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Acting Out of Trauma in Bahman Ghobadi's *Turtles Can Fly*

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Hom Nath Pokhrel has completed his thesis entitled “Acting Out of Trauma in Bahman Ghobadi’s *Turtles Can Fly*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from February 2nd 2013 to February 25th 2014. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Acting Out of Trauma in Bahman Ghobadi’s *Turtles Can Fly*”, submitted to the Central department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Hom Nath Pokhrel, has been approved by the undersigned members of Research Committee.

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Abstract

The present dissertation on Bahman Ghobadi's film *Turtles Can Fly* attempts to show a vivid portrayal of traumatic experience of the characters in Iraq by the violence of the Iraqi armies. Ghobadi here shows the dejected life of the characters and their traumatic experience because of their direct personal experiences of the atrocities perpetrated by the Iraqi armies on the eve of US invasion. The protagonist's delirium caused by the gaps and the disruptions of war, conflicts and violence increases the pressure of trauma which constantly rises to the surface of his mind and makes him alienated because they become the chief determinant of his life. This is an attempt at acting out the trauma which, however, does not get evacuated so that it remains melancholia.

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I: The Quest of Unburdening of Trauma in *Turtles Can Fly*

The present research is an inquiry into the traumatic experiences of the characters in the movie *Turtles Can Fly*. Studying trauma in the movie reveals the post-war traumatic disorder within the characters. Violence, problems, pains and sufferings, nostalgia etc are responsible to lead each of the characters to the world of trauma which is unsuccessfully worked through. This thesis on *Turtles Can Fly* by Bahman Ghobadi attempts to interpret the movie in terms of acting out melancholia, particularly the post-war traumatic disorder.

This project focuses on a film of world of parentless refugee children who have suffered for years under Saddam Hussein's rule, UN Sanctions, and now the impending American invasion. It explores the traumatic experience of war from the perspective of the main characters Satellite, Agrin and Hengov. We see the children's struggle and the state of their lives as the casualties of war and decisions made by Saddam Hussein and George Bush. Satellite is a slightly awkward but deeply empathic ruler of the children. As we watch him navigate his daily challenges and make impossible decisions, the poignancy of his character sears into our heart. Satellite is attracted to Agrin, who has recently arrived in the area with her armless brother, Hengov and a baby. Agrin, the newly orphaned girl who has already endured too much agony of war is in charge of caring for her maimed brother and a baby. Through flashback, we see Agrin suffering from vivid memories of war (post-traumatic stress disorder) where/when Iraqi soldiers raped her in a pond of water. Riga may or may not be her child, but Riga symbolizes the memory of her horrifying experience. Hengov, a boy who predicts the future uses his mouth to disarm the active mines, which means a millimeter-mistake detonates Hengov's life. He and his sister, Agrin, take turns carrying their little brother. This study analyses the war trauma in

Turtles Can Fly in term of traumatic theory. It follows LaCapra who talks about acting out trauma.

The primary objective of this study is to show a vivid portrayal of traumatic experience of the characters in Iraq anguish by the violence of war, colonization and state of being refugee through the critical analysis of Satellite, Agrin and Hengov. This study aims at revealing traumatic experience of war in the certain ethnic group in Iraq on the eve of American invasion. This study demonstrates the vivid picture of contemporary social structure where people are the victims of war and violence. By doing so, this study aims at finding the traumatic experience behind the dejected life of the characters, racial violence, colonial mentality and so on.

The methodological section discusses trauma theory. Trauma is the silenced aftermath of violence in which victim's survival is to overcome accident. It includes working through and acting out. Working through involves the process of 'doing something' or to engage oneself in social and political dimensions of life with the experience of sufferings and pain. Mourning is the form of working through the trauma. In acting out of trauma people fails to recover the chaos and show the symptoms of nightmares, flashbacks, post-traumatic stress disorder. Melancholia is the form of acting out of trauma.

Other part of the study applies trauma theory to analyze Bahman Ghobadi's film *Turtles can Fly* which is the representation of characters who are deeply involved to free themselves from the pang of trauma. But what they gain is loss, integration and alienation. Hence, they fail to work through the trauma which turns to be the form of melancholia. Satellite, the protagonist of the movie finds mismatch between his expectations and the events. His dream to be happy and prosperous remains unfulfilled. Moreover, he lost his leg and finds his beloved dead which results in

severe trauma within him. The somber and gloomy character Agrin has experienced the sufferings of war and she could not resist with post-war traumatic disorder. She seems badly haunted by the past events too painful to reconcile and she commits suicide. Thus, her trauma remains unredeemed. Hengov, the armless brother of Agrin is another survivor of holocaust, haunted by the memories of his escape from death. His trauma was unexpressed which results in complex trauma. He is not able to reconcile his pain after Agrin's suicide and runs shouting and crying. Thus, his trauma too remains unredeemed.

The final, concluding chapter reveals the post-war traumatic experience of the characters in Bahman Ghobadi's *Turtles can Fly*, who go through the severe sense of trauma and alienation because of their personal experience of violence during the war. Post-war stress disorder and horrible violence are responsible for the trauma to the characters in the movie. Plights, problems, pains and pang, nostalgia, terrible nightmare etc are responsible to lead each of the characters to the world of trauma which is unsuccessfully worked through.

II: Acting Out of Trauma in Bahman Ghobadi's *Turtles Can Fly*

In the field of literary studies, for the development of trauma theory, the credit goes to Sigmund Freud who initially took the job of managing and flourishing the trauma theory in the course of his treatment of the people who were being physically and mentally wounded, disturbed and disordered in World War I. These writers try their best to define trauma basing on Freud's psychoanalysis and even speak for or against it.

