

### Politics of Memory in Greg Mortenson's *Three Cups of Tea*

This research paper makes an inquiry upon Greg Mortenson's autobiographical memoir *Three Cups of Tea* in order to explore his motives and intentions behind sharing his personal struggles, experiences, and challenges that he faced during his humanitarian mission in Pakistan. The paper unfolds Mortenson's politics behind writing the memoir and shares his experiences with the eastern world, especially poor tribe of the Pakistan. Mortenson gives the graphic picture of the most painful living conditions of the Korphe people and also includes the ways the American government exercises the military powers to dominate Pakistan and Afghanistan in the name of terrorist land. The memoir reflects his departure from such political and religious hostility between the two worlds and his unconditional dedication in improving their life. These humanitarian motives can be found behind his act of remembering. His memory becomes the source of the autobiographical narrative of this memoir which challenges the hostile tradition between the two worlds and advocate for the means of education as a weapon to fight terrorism but not bloody war. Therefore, the researcher hereby invests the primary focus on the writer's act of memorization and unfolds the hidden meanings behind it.

*Three Cups of Tea* revolves around the memory of Greg Mortenson, an American mountaineer whose change in perception of life underlines the core plot of the memoir. The book dominates the picture of his encounter with the remote community of Pakistan known as Korphe and it moves on with Mortenson's gradual understanding of the remote world of the community which is opposite to the world of developed country like America where he grew up. As a mountaineer, Mortenson begins the book with his mission on climbing the second highest peak of the world named K2. However, his mountaineering mission turns into the humanitarian journey

following his accident in the course of ascending the peak in the company of his fellow members. The breath-taking downfall from the mountain into the mass of glacier with no hope of survival turned out to be the point of transformation in Mortenson's philosophy of life. After the generous engagement of Korphe locals into his treatment and recovery, Mortenson found a ray of enlightenment about his understanding of the land that has the language, culture, religion and traditions in sharp opposition to his western upbringing. At a time when the relation of the divided worlds between America and Pakistan was in the culmination of terrorism and hostility, the memoir proceeds further with the narrative of the lived experiences by Mortenson where he is seen transgressing the assumed cultural differences between the worlds in the unconditional dedication for the service of humanity regardless of the diverse backgrounds. However, the research paper also probes into the implicit politics of Mortenson's writing that tends to represent the east, particularly Pakistan as an uneducated and uncivilized land while still looking humanitarian in his project.

The entire memoir develops into the progressive narration visualizing the course of actions; most of them are risky and life-threatening both in terms of his individual adventure as well as the prevalent dangers under the suffocation of terrorist attack and the mounting political rivalry between America and Pakistan. The progression in the narration keeps unfolding the mode of transformations on the part of Mortenson. His passion, compassion and devotion as well as determination to pay back the generosity of Korphe people reflects him in the evolving process of transforming from a typical individualistic American fellow to an epitome of universal humanitarian icon. His transformation from an ordinary mountaineer to an inspiring humanitarian is realized with the help of his memorization in the memoir. A profound reading of the introspective events throughout the memoir makes one realize

the message of humanitarian values that Mortenson intends to convey. The researcher hereby pays a critical observation upon the ways the autobiographer aims to establish the meaning in the form of humanitarian appeal for which the analysis of memory has been rigorously exercised because the autobiographical writing like the present memoir heavily depends on the process of memorization in order to explore the past moments, incidents and events. Memory lies at the centre of autobiographical writings and is very essential in autobiographer's struggle for the formation of his/her identity: "the remembering subject actively creates the meaning of the past in the act of remembering" (Smith and Watson16). These lines make an emphasis on the fact that the act of remembering is not a neutral act but it tends to be more political because in the process of remembering the writer happens to deliver a certain intention in the process of memorizing the past events. Through the memoir, the writer shows readiness to trip over the memory and trace down the history of his/her memories in order to bring them back to the present and explore the significance from them that benefits the present time. It is not possible to pinpoint the particular reason behind a person's desire for going back to the past in the lane of memory but what is clear to contend is that one's act of remembering involves some kind of intentions. Act of evacuating one's past memories is preceded by the purpose. Therefore, the researcher probes into the intentions and purposes behind Greg Mortenson's endeavors to document his personal experiences of going through the terrible times during his humanitarian service in the extremely disadvantaged community of Pakistan situated at the mountainous belt.

