

Tribhuvan University

Cultural Trauma in Jean Sasson's *For The Love Of a Son*

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department Of English, T. U.
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in English**

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October 2015

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Letter of Recommendation

Madhav Mishra has completed his thesis entitled "Cultural Trauma in Jean Sasson's *For the Love of a Son*" under my supervision. He carried out his research from December 2014 to October 2015. I hereby recommend this thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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06 October 2015

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my profound gratitude to the respected supervisor Maheshwer Poudel whose sincere effort, helpful suggestions, continuous scholarly guidance, valuable criticism and instructions' made this work complete.

I am heartily thankful to, Prof. Dr. Amma Raj Joshi, Head of the Department of English for providing me an opportunity to work on this project by accepting my proposal. Similarly, I hearty express my gratitude to the respected lectures of the Department who equally provided me invaluable advice and suggestions.

In addition to this I would like to offer my respect to my parents and thankfulness to all my family members, who directly or indirectly support to complete my academic research. Moreover, I would like to thank my friends and other who provided invaluable suggestions during my research.

October 2015

Madhav Mishra

Abstract

This research examines cultural trauma in Jean Sasson's novel *For the Love of a Son* which is the story of Maryam Khail, a beautiful Afghan woman born into one of the most influential families in Afghanistan, a family of wealth and power. Despite her beauty, her education and strength, the evil that lurks in every home in Afghanistan finally caught up with Maryam. This study explores and shows how Afghan civilians are being survived by international war and intra state war for more than three decades. The research applies cultural trauma as a literary tool to examine Sasson's novel which is about Afghan woman quest for her stolen child. During the Civil War gross human rights violations including executions, sexual violence, and many forms of tortures were committed. National government was not stable, civil infrastructure was collapsed and basic social services were no longer available. In this regard, Afghan people collectively feel they have been subjected to horrendous events that leave indelible marks upon their group's consciousness.

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I. Introduction to Jean Sasson's *For The Love Of a Son* and the Concept of Trauma

This project focuses on Jean Sasson's *For the love of a Son*, a story of one Afghan woman's quest for her stolen child. This novel was set in Afghanistan's civil war. Since the late 1970s, international wars and intra state violence have battled the country of Afghanistan, generating several waves of mass displacement. Located in one of the most unstable regions of the world, Afghanistan has suffered through years of war and international conflict. For more than decades, the Afghan people have experienced war time trauma and displacement. Characters are victimized by remembering trauma. Most of the characters are haunted by past. Some characters frequently visit past and some are totally possessed by past. They have suffered from traumatic past. They attempt to distinguish past, present and future but become unsuccessful. They are totally unaware about surrounding activities. Characters are trying to seek joys but fail to achieve it. Aggressive behavior, sleeplessness, paranoia can be seen among characters. On the basis of these events, this text is going to be analyzed from the perspective of trauma theory drawing upon the theoretical framework of Jeffrey C. Alexander.

The objective of this research is to illustrate how the Afghan civilians are being victimized by international war and intra state war. For more than three decades Afghan people are being traumatic victim of invasion by Soviet Forces in 1979, staunch résistance by Islamic fractions to employ guerilla war, Taliban war and USA attack in Afghanistan. This research also tries to dig out the heart rendering realities of the then Afghan women even in the last phase of twentieth century.

This research not only assumes that contemporary Afghan society actively makes the female and common Afghan people, voiceless and passive but also

traumatizes through culture , tradition, society as well as war. That is why Maryam is narrating her traumatized experiences to get relief from trauma caused by patriarchy as well as war. The novel is written in historical background of Afghan war. Invasion by soviet in 1979 constituted the beginning of a protracted conflict in Afghanistan. Staunch resistance by Islamic faction controlled by the mujahedeen began to employ guerrilla warfare against twin foes-the government and soviet forces that were occupying rural regions. In 1993 the Taliban movement led by the Pashtun in Kandahar gained increasing influence in Afghanistan by promising stability and peace. Once the Taliban came into full power, however they implemented and governed to with strict adherence to an extreme interpretation of the Sharies law and Islam. In this third phase of contemporaries conflicts, people were negatively affected irrespective of their ethnicity, class or sect. In the wake of 9/11, the Taliban government became a target of the international community, more specifically of the United States and its allies. Afghanistan was perceived to be housing international terrorists and was well known for its human rights violet ions. This traumatizing mind of Afghan people has wonderfully captured by Jean Sasson in this novel *For The Love Of a Son*.

Afghan people are experiencing the threat of terrorist attack. The different attack possible repetition of attack is haunting in the mind of Afghan civilian. Sleeplessness, aggressive, violent, paranoia are being common for Afghan people, either they in Afghanistan or outside Afghanistan. There is not harmony inside the family. Some are in favor of war but some are not. This situation is creating the situation of division in family. Violent men are easily available in Afghan, because they are inheriting the war. People from the every profession are not satisfied. There is not any professional link with war of people but being victimized.

Maryam is one of the main protagonists in the novel. She is beautiful. She is satisfied from the side of husband but her inner suffering does not heal through romantic conversation with husband. She is facing the problem of sleeplessness. She is being aggressive and pessimistic. When she sees the news related to Afghan. That scene haunts her but she does not get relief from it till end of novel. Huge demonstration against Taliban war, Television interview about war, radio broadcasting are being traumatic trigger for Maryam. She prefers herself as if she is conscious person but she is terribly being suffered.

Kaiss is another antagonist character haunted by Huntington Disease. He is violent man. As Taliban government is launching the war, Kaiss is also internalizing the violent. Minor mistake of Maryam's becomes matter of great attack upon her. He does not see anything except fighting. He is aggressive, violent and pessimistic.

Big Duran, son of the Maryam is also facing sleeplessness. There is not harmony inside the family members. All most characters provide their views in the context of war. There is not any character who is untouched with issue of war. In other words, every character is hovering around the war. They are being victimized of war.

Different critics have analyzed the novel from different perspectives. The author Sasson is claimed to be one of the truest stories of the world and critics also agree with her and they want to prove that women are suffering because of gender discrimination.