The trauma theory has aroused a vivid interest among the cultural and literary theorists. The reason behind why trauma theory has begun to draw the attention of theorists pushes us to look at popular culture and mass media obsessed by repetitions of violent disaster. James Berger in this regard:

It has become popular because of the succession of *Die Hard*, *Terminators* and *Robocop's*, as well as *Nightmares on Elm Street*, disease and epidemic films, and now return of the "classic" disaster films and of twistings and turbulence and the repeated sequence of miniapocalypses within each films; at "real life" cop shows; and at the news itself, that never exhausted source of pure horror. (571)

By the same token of why trauma theory has become popular and inevitable makes us look at the preoccupation with family dysfunctions, child abuse, incest, spousal abuse in the media, more strikingly on the talk show circuit. There appears to be the sense both that family is the only hope for curing all social ill and that the family is "damaged beyond hope" (571). Along with the interest in family breakdown and violence comes the interest of enigmatic figure of the survivor, the one who has faced the catastrophe and can tell us what it like is. The survivor is a kind of living "black box", a source of final knowledge of authority. Over the past fifteen years there has

been an enormous growth in the interest in eyewitness, accounts and testimonies of all kinds: by victims of child abuse, holocaust survivor, of near death experience trauma has now crossed the boundaries of psychiatry and medicinal field and has shown an increasing insistence of the direct effects of external violence in psychic disorder. This happened after the multi-culturalist's celebration of decanter and meaninglessness. Within psychiatry, recent discussion has been dominated by two disorders that entered the official diagnostic manual of the American psychiatric association in 1980s; post-colonial traumatic stress disorder and multiple personality disorder. Multiculturalists' and post-colonial critics share an interest in dismantling those institutional mechanisms that reinscribed a power structure that favored the interest and continuing privilege of certain group and nation. This interest did not arise in vacuum; however its emergence has been prepared by the Civil Right, Women's and Gay Liberation movement of the 1960s and 970s. These movements provided strength from a radical questioning of federal authority and which the protest against Vietnam War I given vent and which contributed to its conception as a 'national trauma'. In order to clarify this issue, Berger points out:

A theory of trauma in addition suggests ways of reconceptualizing important directions in critical theory itself. In particular, the recent crisis in post structuralist thought brought on by Heidegger and Paul be Man controversies seems to require the way of thinking about how events in the past return to haunt the present. More fundamentally, it may be useful to look again at the rhetoric of post-structuralist and post-modern theory - their emphasis an decentaring, fragmentation, the sublime of apocalyptic – and explore what relation they might have to the traumatic historical events of mid-century [. . .] like Derrida, Jean –

Francois- Lyotard and Hayden White while writing explicitly about the holocaust in the 1980s in ways that uncannily echo earlier works. (573)

Trauma theory reconceptualizes the diction of critical theory. It is helpful to look after the controversies of the post structuralists' thought.

Similarly, Clifton Spargo in his article, "The Rhetoric of Trauma" explores the act of criticism which has something to say with the regard about nothing to say. Trauma is the figure of our experience of nothing to say but takes the risk of overcoming the immediate sensory experience about which we are speaking. He argues about the two camps of contemporary trauma i.e. the argument from and through the symptomology of trauma and the interpretation of trauma through the perspective of a therapeutic resolution. None of the theoretical discourse especially cultural rhetoric of trauma fails to speak on the behalf of the victims. Spargo cites Caruth who insist on the lack of perception of survival in trauma. She focuses upon a doubled consciousness of trauma i.e. the unconscious perpetuation of an unremembered event and the survivor's contemporary and forgetful consciousness. Spargo adds that it is almost as though the traumatic event itself could be read as a sign of hope.

Spargo mainly focuses on the act of interpretation in the description of trauma in which others come to be party to the symptoms of the traumatic events. So, we must be prepared to speak trauma of a cultural rhetoric and to attend the moments in which trauma fails to speak on the behalf of very victims. He assumes that there must be rhetoric inscribed upon every trauma. While talking about the victims of holocaust it seems almost cultural reflex to insist upon reintegrating the victim into predominant social narratives by recognizing the steps victims take towards their own victimization. In this regard Spargo writes:

A closer inspection of the historical development of victimology as the subfield of criminology would reveal how pervasive the mindset is, even within social narratives aimed at shedding new light into the dark and private recesses of the victim's sufferings. Even a minimal restoration of the victim's agency is reassuring; it tells us there is a structure of rational causation, perceivable by victim and perpetrator alike, that precedes the moment of horror, the moment when the perpetrator inflicts his harm upon the victim. (4)

Spargo talks about the contemporary criminological discourse of victimology too. He argues that to emphasize the victim's survival is to overcome accident and to read the experience of victimization towards purposiveness. A victim would seek to recover the overcome accident, which suggests the fundamental flaw in the endeavor undertaken. Here Spargo cites Crauth who tries to find the difficulties in separating the particularly problematic application of interpretive and the larger therapeutic project of interpretation.

Spargo furthermore argues that the rhetoric of trauma contains the ambiguity of perception according to which perpetrators and victims seem interchangeable. The historical parameters of violence that locates trauma and the experiential urgency of traumatic events of history accounts to make sense of figurative urgencies in the work of art. Spargo here has traced the aesthetic dimension of trauma within a work of art to its cultural language that establishes the parameters and cues for interpreting victims of violence. Only artistic or literary rhetoric provides a stay against construction of survival that is always more than a little bit forgetful of the victim to the extent which is therapeutically effective. It is ironical to believe there is a realm of aesthetic experience almost parallel to everyday experience. So, trauma seems the

epitome of irrationality, a phenomenon disabling rationality and perhaps best prevented by not admitting its legitimacy. The historicist escapes from the historiography, pragmatic psychology and the philosophy of the trauma.

Clifton Spargo insists upon not taking sides with the symptoms or with the cure but rather of seeing that an act of interpretation is embedded in the every description of trauma. He points out that history remains silent on the discourse of trauma. So the work of art or the literary interpretation might be an appropriate discourse to address the sufferings of victims who are in the shock aftermath and fails to overcome the accidents. He attempts to make us better aware of trauma's cultural complexity with an interpretive horizon that contradicts the sense of trauma in the form of language sympathetically and therapeutically.

In the same way Dominick LaCapra's theory of trauma focuses on three psychoanalytical topics; the return of the repressed; acting out versus working through; and the dynamics of transference. A traumatically event, as LaCapra argues, tends first to be repressed and then to return in the forms of compulsive repetition. Transference is the occasion for working through the traumatic symptoms. It repeats or acts out a past event a relationship in a new therapeutic setting that allows for critical evaluation and changes. As LaCapra argues, mourning is a crucial mode for working through and melancholia as a mode of acting out. Melancholia as a mode of acting out in which the depressed and traumatized self remains narcissistically identified with the lost object. It is incorporated rather than introjected. LaCapra cites Freud who argues that the pathological melancholia arise in the reaction to the loss of loved ones or the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one. Such as one's country, liberty, ideal and so on. Mourning involves the possibility of engaging trauma and achieving trauma in life. It creates the relation to the past and recognizes

its difference from the present and enacts a specific relation to the present social life, responsibilities and norms requiring respectful recognition and consideration for others. In this regard, LaCapra writes:

Mourning involves introjections through the relation to the past that recognizes its difference from the present and enacts a specific performative relation to it that simultaneously remembers and takes leave of it, thereby allowing for critical judgment and a reinvestment in life. (81)

LaCapra tries his best to draw and elaborate the distinction between absence and loss in *Trauma, Absence and Loss*. It includes the intellectual clarity and cogency along with the ethical and political dimensions. Post-apartheid South Africa and Post-Nazi Germany faces the problems of acknowledging and working through historical losses in ways that affect different groups differently. Indeed, the problem of beneficiaries of earlier oppression is how to recognize and mourn the losses of former victims and to find a way to represent and mourn for their own losses.

