is frequently observed accompanying her. Jiro's attachment to her, no matter how strong, is purely selfish and pompous. He treats Etsuko as if she were a mere concubine. Throughout the story, it is evident that what shocks, disturbs, and haunts her is not the terrible fate of being Wang Ku's concubine, but rather the jolt of betrayal inflicted by her husband.

The situation has changed so dramatically that it would be impossible to get his mother back on track. The following sentences provide insight on the narrator's furious rage and remorse for being completely incapable of dealing with a tragic and torturous destiny:

> She was sitting very upright and as I appeared in the doorway, she looked at me and made another giggling sound, as if she were enjoying a private joke and trying to suppress her laughter. It dawned on me then that Sachiko was weeping, and I knew, as I had known throughout that punishing run home, that my mother was gone. I now realized was an impostor: someone not in the least capable of controlling this bewildering world that was unfolding all around me. (74)

The narrator comes to the conclusion that huge forces collided and fought. These forces are so powerful and overwhelming that individuals lack the ability to control them. The narrator goes on to question himself about who has access to another person's heart. Sachiko has to pay the price for his father's malicious actions. Jiro is viciously lecherous. There is no way to get out of his grip. She has no option but to

succumb to temptation and force. That is why she does what her circumstances force her to do. The narrator considers the pressures of situational parameters.

Thus, it can be concluded that Etsuko is a powerless, deceived lady who must deal with a number of traumatic situations. Jiro's absence, exposure to violence, carnage, and death in a combat zone, as well as her moral degradation and dishonor, have all contributed to her traumatized condition. Violent mood-swinging, hysterical laughter, arid jokes, outburst of anger and aggression and the premonition of being assaulted by a man of bad intention are the characteristic features of her traumatic psyche.

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