Olivia Richardson, in *Breaking News*, argues:

I could not put this down. It's such a gripping, action-packed, heart-wrenching tale where you read each page with the hope that the next will be happier. It's inspiring to hear of revolutionaries and strong

women in such a restrictive environment. Author Jean Sasson continues her gift of bringing middle- Eastern women's amazing tales to life in writing. It gives a good history of turmoil in Afghanistan, giving you more understanding of what women went through there under Taliban rule. Other mothers out there will appreciate the heart-wrenching story line and feel a little more compelled to treasure every moment with their own children. (10)

From the above mentioned lines we can say that this is the story of Middle Eastern women's story. In Afghanistan girls can dream, but only the dreams of a boy come true. They were swimming against an ancient culture which demands that women always submit that women always stay weak. Set against a landscape littered with tragic tales of horrific suffering, Jean Sasson chronicles the story of one resolute but tormented women determined to achieve freedom and equality with men.

in claiming the feminist tone Celeste makes a point:

What really angered me was the fact that in the time Maryam was beaten and raped by her husband, her family namely her father and sister chose through a blind eye to what was happening to Maryam. Kaiss even threatened to kill her father and son but yet her family allowed kaiss back into their lives and most importantly, Maryam's life. As if she had not gone through enough. She eventually got divorced but her family did not respect her wishes that she wanted nothing to do with Kaiss. She told her family that Kaiss will seize every opportunity to kidnap her son but her family thought she was irrational and erratic. Yet Maryam's worst fears and suspicion came true. And I felt angered towards her family for allowing towards her

family who raised their children as equals and who raised their children as equals as and who never beaten Maryam, or Nadia, her sister who had a loving home compared to most people living in Afghanistan. (4)

From the above mentioed review we can say that a new life of freedom seemed within her grasp, but her father arranged a traditional marriage to a fellow Afghan, who turned out to be a violent man. Beaten, raped and abused, Maryam found joy in the birth of a baby son. But then her brutal husband stole him away far beyond his mother's reach. For many long years she searched for her lost son, while civil war and Taliban oppression raged back home in Afghanistan.

In the same way, another critic Marian, in *Todays' Zaman*, argues that the sadness of Sasson's story comes in her realization at an early age that "boys own the world they live in, while girls are basically servants, compelled to please the men their families." our hearts break over her observation that in "in Afghanistan girls can dream, but only the dreams of boys come true," when you turn the final page, the frightening truth dawns on you that this story is not yet over. Maryam's son still could carry out his threats. A mother's hearts still bleed sot for her boy who has been turned into monsters by a monster, and she cannot stop loving him from afar with a mother's "bottomless love."

From the above mentions reviews we can see that *For the Love of a Son* has been analyzed from various perspectives. Various critics have preferred their own visions. But this novel has not analyzed from the angle of trauma theory. So there lies a strong need of trauma studies. This research aims to view *For the Love of a Son* from the perspective of Cultural Trauma Theory. It tries to explore traumatic

experience among characters which is caused by different Afghan war and its aftermath.

Trauma has different meanings, which depend on a sphere in relation to which the word is used. In medicine trauma means physical injury which can provoke shock or even death. Trauma can be also psychological which is more individual, based on a single experience damaging psyche. Not very long ago, the word trauma appeared in the other fields of science besides medicine and psychology. Many sociologists define trauma differently, basically it describes a phenomenon or effect which is experienced by a group of people, or even by a whole society and which leaves indelible marks on their consciousness. With this meaning the concept is very close to the psychological definition of the word. But unlike the psychological trauma, cultural trauma unites a group of people under one problem. In this part mostly ideas of Jeffrey Alexander will be performed.

According to many social scientists, twentieth century was a century of traumas for many nations all over the world with different reasons. Jews, Post Yugoslavian people, Armenians, post-Soviet nations and other experienced trauma. According to Alexander, in the 20th century, first in the Western societies and then in a very short period of time in the whole world, people from different nations and societies began to talk continually about being traumatized because of different reasons such as an act of violence, an experience, an event, an unexpected experience of social transformation or even simply by change.

Alexander in his text tries to describe the process of trauma creation, its social processes, in what circumstances trauma can be caused and what exactly trauma is. In other words, which condition of a society or group of people can be described as a trauma? First of all Alexander believes that trauma is an empirical and

scientific concept which connects and builds new type of causal relationships between structures, actions or events which were unrelated before. The author claims that “It is by constructing cultural traumas that, social groups, national societies and sometimes even entire civilizations not only cognitively identify the existence and source of human suffering but “take on board, some significant responsibility for it” (85).

As people identify the cause of trauma, members of collectivities define their solidarity relationships and are able to share the sufferings of the other members of the same society. So does it mean that the suffering of others can be seen as our own? As an answer to this question Alexander argues that sometimes social groups can fail to see or recognize the existence of other’s trauma. In other words people refuse to participate in what Alexander calls process of trauma creation, as a result particular social groups leave others suffering alone.

Even though some people refuse to recognize the existence of trauma and they do not participate in trauma creation they are as traumatized as people who do not refuse its existence. Therefore they are mentally and emotionally, at the same place as the other members of the society. And unconsciously they do share others sufferings and feelings. The point is that even if some people refuse to acknowledge the presence of trauma in their society but, in fact, if that society is traumatized than each of its member goes through the same trauma which means that on some level they do suffer together. They can share feelings and they can understand others emotional stance, though they do not recognize it as a trauma themselves. People need love connection, relation, feeling of security, stability and if suddenly something ruins these necessities, it is quite obvious that people will be traumatized. In other words when suddenly a whole environment changes unexpectedly and people are not prepared for it, as a result they often characterize themselves as traumatized. Jeffrey

Alexander is much more interested in the collective than in the individual traumas. He sees them as a main sign of a trauma becoming cultural. Moreover, it can be argued that he identifies collective trauma to cultural trauma. In order to describe the differences between individual and collective traumas Alexander uses Erikson's theoretical innovation.

By individual trauma Alexander means a blow to the psyche that breaks through one's defenses so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively. By collective trauma, on the other hand, he means a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality. The collective trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with "trauma." But it is a form of shock all the same, a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared. It no longer exists as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body.