Furthermore, mourning may obviously take the collective forms. As LaCapra argues it should be seen in a larger context of Freud's concept of working through who tried to compare and contrast melancholia and mourning as the form of acting out and working through respectively. In line with Freud's concept LaCapra adds mourning can be seen as a homeopathic socialization or ritualization of the repetition-compulsion that attempts to turn against the 'death drive'.

Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht in his article, "On the Decent Uses of History" talks about the 'decent' way of dealing with historical trauma. He focuses on the presence of one's in the spatial sense of the world in the historical judgment. It includes visiting the places where the traumatic events had occurred and exposing oneself to the horror

which such sites may still hold which may probably would be another divergence or other productive discussion. Gumbrecht is mainly concerned with LaCapra's treatment of the concept of 'memory' for which Gumbrecht questions. The mostly discussed topics like the culture of memory, the renewed discussion about the use of history and the Holocaust to which LaCapra draws its pertinence and its intellectual energy seems skeptical. LaCapra views trauma as the impact of such events which exceeds the assimilative capacities of human psyche which seems the unconditional trust to Freud. Gumbrecht finds it intellectually overwhelming. The functions and comments of aesthetic devices and literary forms, as LaCapra argues are quite conventional and sometimes even awkward.

Gumbrecht takes holocaust as the shocking experience in the course of human actions to which we must expose ourselves to work through the historical trauma. He argues that to strive for critical distance in respect to the ideology and motivation that led to the acts of the perpetration is really not good enough. No one should remain under any legal rule of 'limited liability' as LaCapra argues but we have the hope of redemption and claims for the certainty of time when we finally reach to the stage of original situation and urge to say, 'It is about time to forget'. Gumbrecht furthermore argues that there is no any distinction between the human and non-human understanding and refusing to understand which can be made on the basis of logical arguments. So, he urges that the end of mourning is an error for which temporal redemption is necessary. So dealing with the history and trauma always lies in the presence. Visiting the traumatized place but not only in imagination, this can really find out the other productive discussion.

In the same way Nina Goss and Gary Handwerk in the book review of Dominick LaCapra's, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* confronts the events and

attempts to address the problem of trauma and its bearing in different groups or subject positions. They take LaCapra as a longstanding critique of 'objectivist' history and his theory as the neutral, comprehensive survey of past that doesn't recognize its own implication in the act of understanding. The strength of LaCapra's text lies in its urgency, in the clarity of its commitment to historiographic adequacy and the constructive potential of psychoanalytic mode of interpretation. Goss and Handwerk argue that it is hard to imagine even practicing historians disagreeing with the general idea of empathic unsettlement. LaCapra focuses upon therapeutically working through traumatic history which can incorporate a confrontation with a truly unsettled critical encounter.

Debrati Sanyal in his review of LaCapra argues the analysis of trauma as an ambitious and compelling reflection on the possibilities. The approach of LaCapra would negotiate between the aporias of trauma and the employment of historiography. It might be the subject to a collective process of 'mourning', 'working through' and 'moving on' that would be the release from the historical wound that shape our experiential and conceptual landscape.

Samuel Moyn in his article "Empathy in History, Empathizing with Humanity" tries to situate the appeal to empathy historically and found his ideas against the backdrop of post-Enlightenment emotional regime of sympathy. He argues that humanity deserves some kind of empathy like that the people feel the tugs of evoked emotions as images of catastrophe which seems obligatory. He furthermore adds that the concept of empathy is not only to survive in the contemporary politics but also to contend with the place in the history of sentiments to face up to the criticism and to be loyal or hostile of the modern reign of sympathy. He strongly charges LaCapra and Carolyn Dean's school who had made the term 'empathy'

skeptically focusing in the fear of exhaustion and preservation. Empathy in contemporary historical theory seems poised to resume sympathy's lack of justificatory foundations and to leave the ethics, it assumes without explanation.

Similarly, Kate Schick's theory of trauma focuses on the ways in which contemporary political theory and international relation theory deal with trauma and sufferings in the world politics. She draws a wide range of disciplinary sources including psychotherapy, historical trauma studies, cultural studies and political theory. As Kate argues, traumatic loss is worked through it poses political dangers that not only operates in the immediate aftermath of trauma but also decades and generations later.

Kate Schick in "Acting out and Working Through: Trauma and (in)security" cites different critics; Cathy Crauth, Kari Erikson, Martha Cabrera, LaCapra and Edkins to paint a coherent picture about the process of working through traumatic experiences and to build a rational framework of traditional security studies to the role of emotions in the world politics. While arguing, she firstly examines trauma in general terms with socio-historical reflections. Trauma is firstly experienced by an individual and also has social and political dimensions. Traumatic event is so overwhelming that it is not experienced in a moment and not until the enormity of what had happened begins to sink. Trauma is also experienced by large social groups especially in political violence and natural disasters. In this regard Kate Schick writes:

Trauma is not only experienced in the after math of single dramatic events; it can also be ongoing and structurally induced as, as for example, in case of extreme poverty or ongoing civil war, where day to day life is a struggle for security and survival. (4)

Schick also tries to talk about the trans-generational transmission of trauma in which the second generation may or may not know the trauma of older generation. Similarly, the second hand trauma is also experienced by helping others. Alongside these individual and social dimensions of trauma are disturbing political dimensions too. Schick cites Kann Fierke who argues that no one can isolate psychological and political consideration in the aftermath of the war. These psychological and political humiliation seeks for the revenge-seeking politics. Schick gives the example of Hitler and the war of Germany which proves the pursuit of trauma after World War I.

As Schick explains, the other response for the trauma is acting out which involves a compulsive and repetitive reliving of the trauma. The individuals who act out have the difficulty in distinguishing the past and the present and struggle through the notion of the future. This is unavoidable following trauma which shows the symptoms of hyper-arousal, traumatized individuals living in fight or flight mode, intrusion, flashbacks and nightmares and constriction. In the case of social trauma, the whole community fails to work through trauma and they search the meaning of life in disasters. This leads to the construction of meaning-making narratives. People often search for the meaning in the losses they suffer and try to attenuate the pain and bring comfort. Jay winter, a cited critic by Schick examines the loss of World War I and its aftermath and tries to find how the vast number of those affected by war dealt with the grief. People try to search for the meaning among the chaos and wreckage of the war left in its wake. As Lacapra argues, mourning is the state which encourages truncated form of working through but the people who are not able to return in their services can be labeled as sufferings from post traumatic stress disorder. Schick writes:

Just a whole community's experience trauma, so too do whole communities fail to work through that trauma. People search

desperately for meaning in the wake of disaster; this leads to the construction of 'meaning-making narratives' in order to explain what happened and to bring comfort. Unfortunately, these narratives often take refuge in simplistic explanations that both prolong existing suffering and beget further suffering. Three common narratives are heroic-solider narrative, which allows only a truncated form of mourning that shuts down the questioning of self and other; the good versus evil narrative, which leads to a demonisation of the other; and the redemptive violence narrative, which prompts revenge-seeking behaviours. (7)

In both scenarios, individuals are discouraged from engaging politically. Schick gives the example of September 11 2001. In the wake of the attack George Bush immediately employ the rhetoric of good and evil which employ the way of attack which not only affects the individuals but also the whole community resisting the temptation of taking either position. Meaning making narrative are not only employed in the wake of traumatic event of September 11 but also in the situations of ongoing trauma in which each new loss triggers past losses and old wounds are reopened. Moses-Hrushovski uses the term 'deployment' to describe the recurring attitudes and patterns of behavior exhibited by multi traumatized patients and argues the exhibit of such patterns in a broader social scale. Furthermore, Schick argues about the danger of prolonged acting out after traumatic events, i.e. the failure of work due to the traumatic experience which might create the further violence. This happens just aftermath of war or decades later. Vamik Volkan, a critic explains the trans-generational transmission of trauma which plays the important role in violent conflict. The refusal to mourn may keep the sense of victimhood alive which may explodes

with the symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder. Volkan describes such trauma as 'chosen trauma'. Chosen traumas can enhance the reinforcement of the sense of victimization and the ethnic pride.

The process of 'doing something' with the experience of suffering is the process of working through. Unless trauma is worked through, it is likely to invite further pain and sufferings. As Schick argues, the acted out trauma creates the political disengagement or violence. Schick cites LaCapra's theory of working through in which LaCapra has described working through as an 'articulatory practice' that makes one enable to distinguish between present, past and future. LaCapra tries to distinguish working through and acting out using the term mourning and melancholia respectively. In this regard Lacapra writes:

(Working through) requires going back to problems, working them over and perhaps transforming the understanding of them. Even when they are worked through, this does not mean that they may not recur and require renewed and perhaps changed ways of working them again. In this sense, working through is itself a process that may never entirely transcend acting out and that, even in the best of circumstances is never achieved once and for all. (148-49)

Schick too takes mourning as the notion of working through which can re-engage with the social and political dimensions of the life which are restricted aftermath of trauma. Furthermore, Schick explains mourning as a form which is expressed by different people in different forms. The process of working through entails three broad tasks in the view point of Schick: expressing grief, reconstructing events and history in the narrative form and critical judgment.

From this view point of Kate Schick, part of mourning is expressing grief at the pain and the loss that one has suffered which can be difficult for the traumatized individuals and groups. Moreover it can be difficult to use words to express the feelings. So in this stage non verbal expression can be helpful. Schick in this regard writes:

Expressing pain and loss in the wake of traumatic experience is an important part of working through; it is also difficult. Creative expression, both alone and in concert with others can help individuals and communities begin to explore the impact of that loss and to make connections between the aspects of themselves that are often fractured following extreme suffering. (13)

Schick takes the narration of history and events as a central process of mourning which helps them to aid recovery and healing. Mollica, a critic argues that the process of narration should have four elements: Firstly the story should recount factually what happened communicating the series of events that triggered their trauma. Secondly, the narration should communicate broader social elements. Thirdly, the narration should reflect the inner implication of suffering and lastly the narration should build the relationship with the listener. Moreover, it also depends upon the creation of safe spaces in which communication can take place. As Schick argues with these elements of narration there might be the safe landing of mourning or working through. She furthermore adds that it is only the way where the traumatized people can see a little hope with the risk of listening and responding. Working through is political too. The process of telling one's story in a public is a political task. Gillin Rose, a critic argues that democracy is an incomplete able political risk which can never give perfect result.

Schick finally talks about the international security studies which mainly concerns with the persistence of violence and insecurity in global politics. She further adds that the present and past trauma heightens the insecurity and results in wake of violent shocks or in the situation of ongoing trauma. Kate Schick in this regard writes, “Human security approaches shift attention from states to individuals, in recognition of the fact that states themselves can engender insecurity of human beings threatens global security” (180). Trauma is the wake of collective violence and those elites and socialists refuge maladaptive meaning, Schick claims. The prevention of questioning of the policies or structures, revenge seeking, scape-goating in the states keeps the citizen and the state in distance and psycho-analytically these terms can be taken as the process of acting out. Failing of working through of trauma leads to political upheaval, prolonging and compounding insecurity and finally to the action of acting out. On the other hand, the process of working through the trauma refuses to gloss over past and present pain but sits with sufferings and allows.

To challenge over deeply held assumptions about social and political arrangements. It involves expressing grief aftermath of violence, telling the story which took place and engaging in political risk. Schick writes:

Working through is not an easy path. It involves slow steps, painful questioning and frequent failure. But the alternative is an alternative of easy answers and glib response that does nothing to address the underlying structure that perpetuates violence and suffering. It takes courage to work through trauma to take difficult path of mourning and political risk. It is not a popular path; it is disturbing and unsettling. It must be worked by courageous groups and individuals who are willing

to go against settled norms and to advocate a different way of thinking and being. (19)

The bottom line of trauma theory is that the burden of trauma must be evaluated.

Working through trauma involves acting out...the slow, prolonged process of painful unburdening.

Trauma is the silenced aftermath of violence in which the victim's survival is to overcome accident. Victims try to recover the event through the process of acting out and working through. Acting out involves the repetitive revealing of trauma in which the people fails to recover their chaos and shows the symptoms of flashbacks, nightmares, post- traumatic stress disorder etc. On the other hand, working through involves the process of 'doing something' with the experience of sufferings which can re-engage people with the social and political dimensions of life. Unless trauma is worked through, it is likely to invite further pain and sufferings. Mourning can be taken as the form of working through and melancholia as the form of acting out. Trauma theory includes the philosophical, psychological, ethical or aesthetic questions about nature, war, experience, violence, depression, phobia, horrific nostalgia and many kinds of disorder.