Alexander also shows the differences between the enlightenment and psychoanalytic approaches to trauma. According to the Enlightenment understanding of trauma, it is kind of a "rational response" to sudden and unexpected changes in the society; and it does not matter whether these changes occur on social or individual level. According to the author actors accept the causes that have invoked trauma very clearly and respond to them lucidly. As a result those responses are very progressive and helpful. It is a very widespread idea that when bad things happen to good people they feel uncomfortable, shocked, and resented. This is exactly what Enlightenment thinking underlines. According to its political situations, economic crises, lost wars, nature or technological disasters and different kinds of attacks on humans create

whole bunch of traumatic and depressive results in societies, such as feeling of unfairness, aimlessness, panic, despair, and lack of desire to go for risks.

On the other hand, the psychoanalytical approach argues that when bad things happen to good people the levels of shock and fear are so high that people may actually deny existence of trauma as a result the traumatizing incidents are corrupted in people's memories. In other words, the theory "places a model of unconscious emotional fears and cognitively distorting mechanisms of psychological defense between the external shattering event and the actor's internal traumatic response" (5).

Talking about and analyzing these approaches will take us far away from the point and will make us discuss just the concept of trauma itself. More interesting is the part where Alexander talks about the social process of cultural trauma. Author claims that for different reasons there can be lots of massive collapses and many social systems can fail for example, education system, or economic systems may fail to perform their functions, government may fail to govern. These kinds of problems are without a doubt very fundamental and serious but according to Alexander they won't necessarily result the society to be traumatized. The events themselves which caused the pain in the society are not causes of trauma as the author defines. As a result people feel threatened by this specific pain, feeling unable to represent sense of self identification, their past, present and future. This is exactly the topic the older generation group discussed during the focus groups. When the Afghan war started many institutions and systems were collapsed and they couldn't switch to the new system, as a result many people lost their works professions and even their homeland, as they were forced to find new path in life. The main problem here is the huge discomfort that follows this process, not the failing of different institutions.

Alexander lays out the processes that come between the collective and cultural actions. These are: Claim-making: the spiral of signification, Carrier groups, Audience and situation: Speech Act Theory, Cultural Classification: the creation of Trauma as a new master narrative, Institutional arenas, Stratification hierarchies, Identity revision, memory and reutilization. Among these processes the most interesting and most close to the main point of this text is: Cultural classification: The creation of the trauma as a New Master Narrative.

According to Alexander, the interpretation of trauma depends on how the cultural frame work is classified. It can be said at one point that this whole process tells a new story, but on the other hand, this new story at the same time is "a complex and multivalent symbolic process that is contingent, highly contested, and sometimes highly polarizing"(94). Alexander names four basic representations that, in his opinion, are most important in creating a new master narrative. First of all in the listing comes The nature of the pain. This is about understanding the actual facts that happened with the particular society, collectivity or group of people. Did the collapse of the previous system marks or a wound on Afghan people's psyche? And if there is a wound what were the reasons? What did it exactly consist of?

The next topic is about the nature of the victim. It is important to know exactly which group or collectivity suffered from the specific traumatogenic pain. Or whether only one or several groups were affected by the event? Were Pashtun the only tribe that were affected by the war or were the other ethnic minority groups in Afghan equally traumatized? Where every generation at that time traumatized by the event or only particular ones?

The relation of the trauma victims to the wider audience is next on Alexander's list. According to the author, it is very important to analyze on what level the

members of the audience identify themselves with the victimized collectivity. Generally the representatives of the audience cannot identify themselves with the victimized group. It can happen only in the beginning when the trauma process starts, but also people may never be able to share the trauma with the group. Only if the victims are represented in terms of valued qualities shared by the larger collective identity will the audience be able to symbolically participate in the experience of the originating trauma.

Attribution of the responsibility or in other words making it clear who caused the trauma is the most important and tricky matter. Deciding who has to be blamed for a particular event or situation. As Alexander puts, this issue is always a matter of symbolic and social construction. Did communist kill people or was it by local religious groups? Who has to be responsible for all only the older generation or the younger generation as well?

Alexander believes that referring the trauma process to only Western societies would be a serious mistake and misunderstanding, in spite of the fact that Western societies provided dramatic traumatic episodes in their history. Experiences of trauma creation were developed in non Western societies with the same success. Mass murders, massacres, genocides, traumatic and dramatic events are the recent history of the Western as well as non Western societies. The “process of trauma creation” is a process that does not distinguish societies from their places on the map. This is responsibility familiar to both Western and non Western countries.

According to Alexander, collective traumas have no geographical or cultural limitations. Process of trauma gives collectivities an opportunity to change, or not to change political, social, moral responsibilities and actions on their own experiences. It is like a moral lesson that helps to develop new values.

II. Sasson's *For The Love Of a Son*, Cultural Trauma and Its Victims

The novel *For The Love Of a Son* was written in the background of Afghan civil war. In this novel, Jean Sasson tries to expose how the common Afghan people are suffering from war. Maryam is one of the main protagonists of this novel. She frequently visits the past since beginning to end. Maryam is suffering from threat of war. Similarly, characters like Big Duran, Uncle Hakim, Cousin Farid, Cosin Zeby, Cosin Zarmina, Siater Nadia, Nicee Suzia, Auntie Shagul and Cousin Amina are totally possessed by the past. They are totally detached from present activities. Not only this, some characters are facing the problems because of company with other characters. Big Duran, son of the Maryam is being suffered because of his company with his mother. Kaiss, Maryam's ex-husband of Maryam also undergoes through suffering. Public demonstration against war, radio broadcasting and television interviews about for and against war are traumatic triggers in this novel which becomes catalyst to increase traumatic situation among characters. Result of cultural trauma leads one to surrogate victim. In this novel, there are all characters, which has direct or indirect linked with war and characters are facing psychological problems.