Bahman Ghobadi's *Turtles Can Fly* is a movie set on Kurdish refugee camp on Iraqi-Turkish border on the eve of American invasion. The movie picturizes the traumatic experiences of characters along with their alienated, fragmented, melancholic and disrupted self. The political instability and war chaos has pushes the characters to a chaotic life of collecting mines and earning their living. Their mind is occupied with the imaginations of incidents which cause the trauma and hallucination. The tormented state of their mind happens to remember the violence created in Iraq on the eve of American invasion which takes them to severe trauma. This chapter

deals with war trauma which describes an overwhelming re-experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the events occur in the often delayed and uncontrollable repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomenon.

Traumatic Experience leaves long-lasting effects on victim. People who go through traumatic experiences often have certain symptoms and problems afterward. How severe these symptoms are depending on the person, the type of trauma involved and the emotional support they receive from others. Reactions and symptoms can be wide and varied and differ in severity to person. An age factor also determines it. Satellite, the protagonist of the movie is a natural leader and self appointed dictator of all the children in the refugee camp. He supervises the kids as they dig up the mines and sell them for food and other necessities. He is badly affected by the pain and suffering given to them at the time of war. He tries to hide it and waits for the end of suffering after the arrival of US armies. But the things weren't in favor of him the life turns more chaotic and destructive. So it is a subtle approach to explore the effect of trauma on him. Satellite is a complex character in the movie who leads the orphan children in the refugee camp while collecting mines and selling it. He had fall his eyes on Agrin, a newly arrived orphan girl who is always sad faced and never smile throughout the movie. Sallelite is a great character of charisma, wit and wisdom. By far most inerasable character is the mysterious Agrin, the most haunting, unsettling and uncompromising psychic damage in recent memory.

The movie takes us past all the rhetoric of war and brings us firmly down to the ground level. The Kurds are against Saddam Hussien, who brought them nothing but grief and sorrow, but when US president George W. Bush invaded Iraq it's the Iraqi and Kurdish children who are inevitably the victims. The trauma haunted them

so badly it was almost impossible for them to overcome. Satellite, who was excited for the US invasion and end of their sorrows was also almost hopeless after he lost his leg trapped in American mines. We can easily approach his trauma through his actions at the end of the movie that he was staring towards somewhere sad faced and hopeless eyes. Before war he remains as an important person to the refugee camp. Earning the living of all the children and guide to the adult people can be clearly seen in his action. At last he considers himself defeated by history and makes every effort not to make others notice that he is suffering from trauma in the refugee camp and Kurdian community. He showed his unreasoned love towards Agrin and tries to help her in every step but was not succeed in it. His dream of being success in love is failed after he lost his leg and Agrin committed suicide. This leaves him with bitter experience of the post war period, making him alienated in the present. The war memories have disturbed his mind. This has made him an absentminded person. He takes help from Hengov, Agrin's brother, who is armless and can predict the future to save the refugee camp from chaos. On the other hand, no one care for his suffering so his trauma remains unexpressed which leads him to more melancholic and disrupted situation.

As a traumatized person, Satellite tries to direct his traumatic experience towards the observation of things around him. Thus, he became a minute observer of the chaos and decay of civilization of Iraq. Although he has lost his leg trapped in American mines, he is the perfect observer of all the destruction. Hoping to be coherence and order to his fragmented schizophrenic selfhood, Satellite begins to adapt himself to the new climate of disabled but there was no hope remained for him at last, so he seems melancholic and chaotic. It was Satellite's dream that life becomes

paradise after the arrival of US armies. He anticipates much more to make himself out of pain. His hopeful expressions can be seen in his statement below:

It's the end of injustice, misfortune and hardship.

They are our best friends and brothers.

They will make this country a paradise.

They are here to take away our sorrows.

All the expectations on the part of Satellite disappear, leaving nothing behind it when he finds himself odd. In American rule, he thinks that he will be treated respectfully and can easily cope with American culture but none of these dreams remain intact following the resurgence of the awareness that he is rejected, neglected and deceived. When there is mismatched between his expectations and the events, he has what is experienced as traumatic. Ghobadi has presented this character as traumatic survivor. The reign of alienation, exploitation, the unachievement of dream are the factors to the realization of traumatic ridden in life. The struggle done by Satellite to achieve peace and prosperity is his traumatic struggle, which intimately pushes him towards the psychological torture, distress and hopelessness towards his life. The memory of the war has shattered him in such a way that he seems to be obvious of himself and his situation. This seems when he is alone at camp or the streets. Satellite that he has undergone during the war helps us to understand the fact of the atrocity and extreme violence perpetrated upon war victims at that time. Ann Hornaday in his review for Washington Post of the movie writes:

[. . .] and as U.S. helicopters come storming overhead -- Satellite's world becomes a microcosm for the experience of refugees everywhere. It's a world that, paralyzed by despair but propelled by

desperation, spins on an entirely different axis than the rest of the globe. (Friday, App. 22, 2005; Page C05)

The devastation to this land and its inhabitants is revealed in the matter-of-fact perspective of the children and is equally displayed with every poignant detail of its unbearable nature. The exquisitely haunting mountains play backdrop to violence and tragedy, but at the same time the heart and humor of the children is an undeniable force.

This is a movie that does not only document the war, but also the less well-known sides of war: the lives that continuous within, the psychology, the everyday life and the mental suffering of the war children seen through the eye of Ghobadi. Ghobadi characters embark on the journey to rescue one of the Halabcheh's victims. In the movie we can find two survivors, Hengov, an armless teenager and Agrin, his sister, who was raped by soldiers during the attack. A blind toddler who clings to Agrin is the child of that rape. The three have settled temporarily in the village where Satellite spies Agrin and fall in love with her. Agrin is another pathetic character of the movie whom Satellite adores. She was never able to respond to Satellite because of her painful past and horrific nightmares that often haunts her. She never seems to be in joyful and jocular mood because the war experiences frequently haunt her. The somber and gloomy thoughts or suffering, torture and death surface comes in Agrin's mind all the time. She meets Satellite for the first time when he was installing the TV disk channel in the local village. She takes care of armless brother Hengov and her blind child who was born by the gang rape of Iraqi-Arab soldiers. She is often haunted by the same events when Iraqi soldiers have raped her, shot his brother's arms and killed her family. We can easily approach such a traumatic character through her actions and sadness throughout the movie. The symptoms of trauma are clearly seen

within her. Through the horrific nightmares, recurring dreams, and flashbacks we can get the source of Agrin's simmering grief and rage. Agrin is quiet throughout the film but in her eyes we can virtually see the entire war. At the concluding part of the movie, she seems badly haunted by past events too painful to reconcile and she commits suicide. At this point it is clear that she couldn't work through the trauma and the burden of trauma killed her. Melancholia is the major factor to take her life.