For The Love Of a Son begins with pathetic condition of Mayan, Maryam's grandmother. Not only war Afghan women faced difficulties through their religious as well as their social practices. Any girl's wedding should be a cause for celebration, but instead Mayana was given to someone she did not know. The women of the family dressed a frighten Mayana in her wedding dress, then she was placed on the back of a gaily decorated horse with ribbon of vivid colures woven into its main and tail, and escorted to the grand home of the Khan, approximately six miles away. While an impatient Ahmed Khan waited to claim his bride, his three exciting wives riddle with the jealousy. Not only that when Ahmed Khan dies, Mayan is dragged away and

locked in her room with guards positioned outside her door and window. In Afghanistan girls can dream but only the dreams of boys come true. Boys own the world they live in, while girls are basically servants, compelled to please the men in their families. In the prologue, main protagonist Maryam captured her traumatic experience makes her condition sleepless, aggressive and pessimistic. Though she herself tries to prefer her as conscious people but her mind leads her past, present and future randomly. Condition of working through trauma can be viewed from her character. Not only her, Kaiss and Big duran who are totally in past except their physical appearance. They don't know distinct between present and past. Condition of repetition and repletion as in acting out occurs there. Among all characters there is no one safe from tension of terrorist attack and Afghan war. All are indirect link with war and has gone through the traumatic experience.

The word "trauma" is borrowed from Greek word "wound". It is derived from the verb which means to pierce. Trauma is a mental condition caused by severe shock, especially when the harmful effects last for long time. Sigmund Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1919) has used this term to describe a painful event not inflicted to the body but to the mind. Before 1980 trauma was taken as matter of clinical but after 1990 it is not only limited in area of clinical rather ethical, historical, political and aesthetic. Insane people before 1980 were viewed as mad but with development of trauma theory historical and political eyes try to recount the problems.

Traumatic survivals are carrier to spread traumatic experience not only in present till future too. Cathy Caruth, in her essay "Violence and Time: Traumatic Survivals," has mentioned about it. She writes:

Trauma is constituted not only by the destructive force of violent event but by the very act of survival. If we are to register the impact of

violence, we can't, therefore, locate it only in the destructive moment of the past but in an ongoing survival that belongs to the future. It is because violence inhabits, incomprehensively, the very survival of those who have lived beyond that it may be witnessed best in the future generations to whom this survival is passed on. (25)

To be victimized by traumatic experience not only destructive event but the act of survival too. After witnessing the traumatic event, if severe shock occurs in the mind it happens. In alternative words, it is considered when person directly participate/viewed traumatic events and got severe shock then there is threat of traumatic victimization. But it is not limited only in this parameter. Even after witnessing the traumatic survivor there is possibility of victimization.

Alexander, one of the prominent cultural trauma theorists, has developed the concept of cultural trauma and collective identity. For him, cultural trauma is, first of all, an empirical, scientific concept, suggesting new meaningful and causal relationship between previously unrelated events, structures, perceptions, and actions. But this new scientific concepts also illuminates an emerging domain of social responsibility and political action. Cultural traumas that social groups, and national societies, and sometimes even entire civilizations not only cognitively identify the existence and sources of human suffering but take on board some significant responsibility on for it. Insofar as they identify the cause of trauma, and thereby assume, such moral responsibility, members of the collectives define their soldiery relationship in ways that, in principle, allow them to share the sufferings of others. Alexander in *Writing Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma* writes:

Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collective feel they have been subjected to horrendous events that leave indelible marks upon

their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways. As we develop it here, cultural trauma is first of all an empirical, scientific concept, suggesting new meaningful and casual relationships between previously unrelated events, structures perceptions, and actions. (1)

These lines prove that cultural trauma is a collective feeling and it is extremely unpleasant and impossible to forget their group consciousness. People want to moves their past memories. Sometimes societies expand the circle of us. By the same token, social group can refuse to recognize the existence of other trauma, and because of their failure they cannot achieve a moral stance. In the case of novel *For the Love of a Son* there are such problems. Characters have gone through such problems. Working through in *For the Love of a Son*. The change in the society is usually wide, touching many areas and aspects of social or even personal lives, affecting with big number of actors and actions.

Sasson describes the pathetic situation of Afghan people through the character Maryam:

I felt so sad for my country. It had enjoyed a burst of prosperity during my childhood, but those year were long gone, and worst times in Afghanistan's troubled history had follow. Now all was lost. For the first time in years I wondered what had happened to my family treasures, like my grandfather Hassen's stamp collection and my own precious coin collection. It seemed a long. Long time ago that I had left them carefully hidden in my room. (410)

From the above mention lines, we can understand that her personal life was destroyed by the war. Not only her even the whole Afghan people facing difficult time. They

lost many things. She herself is getting confusion about her future life. Like other common Afghan people she knows about the upcoming day or day of Afghan invasion. She tries to express as if she is conscious. She attempts to relate herself with present but past is haunting her.

In working through one exists in both present and past at the same time. When traumatic triggers appear it force to person revisit his/her past. At the same time person is conscious about her appearance. In this time person tries to create certain distance between past and present.

Alexander views:

This identity revision means that there will be a searching re-remembering of the collective past , for memory is not only social and fluid but deeply connected to the contemporary sense of the self . Identities are continuously constructed and secured not only by facing the present and future but also by reconstructing the collectivity's earlier life. (22)

According to Alexander, experience trauma can be understood as a sociological process that defines a painful injury to the collectivity, establishes the victim, attributes the ideal and material consequences. Mind or memory is the main object for ‘working through’, because it carries person to his/her traumatic past frequently. One, who is facing the problem, becomes able elaborate his/her past and present.

Afghanistan, once a beautiful country, changed into a war land. Kabul is an ancient city, over three thousand years old, situated in the dramatic Hindu Kush Mountains, straddling the Kabul River. When Maryam was youth it was the economic and cultural heart of north-eastern Afghanistan. Kabul was a beautiful city in those

days, and every school child learned by heart poems praising its beauty, the most popular being 'Kabul', by the Persian poet Saibi Tabrizi:

The beautiful city of Kabul wears a rugged mountain skirt, Even the rose is jealous of its lash-like thorns. The dust of Kabul's blowing soil smarts lightly in my eyes. But I love Kabul, for knowledge and love come from her dust. I sing bridge praises to her sparkling water, colourful flowers and beauty of the trees. Men choose Kabul over paradise, for her mountains bring them near to heaven's delights. (23)

In *For the Love of a Son*, the central character Maryam was lamenting her past life. She is in Arab but her mind was in Afghanistan. Even she remembered how she enjoyed the pleasure of slipping into her mother's bed for a few hours and then, after becoming restless, leaving her bed to climb into her father's bed for a few extra hours of sleep. For her those were such innocent, sweet times. Not only her every Afghan people missing their past and busy in imagination. Like other Afghan family Maryam's family faces the difficult situation in the different period of time. In the first part of the book Maryam's grandmother and her three aunts were exploited. The book starts with these lines:

In Afghanistan girls can dream, but only the dreams of boys comes true. Boys own the world they live in while girls are basically servants, compelled to please the men in their families. Although Afghan boys are supposed to be tough towards females, my heart plunged in pity as I observed little girls shyly making their way into the Kabul share – i- now school to begin their first day of kindergarten . But I straightened my shoulders, puffed out my chest and tugged at my mother's hand,

pulling her along as I walked smugly past the timid creatures fearfully
huddled near their older sisters or mothers. (1)

From the above mention lines we can say that in Afghanistan women are traumatized not only by war but they are victimized by their own religion, tradition and social practices. In Afghanistan cruelty was part of the culture, with state sanctioned punishments ranging from prisoners being fired from cannons, beheading by sabre. live burials, international blinding. Maryam's three aunts were killed by Shair khan but he was not punished . According to Maryam Shair told her father that his sisters had all died of tuberculosis. Her father accepts this as a truth. Afghanistan had no scientific methods available to prove otherwise. In Afghanistan Shair's idea were not unusual, most men in Afghanistan scorned and mistreated females and nearly all Afghan women lived in subjugation varying upon slavery.

In Afghanistan, there was gender discrimination and females became traumatized but situation became more difficult when Russian started govern in Afghanistan from 1979. According to Maryam they were happy girls that day, perhaps the last day of my life in Afghanistan. They chattered about the upcoming field trip, and how they were going to swim in the lush gardens of the resort, (180). At the war time many family lose. Maryam observes:

I was saddened into silence. For the first time in many years. Our family had a lot to lose. Just when father was making a good living. The communists had come to take it all away. It was not fair. I could tell by the expression on my father's face that he was thinking much the same thing, although he grunted deep in his throat. Just then the music from the radio stopped and the same voice announced, 'I am the

Republic of Afghanistan's minister of Defense, Major Aslam Watanjar'. (189)

These lines expose that they were only one of many thousands of helpless Afghan families who were praying that the chaos and violence would quickly pass and they could return to normal lives. But their prayers had not been answered. And Afghan people were habituated with war trauma. It is not the process of get rid from traumatic past rather One can experience present and past at the same time.

According to lay theory, traumas are naturally occupying events that shatter an individual or collective actor's sense of well being. The reaction to such shattering events being traumatized is felt to through to be an immediate and unreflexive response for Alexander;

According to the lay perspective, the trauma experience occurs when the traumatizing event interactive with human nature. Human being needs security, love, and connection. If something happens that sharply undermines these needs, it hardly seems surprising, according to lay trauma theory, that people will be traumatized as a result. (3)

From the above mentioned lines we can say that people need love and care but in the case of Afghanistan even government created difficult. Afghan people that their new present was Nur Muhammod Tasaki and his prime minister was Haffifullah Amin, the man who was rumored to have planned the coup. Those two set about conferring with soviet officials to determine the fate of all Afghan people. This political changed the personal lives. Maryam narrates:

I was stunned by the rapid changes that came over our personal lives. The school curriculum was quickly changed. Suddenly our history classes had nothing to do with Afghanistan. Instead, we were taught

about the glorious Russian revolution and outstanding achievements of communist rules. School drama events no longer had any connection with traditional Afghan legends, such as the stone Dragon or the Holy Grave of the Bride and Groom, folklore known by every child. Now everything put before the malleable students was steeped in propaganda our songs were no longer the traditional ones of passionate Afghan poetry. (197)

From the lines quoted above we can say that at the level of social system, societies can massive disruptions that do not become traumatic. Institution can fail to perform. Schools are failing to provide good education, even to provide basic skills. Their school became showplace for Russian invaders. Parades of visiting dignities marched across the border to Kabul to be shown that Afghan schoolgirls were models of communist youth. With each passing day each, their lives became more bizarre. And each passing day they became angrier. Many Afghan people became more religious after the Communist came to power. Before their arrival, they had taken their religion lightly. During Ramadan they fasted diligently never eating or drinking during the daylight hours.

In *The Social Process of Cultural Trauma* Alexander describes when governments may be unable to secure basic protections and may undergo severe crises of delegation. Economics systems may be profoundly disrupted, to the extent that their allocated functions fail even to provide basic goods. For him:

For traumas to emerge at the level of the collectivity, social crises must become cultural crises. Events are one thing, representations of these events quite another. Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain. It is the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of

the collectivity's sense of its own identity. Collective actors decide to represent social pain as a fun and where they want to go. (10)

Maryam family was targeted by the Russians. They closed her uncle Hakim's cement factory. Farid's family fell into dire financial trouble. Her father's business had suffered a major setback too since it was nearly impossible to export goods. Even her two innocent cousins were killed. According to Maryam-"sadly for our family, uncle hakims warning war prophetic. Our family soon lost two of our most intelligent and gentle cousins" (209). At the war time innocent Afghan people became victim. They were powerless. There was nothing they can do.

In new Afghanistan, everyone was considered guilty of something. The central character Maryam was rebelled against Russian. One day she was gripped by a mad courage, and focused on two Russian women as if they were the source of every Afghan sorrow, she jerked of every Afghan sorrow. She jerked the steering wheel round and floored the gas paddle. The car roared as she bore down on the women. They heard the roar of the engine and glanced behind them to see a car swerving wildly at them. One of women nimbly grabbed the railing and heaved herself up and over into the river not far below. And second women attempted the same agile ploy but she was a bit chubby and lost her footing and fell down on the bridge. She could have run her over as she was spinning around on the ground, but at the last minute she found she did not have a murderer's heart wrenched the wheel to the left. Veering away from her. TO make good her escape. Because of the war thousand of Afghan people fled the country illegally, travelling by car or by foot over the mountains into Pakistan or even Iran, but such a trip was a dangerous undertaking. Many people were caught and returned to Kabul to face prosecution and death as traitors, Even Maryam's family were joy to be leaving.