Agrin's mindset is different. At first seeming like an ice queen, the only time she is expressive is when demonstrating her resentment of Riga. Her blankness is justified better to be numb than to be devastated. But she can't stay numb forever. She does not represent any particular set of sufferers; she is the symbol of suffering. She is unerasable character in the movie that has experienced the sufferings of war and she could not resist with post-war traumatic disorder. She killed her child Riga, who was born from gang rape of Iraqi- Arab soldiers by tying him in the rock and throwing in the lake. We come to know the reality at this point why she has asked Satellite about the depth of the lake once. We can never see Agrin laughing throughout the movie. Her sad face and hopeless sight shows the unredeemed trauma in her. She often stares and seems thinking some horrible past memories. It echoes the typical accounts of her traumatic experience. She does not just remember the horrible scenes; she re-experiences it being in the Kurdian refugee camp. The turmoil state of her mind is the result of the non-erasable effect of the violence. The almost unconscious movement also reflects the cause of her flee for war.

Agrin's first experience of war begins her series of post-war experiences. After being raped she was compelled to survive as the refugee and the mother of an illegal child. The scenes of her numbers of horrible experiences intimately reach into a traumatic life. The relation between Satellite ends within a short span of time. Her

first attempt to be loved dooms to fail. Then the traumatic memory of the fitful affair spoils normal state of her mind that weakens her psychologically. The children, all orphans, are on the watch for war they know will come, watch and listen for the Americans to arrive and struggle under Satellite's organized control. Agrin wishes to escape it all, pleads with Hengov to go some other location but Hengov will not leave Riga. As the tension mounts tragedy occurs touching all the children. The conflict between the real interest and her daily life puts her in the existential crisis. Trauma has destroyed her capacity to process and integrate the horrible experiences into the coherent perception of self and self-in-relation to others and world. Trauma destroys her basic organizing principles too. The destruction of her emotional and psychological dimensions constitutes her extreme trauma. Agrin especially is bogged down in the obligations and fear that commit her presence to a place and people she abhors. She continually asks Hengov when they may leave all the refugee camp, not because she anticipates arriving somewhere that is better than the place they left behind, but because of the lack of mobility implies degree of commitment and emotional investment in a world that she is not willing to accept. Riga, who is literally tied to Agrin when they sleep, is her largest attachment and most grievous burden. She continually tries to cleanse herself of his presence and weight through failed attempts at abandonment, in the hope that the abandonment of child will allow her to work through the trauma easily.

Agrin is besieged with grief over her losses and the trauma she endured. We enter her world and can only imagine what it will be like to be so young and have to shoulder her burden. Through flashbacks, viewers see Agrin suffer from vivid memories of war especially post-traumatic stress disorder when Iraqi soldiers had raped her in the pond. Riga, a child created through rape symbolizes the memory of

her horrifying experience. The metaphor of rape also refers to the occupation of Kurdistan as Bahman Ghobadi states in his interview, “My country, Kurdistan, which lies over Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey has been raped by many countries like the girl in the film.” Moreover, the blindness of Riga symbolizes the horrific and ongoing effect of chemical weapons. Agrin by far is the most indelible and mysterious character in the movie. In her, the director has created one of the most beautiful and unsettling portraits of fear, innocence and reasoning. Agrin abuses her baby. The self-loathing, she feels as a rape victim is fueled by Hengov who forces her to keep the boy. The tension mounts which results in tragedy. Agrin makes the choice, a choice of which we are presented at the beginning of the film, of which we are reminded in the middle and which meets us again at the end when she jumps off the cliff, flying away from her pain as she falls to her death. It is the act of melancholia. She chooses the path of death for the solution of her unredeemable trauma. She cannot bound herself with “doing something”, she fails to work through and choose the form of acting out.

In one of the interview Ghobadi says, “You can’t believe it, but there are more than 30,000 kids like him in Iraq. Often they cannot cope. Hengov was one of the few who somehow had the fighting instinct in him.” Agrin and Hengov are the victims of same incident and seems that they are going through the similar type of trauma. But in reality Agrin is much more traumatized than her brother. Her blind child in front of her eyes increased the trauma in her so he wants to leave the child for which Hengov insists. The deception of Agrin’s imagination is significant to know behavior. She wants to live in out of responsibility. War memories have possessed her mind so powerfully that Agrin cannot resist the thoughts about her experience of the death. She has witnessed and victim of a great massacre of her family. Every time when she sees her brother shot arms and a blind toddler, the reminiscences of past memories

haunt her which she cannot resist. As a result she had tried to kill Riga for multiple times but was unsuccessful. The hatred of Agrin towards the child can be clear through the following dialogue:

I don't know. I can't take care of bastard all night long!

What was that? You said bastard again?

If he is not a bastard, then what is he?

Isn't he the child of those who killed our family and did this to me?

Now he's my child.

As a traumatized person, Agrin is also the keen observer of surrounding. She stares for hours. She seems more traumatized when her child calls her 'mother'. The activity of the Iraqi soldiers is the manifestation of the degradation of moral values in Kurdish society. The Iraqi soldiers are totally disrespectful towards Agrin. Moreover they forcefully push Agrin towards the pond and rape her there. This incident leaves her with a bitter experience of living in Iraqi community. Agrin is must traumatized character in the movie who shows all the symptoms of unredeemable trauma. The horrific nostalgia, flashbacks and other reminiscences did not let her to work through the trauma as a result she suicides. When trauma is not worked through, it is likely to invite other problems. The same case happens with Agrin. So she chooses the path of melancholia and she suicides. The scene is so pathetic when Hengov collect her shoes from the hill. In Agrin, Ghobadi has created one of the most haunting, unsettling and uncompromising portraits of psychic damage in recent memory, one that is sure to stay with viewers long after her fate is decided. It bears noting that all of the actors in *Turtles Can Fly* are nonprofessionals, and all bring electrifying authenticity and presence to their roles.

Hengov is another traumatic survivor in the movie who has got the fortune of prediction. He can predict what is going to happen next but he is so traumatized that he had stopped predicting the future. Satellite takes help of his prediction quite a number of times. He was shot by the Iraqi soldiers in the war where all his family members were killed leaving him behind armless and a helpless sister Agrin. The incident haunts him time and again even though he loves Riga and didn't allow Agrin to let him alone at the camp. Hengov, despite his armless condition, is a resourceful operative and viewed by satellite to be something of a threat to his preeminence in the camp and this threat grows in magnitude when Satellite learns that Hengov has the ability to see the future. Satellite eventually makes peace and seeks to become Hengov's friend in the vain attempt to get closer to Agrin. The only aim of Hengov is to keep his family members together so in the truck explosion he told only his family members to leave the place. It was Satellite responsibility to remove others. He is badly haunted by the events of war which takes him to the traumatic stage. He seems more pathetic after the death of Riga and Agrin's suicide. His trauma remains unredeemed because he did not get any chance to share his suffering throughout the movie. This unexpressed trauma results in the complex trauma which made satellite a real traumatic survivor in the movie. Hengov tries to work through his trauma but finally he was not succeeding to do so. The suicide of Agrin haunts him so badly that he runs towards the street shouting and crying. This action of Hengov shows his trauma which is likely to produce other trauma in his life because if trauma is not worked through it invites other serious problems like depression, nightmares etc.