Never one did I believe I was leaving my country forever, yet leaving without a planned return is much more difficult than I imagined. Once all the arrangements had been made, the reality set in. Soon I would be leaving the land I loved, not knowing what the future might bring to my country or to my beloved family. And there was the question when mother would be allowed to join us. That's when papa told me that I could only pack a small bag so that we could keep up the official illusion that we were returning. (232)

War victim people wanted nothing more than to live and die in their country where they were born. This is the ghastly twilight to their life. In 'acting out' person is totally reliving in past except his/her physical appearance. One has no consciousness about his/her present. Instead of this, person is lost in traumatic past. On so many forms, like nightmare and flashback, terrible past haunts the person. Haunting past is repeated time and again. It is continuous victimization of past. One fails to escape from terrible past. One is totally possessed by past.

In novel *For the Love of a Son*, one of the Protagonists is Mr. Kiss is a violent man. Even in the minor mistake of Maryam he becomes more aggressive. His entire friends are violent and habituated to take cigarette and alcohol. They all are interested to live in world of intoxication. Maryam is his wife. But he raped his wife. Maryam narrates:

My marriage to Kaiss was a merciless struggle. My husband was mean and brutal. My daily life was miserable round of housework restaurant work and rape. There was no more talk of moonlight dinners or disco dancing. My husband worked and raped his wife. That was his life; I sometimes bore the secret and frightening through that perhaps my father's eldest brother Shair Khan had been reincarnated into Kiss. Soon

it was to enroll at college. I longed for the change, to attend school with like-minded peers, to better myself and get away from my husband for a few hours. (265)

From these quoted lines we can say that Kais was in America but his perception towards women is guided from the Afghan culture. Most Afghan men are suspicious of females. They believe all women are promiscuous and must be isolated from men who are not of their family or else they will commit the most sexually depraved acts. A new life of freedom seemed within her grasp, but her father arranged a traditional marriage to a fellow Afghan, who turned out to be a violent man. Beaten, raped and abused. Maryam found joy in birth of a baby son. But then her brutal husband stole him away far beyond his mother's reach. For many long years she searched for her lost son, while civil war and Taliban oppression raged back home in Afghanistan. Another character is Big Duran, when he born. For Maryam, he is a precious baby burst into the world the thousand hardships and tribulations she had suffered with his father were temporarily forgotten. According to Maryam "My love for my son was greater than I had ever dreamed it might be. For the first time since my disastrous marriage. I was in a good place. I held my son Duran in my Arms and looked upon his sweet face, perfect eyes and tinny limbs "(271). It means one bouncing baby had cleared the pain out of her life and she was overwhelmed with sheer joy. Big Duran had taken the most angelic little boy and turned into a psychopath who not only wanted to rape and murder his mother but also to murder his innocent, sweet young brother. As Sasson narrates:

I wanted to tell you that I only regret one thing. My heart lifted in joy as I waited for his next words, hoping that he would apologize and say he wanted to return, to start a new. What do you regret, my

love? 'oh I regret that I did not rape you. I masturbate with you in my mind every night.' I gasped, then scrubbing throwing down the phone in disbelief and horror. I dashed into my bedroom, tore off my face, My body trying to remove the filth that I felt was crusted over me Had there ever been such an unnatural son ! What had Kaiss done to create such a monster ? (435)

From above lines above we can say that Kaiss had brainwashed the Big Duran mind. He could convince him to physically harm his mother or his young brother. The angelic boy was changed into violent man. For Maryam, Afghanistan was no place for her son. Just thinking about the turbulence and danger surrounding her innocent baby would make her lose of her mind, drooping to her knees and searching like the insane. She is busy in imagination. In the naturalistic fallacy Alexander writes:

Imagination informs trauma construction just as much where the reference is to something that has actually occurred to something that has not. It is only through the imaginative process of representation that actors have the sense of experience. Even when claims of victimhood are morally justifiable, politically democratic and socially progressive, these claims still cannot be seen as automatic, or natural, response to the actual nature of an event itself. (9)

As stated in these lines imagination is the condition of reliving in past. Person who is suffering from the imagination loses gap between his/her past and present. Distance between past and present gets collapsed and person relives totally in past. Traumatic status is attributed to real or imaginative phenomena, not because of their actual harmfulness or their objective abruptness, but because these objective to have abruptly, and harmfully, affected collective identity.

Maryam, the protagonist of the novel time and again kisses his lost son's photograph and suspicious toward Kaiss. She is physically fit but mentally weak. For example, Maryam describes:

My grief was unendurable. I nearly lost my mind. I plastered the walls of our apartment with baby Duran photograph. I kissed those images repeatedly, muttering aloud, "Allah, how is my mind? Is he hungry? God is my son cold? "One day on a routine trip to buy groceries. I saw a little boy pleading with his mother for a candy bar. She said no and he began to weep. I fell apart, hastening to open a candy bars offer it the child. His mother drew back suspiciously, as I began to plead: 'Give him the candy. Please give him the candy. My baby loved candy too, but now he is missing and I have no way to giving him anything. 'Looking at the sweet baby's face, I burst into tears and ran from the market. (317)

From the lines above we can understand Marym is not living in present. She is living in past and imagination. She is missing her son. She becomes more anxious when little boy comes close. All scenarios prove that she is living in her present. She is totally possessed by past. She has witnessed so many wars since Russian war against to Afghan invasion by Britain, America. This is the root cause of her problems. Wars organized by different groups in Afghanistan are traumatic events for her.

Master narrative embodies our expectation about how things work. Typically, there are based on actual experience. However, sometimes we grow so accepting of a master narrative that we cannot see other possibilities for stories. Alexander writes:

Representation of trauma depends on constructing a compelling framework of cultural classification. In one sense, this is simply telling

is, at the same time, a complex and multivalent symbols process that is contingent, highly contested, and sometimes highly polarizing. For the wider audience to become persuaded that they, too, have become traumatized by an experience or an event, the carrier group need to engage in successful meaning work. (12)

For Alexander, the interpretation of trauma depends on how the cultural framework is classified. It can be said at one point that this whole process tells a new story, but on the other hand, this new story at the same time a complex and multivalent symbolic process that is contingent, highly contested, and sometimes highly polarizing.

According to Alexander four critical representations are essential to the creation of a new master narrative. In social reality, these representations unfold in an interlarded manner that is continuously cross-referential. The causality is symbolic and aesthetic, and sequential or developmental but value added. These four types are nature of a pain, nature of the victim, relation of the trauma victim to the wider audience, and attribution of responsibility.

In case of master narrative, Sasson tells a new story of Maryam but this new story is complex and multivalent symbolic process. This is the story of Maryam Khail, a beautiful Afghan woman born into one of the most influential families in Afghanistan, a family of wealth and power. Despite her beauty, her education and her strength, the evil that lurks in every home in Afghanistan finally caught up with Maryam. The heart of evil beats in Afghanistan. When men hold every advantage, neither wealth, nor strength, nor family can compete with gender. Women have only prayer and hope as allies. Whether the men in their lives choose to marry them off to an old man, take away their children or even murder them, women live with the knowledge that there will be no rescue. Female liberation is not in the Afghan culture.

In *The Nature of the Victim*, Alexander describes it is important to know exactly which groups or collective suffered from the specific traumatogenic pain or whether only one or several groups were affected by the events. Alexander writes:

What group of person was affected by this traumatizing pain? Were they particular individual or groups, or the people in general? Did a singular and delimited group receive the brunt of the pain, or were several groups involved? Were the German Jews the primary victims of the holocaust, or did the victim group extended to the Jews of the pale, European Jewry, or the Jewish people as a whole? Were the millions of polish people who died at the hands of German Nazis also victims of the Holocaust? Were communists, socialism, homosexual, and handicapped person also victims of the Nazi holocaust. (13)

From these lines we can explore that in *For the Love of a Son*, In Afghan people are suffered from the cultural trauma but Russian mainly suffered Pashtun groups. Not only Russian even other group also dominant the ordinary Afghan people. Sasson narrates:

The civil war in Afghanistan never ceased. Sometimes I thought the war might carry on fore ever. When the Soviets finally pulled out they had left the country brimming with the latest military hardware , which was commandeered by the Afghan warlords , who proved themselves easily more brutal and merciless then the Russians at the expense of civilian population. A fully fledged civil war erupted when the warlord failed to agree on anything. (343)

In the next paragraph Maryam describes that about that time exiled Afghan first heard about a new group rising from the concrete dust that had once been the grand

buildings of Afghanistan: the Taliban. Led by a clerk named Mullah Mohammed Omar, the group came out of Kandahar in 1949. Afghans heard how Mullah Omar and his faithful armed religious students first appeared as defenders of the ordinary people from the corruption and brutality of the warlords after they went to free some girls from a poor family who had been raped on the road to Kandahar. In the beginning, the Taliban were welcomed with open arms by the Afghan civilians, who were weary of years of ruthless violence and incessant fighting between the Mujahedin warlords. For Maryan "Never did we imagine that the Taliban would spell unimaginable repression, suffering and doom for our poor fellow countrymen and women" (346).

In this way, characters in novel are haunted by cultural trauma. We can say that even when the nature of the pain has been crystallized and the identity of the victim established, there remains the highly significant question of the members of the victim to the wider audience. To what extent do the members of the audience for trauma representations expression an identity with the immediate victim. According to Alexander typically, at the beginning of a trauma process, most audience members see little if any relation between themselves and the victimized groups. Only if the victims are represented in terms of valued qualities shared by the larger collective identity will the audience be able to symbolically participate in the experience of the originating trauma.

Attribution of the responsibility or in other words making it clear who caused the trauma is the most important and tricky matter. Deciding who has to be blamed for a particular events or situation. For Alexander:

In creating a compelling trauma narrative, it is critical to establish the identity of the perpetrator, the antagonist. Who actually injured the

victim? Who caused the trauma? This issue is always a matter of symbolic and social construction. Did Germany create the Holocaust, or was it the Nazi regime? Was the crime restricted to special SS forces, or was the Wehrmacht, the entire Nazi army, also deeply involved? Did the crime extend to ordinary soldiers, to ordinary citizens, to catholic as well as protestant Germans? Was it only the older generation of Germans who were responsible, or were later generations responsible. (15)

From these lines it is clear that Who create the trauma is the most important and tricky matter. Deciding who has to be blamed for a particular events or situation. In the case of Maryam and her family, are traumatized not only by Russian or Taliban but female were traumatized by their own culture. And in the case of Russian and Taliban also welcomed by Afghan ruler or people.

Maryam describes:

With passing times I often look back on my life, sadly remember all the daughters and mothers in my family. I am haunted by one question: Why were not we all stronger? Why could not we stand up for ourselves against our men? Grandmother, Amin Mother, Saraha, me, All of us. We all struggled but we were weak and fell back into resignation. The forces we were struggling against were not like swimming against the tide . . . but more like swimming against a tsunami. We were swimming against an ancient culture which demands that women always sub mitt, that women always stay weak. So I end where I began . . . dreaming a dream that can never can true. (436)

In Afghanistan only the dreams of boys can come true. Boys own the world they live in, while girls are basically servants, compelled to please the men in the families.

Alexander believes that referring the trauma process to only western society's world be a serious mistake and misunderstanding, in spite of the fact that western societies provided dramatic traumatic episodes in their history. Experiences of trauma in non western societies with same success. Alexander describes:

It would be a serious misunderstanding if trauma theory were restricted in its reference to western social life. True, it has been western societies that have recently provided the most dramatic apologies for traumatic episodes in their national histories. But it has been the non western regions of the world, and the most defenseless segments of the world's population, that have been recently been subjected to the most terrifying traumatic injuries. The victims of western traumas have disproportionately been members of subaltern and marginalized groups. The empirical case studies that follow deals with the legacies of annihilated Jews, enslaved African Americans, defeated German nationals, and dominated and impoverished poles. It should hardly be surprising, in other words, that the theory developed in relation to the empirical ceases can so fluidly be experiences of trauma outside of western societies. (25)

The lines given above clearly describe that trauma should be subjected to the most terrifying traumatic injuries. It means that trauma should focus equally both western and non western societies. In the case of non western societies it is a new concept. The tragic reasons for these recent outpouring of mass murder in the non western world cannot be the concern here for the westerner.

Jean Sasson is from the western part of the world but she writes the story of non western society.