After Agrin we can take Hengov as a pathetic character in the movie who has gone through a lot of sufferings and pain. Although he did not express his pain to anyone but through his actions we come to know that he too is deeply traumatized

character in the movie who didn't find any solutions of his trauma till last but the suffering increases other more. Hengov derives no pleasure from his seemingly ability to predict future. It shows his fear towards other more chaos and destruction in his life. Hengov is the survivor of holocaust, haunted by the memories of his escape from death and his armless body leads him to a disturbed life in Kurdish camp. His only way to work through trauma is Agrin and her little child Riga but after the death of both his trauma reached in the complex stage. He could not be able to reconcile the trauma and runs towards the street crying and shouting. In this sense it is clear his trauma too remain unredeemed like of Satellite and other characters. The connection of Riga and Hengov can be discovered as harsh truths which are unveiled. Anything and everything that matters in the movie happens in Hengov's mind and there is so much fear and terror of war in his psychology. He every time faces with the new situation leaving him mystified and nonplussed. It shows the post war society and survivors who are alienated and disintegrated.

The depiction of Hengov's imagination is significant to know his behavior. He seems an absent-minded person who has lost everything in war. He could never achieve what he has dreamed about, especially dream of peace and prosperity wasn't fulfilled. It reaches him in the traumatic ridden life. Thus, Hengov suffers from misery. As Agrin and Satellite, he is also the keen observer of the surrounding. He stares long in one place and speaks less. He has no any interest in the American arrival neither he has given interest in this. As Satellite is a character who is observed with full of hope in the first part of the movie but here Hengov is miserable and sad faced character from the beginning to the end. His actions and behaviors show that he is badly affected by something. Later on through flashbacks we know his pathetic reality.

Hengov is a sympathetic character. Where and when he goes he always face some problems and risk his life to solve it. While collecting mines, a millimeter mistake can take his life but he risk for family and his survivals. The recurring memory and his own situation torture him so severely that he becomes unable to experience reality. He sees everywhere that everything is attacking him. Hengov as Bahman Ghobadi argues is the representative of the Iraqi children who had really a hard time to cope with the trauma for their new life. Their mental disorder, distress and war fear has taken likely to the other effects of trauma like depression. Ghobadi has presented this character as a traumatic survivor. The reign of alienation and exploitation are the factors to the realization of his traumatic ridden life. His struggle to achieve his aim is traumatic survival which pushes him to a mentally disturbed person. His journey from Halabcheh to the Kurdian community is seemingly solving his plight but there too his suffering increases. This show no place in Iraq was far from post-war plight and sufferings. Traumatized to see Hengov and Agrin are two parts of the same coin. They are haunted by same experience and going through the same trauma. The only difference is Agrin tries to run away from her responsibility but Hengov goes through it. This shows Agrin is more traumatized than Hengov. From the first part of the movie only we find something lacking on the communication and relation between Hengov and Agrin. After their arrival in Kurdish community we can find them with a little boy seemingly their brother but when the actions develops we get indentified with their past through flashbacks and shows that the small boy is Agrin's son. It is a shocking action to the audience how a young girl has taken the burden in the very young age. But we could not find why Hengov shows so much interest in Riga till the last part of the movie. Flashbacks reconstruct the

dreadful suffering endured by Agrin at the hands of Saddam's soldiers, whilst Hengov's dream sequences portend the film's final tragedy.

Since everyone has become the victim of holocaust Agrin faces existential crisis in her life. Though she is suffering from trauma and frustration, she struggles hard for her existence. As a direct observer and witness to the war atrocities Agrin has seen everything such as moral values, norms and civilization devastated before her own eyes. The holocaust is deeply rooted in her mind that she remembers exactly what happened there during the war. Agrin's disturbed mental state reaches in climax when his only trusted brother Hengov denies leaving Riga and going away. So, Agrin is deeply affected by the behavior of Hengov. When they talk about Riga Agrin becomes preoccupied with the subject of death, recollecting her past war memories. So finally she was not able to work through the trauma and she decides to choose the way of death. Hengov is really tortured by her death which affects deeply inside him and runs shouting. The scene when he picks his sister's shoes by his mouth, the scene is too miserable. No one is there to help him to swipe his tears though he has no hands. Here we can easily find out how deeply he is being traumatized. Along with the war effects, the society is being changed, views are changed, thoughts are redefined and everything is looked from the perspectives of war. So, it was very difficult for Agrin and Hengov to cope with such society. She wants to run away from her child and start a new life. But with the Hengov disagreement of leaving the child she was deeply affected and could not reconcile her plight. It reflects the defeated temperament of Agrin, who really is shocked from the decision. The following dialogue between Agrin and Hengov can clearly depict the Agrin trauma, seeing the child in front of her:

Why aren't we leaving?

I had a dream. We'll go in or days, when the child is cured.

We'll go together.

We won't leave together.

If you're trying to cure the child, I won't come.

If you don't come, I'll go alone.

The child understands everything, lower your voice!

How many times must I tell you?

Everyone is leaving. Only we're left.

It shows Hengov's love for the child and Agrin's hatred. After this situation she was more traumatized which takes her in the state of melancholia. She had really suffered from the decision which pushed her in a kind of mental disturbance. Her search for getting new life takes her to the plight of sufferings. So, remaining far away from reality with the feelings of new life, she reaches to the painful realization of life which remains inside her in the form of unredeemed trauma. Her entire life begins to be trembled on the verge of traumatic explosion.

Moreover, Agrin was psychologically tortured with the question of her motherhood. She had no answer to give if society asks her about the father of the child. That is the reason why Agrin never tries to identify Riga as her child. Her torture can be depicted through following expression of her with Hengov:

What will we tell people when he grows up?

Shall we say we found him in the streets?

What will we tell him when he grows up?

Hengov, let's go!

Somebody will take him!

I'm leaving.