In "A special thank you" she writes:

According to Alison, Maryam's story was very compelling. She had previously written her story and had even hired an editor to clean it up; yet the book failed to interest publishers. Alison said that it was a great disappointment to all that the book remained unsold. Alison had the idea that I would be the perfect writer to make Maryam's dreams come true. That is when Paul told an astonished Alison that he and I were friends, and Alison asked how she might contact me, to tell me about Maryam's compelling story and to ask if I might consider writing it.

From these lines we can say publishing the story of non western societies in the western society is a difficult task. In for the love of a son, Jean Sasson narrates the Afghan story through the central character Maryam.

According to Alexander "collective traumas have no geographical or cultural limitations "process of trauma gives collectivities an opportunities to change, or not change political, social, moral responsibilities and actions on their own experiences. It is like a moral lesson that helps to develop new values. Alexander writes:

This open – ended and contingent process of trauma creation and the assigning of collective responsibility that goes along with it are as relevant to non western as to western societies. Collective traumas have no geographical or cultural limitations. The theory of cultural trauma applies, without prejudice, to any and all instances when societies have not, constructed and experience cultural traumatic

events, and to their efforts to draw, or not to draw, moral lessons that can be said to emanate from them. (27)

Cultural trauma is not merely technical and scientific. It is normatively relevant, and significantly illuminates of moral practical action. However tortures the trauma process, it allows collectivities to define new forms of moral responsibility and to redirect the course of political action.

In for the love of a son all character are facing difficult because of war. All characters are experience of cultural trauma. According to Maryam, Maryam Khalid and Little Duran still live in Saudi Arabia, although there are frequently trips to the USA to visit Nadia, Suzie and other relatives. Big Duran has returned to live in Afghanistan. Although Maryam has never seen her son again, he still communicates with his mother through email messages. Maryam still loves her son and worries about the dangers that surround him in that war-torn country. Uncle Hakim, father to Farid, Zarmina and Zeby, died of Alzheimer's disease in March in Paris. Farid died of throat cancer in Paris on 5 April 2005. He is buried besides his father in a Paris cemetery. Farid's sister Zeby is married to a famous Afghan singer, their son is a keyboard player for his father as well as a fashion model in Germany. Zeby's older sister lives with her husband and her four children in California. Nadia lives in Virginia and still practices medicine. Suzia lives in Virginia with her mother, Nadia. Sister to Maryam's mother, Shagual died of old age in 2007 in Fairfax Virginia, where she is buried. Amina, daughter of Shair, died a few years ago.

At last, we can say that all characters are allowing collectivities to define new forms of moral responsibility and redirect the courses of political action. It is normatively relevant, and significantly illuminates process of moral-practical action. In Jean Saaon's *For the Love of a Son* characters like Maryam, Kaiss, Big Duran

are facing the problem of cultural trauma. They expose their empathy towards trauma victimizer resulted into the trauma victim of themselves. It proves that there is the condition of collective victim in this novel.

III Articulating Trauma in Sasson's *For The Love Of a Son*

This research in Jean Sasson's *For the Love of a Son* exhibits the traumatic experiences of Afghan people due to the Afghan civil war. Afghan people face the difficult situation in the different period of time. Located in one of the most unstable regions of the world, Afghanistan has suffered through years of war and internal conflict for more than three decades; the Afghan people have experience as war time trauma and displacement due to consistent and wide-spread exposure to violence and disorder. Invasion by soviet forces in 1979 constituted the beginning of a protracted conflict in Afghanistan. Staunch resistance by Islamic factions controlled by the Mujahedeen began to employ guerilla war against twin foes-the Afghan government and Soviet forces that were occupying rural regions, resulting in a high death toll and thousands of wounded and displaced people. Continuous attacks and wars from the both side are producing threat of life among Afghan people. And Afghan women are not only traumatized by war but also they are victimized by their own culture. That is the root cause of traumatic experience in *For the Love of a Son*.

This novel *For the Love of a Son* provides the real pictures of Afghan people in post civil war period. Since beginning to the end characters are sufferings from the traumatic experience. It is collection of three decade's activity. Despite of material succession people are not satisfied. They are facing the traumatic experiences. Maryam, a beautiful lady lives in Saudi Arab faces the traumatic experience. Her experience of sleepless condition is an example of traumatic experience. Sight of burning plane at early morning is a traumatic trigger, which reawakens the traumatic experience in her. Not only this, radio and television broadcasting about war are also reawakens the traumatic experience in characters. In this novel, characters have undergone through traumatic suffering.

Working through is condition of frequently visit of terrible past. In *For the Love of a Son*, Maryam since beginning to end frequently revisits the past. As a educated woman she should be conscious, but she is facing the problem of sleeplessness. She knows what is happening to her. She can elaborate it but cannot escape from it. Sleeplessness, aggressive behaviors and continuous anxieties of Maryam are product of 'working through'. She desirably elaborates her experiences. She becomes more intoxicated while elaborating the terrible past. That is her attempt to getting rid from traumatic past. Marya repeats the past but is not totally possessed by past. She knows the gap between 'now' and 'then'.

Unlike 'working through', 'acting out' is condition of denial. In alternative words, it is compulsive repetition of traumatic past. Characters like Kaiss, Big Duran have relived in their traumatic past. They are totally detached from present. Kaiss is involved in war. He only knows violence. He has learnt to be violent due to the war practices. He is reliving in the world of violence. Big Duran does not recognize his surroundings. In this way, condition of 'acting out' can be found in *For the Love of a Son*.

Likewise, characters feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways. Characters like Maryam, Kaiss, Little Duran and Maryam's relatives are Theo, Daisy are suffering from aftereffects. They are being traumatized not because of direct eyewitness of terrific scenarios but because of their aftereffects traumatic victimizer.

This research not only exposes the traumatic experience of the Afghan people, but tires to prove that character are seeking peace and harmony. War is indigestible everywhere. Characters who are suffering from 'working through' are surviving their

life by verbalization or narration of traumatic experience. That is to say, though every kind of traumatic suffering is problematic, through verbalization and narratevization of terrible past like in 'working through', one can exist for long time. That can be found in Jean Sasson's novel *For the Love of a Son*.

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