This hidden fear in the mind of Agrin has much more traumatized her. So she falsely believes the end of plight and suffering with the abandonment of the child which was not possible in the reality. It is obvious that there are not many ways of overcoming sufferings and the limited ways are also not always the same. Agrin's sufferings were always in search of the place to express it. When one way does not work Agrin did not see any way to overcome her sufferings. In case of Agrin it is melancholia. Melancholia in psychoanalysis is the form of acting out. In which the traumatized victim fails to overcome the accident and reaches to the complex trauma which results as depression, death etc.

In one of the interview of Bahman Ghobadi, he says:

A forty millions kurds are not so much as tribe as people. And for us, cinema is a new art of which we have been deprived for a long time. For this reason, I prefer not to have a personalized or individualistic view of it. I believe art is not for art's sake; art is for people's sake. That is why I want to be amongst people. I want to bring the subjects of my films out of people's hearts, so that I can make my films for the people. (Koch, 2007)

This depicts that the characters in the movie are just the representative characters from whole Kurdian community. Each and every people in the refugee camp have their own story and in one way or the other they are working through the pain and sufferings. In this sense we can say that, they all are traumatic survivors. The gawky-looking Satellite, wearing thick eyeglasses, turns in a memorable performance of cocky self-assurance tinged with budding teenage anxiety. Most of the supporting cast of child actors (actual Kurdish kids) are wonderful, particularly Satellite's two assistants, one of whom is a cripple who can twist his shattered leg in disturbing

ways, and the other a little guy who shouts in response to questions while holding back tears.

Ghobadi has achieved the miraculous film about war's ravages on kids that is thoroughly mature in approach and rigorous in style, an unforgettable, haunting piece of film poetry. Pashow is another traumatic character who is the assistant of Satellite and has lost his limb in trapped in the American mines. He also works as the messenger to Satellite and is joined with every activities Satellite does. He too is deeply suffered by the fear and terror of the war but cannot explore to anyone. So due to the lack of expression of trauma his trauma too remain unredeemed. Although he is not given importance by the director in the movie, he can also be taken as the representative character who has disturbed mind and had gone through a lot of pain and sufferings. We can approach to his trauma through the questions done by him. "Is it ok for a child to die in a war simply because he/she was born in Iraq? What gives people the right to put fellow human beings through such misery? Can people who inflict such implicit cruelty to so many people in general be fit to be humans?" and so on. This shows that he too is working through the trauma which he cannot explore easily in front of others.

The other assistant of Satellite is a post-war survivor who often cries in the movie. As he meets Satellite he keeps on asking the questions especially related to the English language. He seems keenly interested to learn English because after the arrival of Americans he needs to communicate with them in English language. He too is not given importance in the movie. Ghobadi has tried to portrait the different level and age group people to show the suffering of war and trauma in different people. As trauma varies according to age, we can see the adult people staying calmly in front of others to see what happens next. Although they don't want to show their trauma in

front of others but we can easily approach to them. Their keen interest to watch the war news is one example of their unexpressed trauma. Esameel, one of the adult characters depicts his trauma and dissatisfaction to Saddam Hussein:

Look what Saddam has done to us!

We have no water, no electricity and no schools

They have deprived us from the sky

They don't let our TVs work to see when the war will start.

We could easily find that they too are eager for the arrival of US armies for the peace. But when everything turned into the chaos and destruction after the arrival of US armies adult people have also gone through the trauma. The repressed desires are expressed here. Their growing suspicion over the US invasion and their will of being free from the Saddam's rule had debunked them psychologically with the memory of outlet of the war. The sense of absence/loss of their native land structurally traumatizes them so that they become the traumatic survivors.

To wrap up, Bahman Ghobadi signals a representation of characters that owes to the development of narcissistic personality which is increasingly defining the individuals of today – in cultural, sociological and psychological terms. The characters in the movie are deeply involved in their deliberate effort to free themselves from the pang of trauma. Their traumas are revealed in their actions and behaviors. Surviving in the post-war period, the pain and suffering left by the war to them has increased their traumatic experience. The major characters Agrin, Hengov and Satellite did all efforts to work through the trauma. It is their traumatic struggle but what they gain is loss, integration and alienation with their traumatic ridden life. Hence, they fail to work through the trauma which turns in the form of melancholia. Agrin commits suicide because she could not overcome the past events in her life. Similarly, Hengov and Satellite's trauma was also remaining unredeemed. Thus, the researcher has explored the unredeemed trauma of the characters in the movie *Turtles Can Fly*.

III: Melancholic Trauma

This research reveals the post war-traumatic experience of the characters Agrin, Satellite and Hengov in Bahman Ghobadi's *Turtles Can Fly*, who goes through the severe sense of trauma and alienation because of their personal experience of the violence during the war. The memories of war frequently recur and haunt them as the scenes of death constantly come to their mind. It makes them physically and mentally troubled.

The protagonist, Satellite, possesses memories of war as he has spent part of the war. He goes through the bitter experience of the massacre perpetrated by Iraqi armies. Trauma resides in a dream that where there is dream, there is trauma. Satellite had the dream of happiness and prosperity after the US arrival but what is achieved is only the frustration and hopelessness which befalls him into the trauma. The challenge of the meaning of life created by traumas makes him search for meaning in life. Finally, the dejected life out of his expectation descends him into a trauma. Agrin, on the other hand was victimized so pathetically that she suffers from the severe sense of emotional trauma which leads her to the death. The burden of the blind toddler and the armless brother in front her eyes never let her to work through the trauma. Trauma has to be excluded for linearity to be convincing but it cannot be successfully put to one side; it always intrudes, it cannot be completely forgotten. So the memory of the horrible scene haunts her severely. Agrin tries to exist in the ceaseless presence of trauma as she has the memory of the horrible scene of violence but she fails. The painful experiences were too difficult to reconcile which leads her to the way of suicide. Thus, her trauma remains unredeemed.

Post-war stress disorder and the horrible violence are equally responsible for the trauma to the characters of the movie. Plights, problems, pains and pang fears,

nostalgia, terrible nightmare etc are responsible to lead each of the characters to the world of trauma which was unsuccessfully worked through. As a result, the loss and alienation with the traumatic ridden life results to the vacuum among the war and massacre created in the Iraq. Hengov, another tragic character too suffers from traumatic experience. He is always in loss, disintegration and alienation with his traumatic ridden life. He exists in the presence of trauma with the unattainable dream and the memory of horrible scene of violence. He became a minute observer of the modern world, its people and their moral decay and insanities. He cannot engage himself in positive creative and humorous activities. Thus, he becomes a lonely and alienated person. Whatever he thinks and does, can be related to his war experience which forces him to focus on negative aspects. His past experiences of death scene trouble him making him lose the order of his mind. Ghobadi therefore is successful to explore the traumatic figure of the characters in the movie *Turtles can Fly*.

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