Memory is the subject of an autobiographical writing such as memoir like *Three Cups of Tea* in which there is the process of meaning making. Generally, memory is taken to be a mere act of recalling one's past moments. It is generally

understood to be one's nostalgic approach to relive the past by revoking the memories from the bygone days. Little has been discussed about the unstated intention behind one's memorization. However, in the field of literary studies, the act of remembering holds importance for the writer remembers something in his effort to form certain meaning. It is implied that the process of remembering is driven by some motives. However painful and pleasant historical events are, one feels compelled and obliged to take their memory back to the history for the fulfillment of some motives.

As far as the formal style of remembering in the form of professional writings such as memoir is concerned, the author recollects the past through the memory and explores certain identity through the help of the language. The autobiographer's recollection orients towards the exploration of his/her life. In fact, memorization in the fashion of autobiographical writing is a literary discovery of the truth. History is something one cannot change but it carries the vastness of the valuable experiences out of which one can learn to correct the present and hence, better the path to the future. Thus, memory is the instrument through which the autobiographer channels back to the past and intends to create some kind of message or meaning which communicates to the contemporary scene. The message the writer aims to deliver is mostly inspired by the anguish of the present situations. The present situation might be personal circumstances or the circumstances at the social and national as well as international level. There are often the political, cultural, social and religious forces that stimulate a sense of urgency in the mind of the autobiographer motivating them not to hold back the memories in vacuum but give them a value by sharing them on the public platform so that little contribution is made to resolve the ongoing circumstance. Mortenson must have realized the urgency of scripting his memories in the form of the memoir because he could see the widening gap between the two

worlds: America and Pakistan and each world plotting narratives to generalize others existence. His individual symbolic efforts in the form of philanthropic service in the land that America regards as terrorist land and adopts the military bombings as only weapon to uproot the terrorism intends to offer an alternative course of actions to address the issue of terrorism. His philanthropic works symbolically challenge the American discourse of war as an anti-human policy that focuses on killing people in the mask of establishing humanity by dismantling terrorism. But Mortenson's memoir as a document of his personal experiences makes a deep observation behind the occurrence of terrorism as the outcome of illiteracy and ignorance and advocates for the education and humanitarian aids instead of bullets and bombs to eradicate the terrorism.

Talking about the importance of memory in autobiographical writings such as memoir, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson identify, "the writer of an autobiography depends on access to memory to tell a retrospective narrative of the past and to situate the present within that experiential history. Memory, thus, is both source and authenticator of autobiographical acts" (16). Here, these lines stress on the importance of memory in authenticating information and message of the writer's memories. It implies that the act of remembering allows the autobiographer to relocate the structure of the present life following the lessons learned from the past. Yet, the act of remembering is not neutral act. In the process of memorizing something, the writer is guided by certain ideology. So, the author has vested motives behind recollecting his experiences.

Since the act of remembering is influenced by the monopoly of author's sole authority, the meaning making mechanism remains affected by the personal intentions and ideological orientations of the author. The autobiographer constructs the narration

of his memorization in ways that serve to his/her inner motives in the course of forming their identity. Their memorization in the process of writing is the representation of their identity. Thus, the remembering contains the political dimension in a sense it operates to serve a subject's purpose. Generally, politics is understood to be related to power, institutions, and government: "art of government, public affairs, compromise and consensus" (Maitah 9). In the literary studies, politics is concerned with "Whyness" (Smith and Julia 185) which means why something is remembered. It refers to why someone remembers something in the course of his time. So, 'politics of memory' thematically refers to the process by which an individual or group remembers something for a specific purpose. The act of remembering is not an accidental work but an intentional venture driven by the specific purpose. The present research hereby looks for the purposes behind Mortenson's remembrance of his experiences in non-western world. The investigation of his purpose behind the remembering will exponentially rely on his non-western approach for the philanthropy within the parameter of the adverse cultural distance between America and Pakistan.

Greg Mortenson is an American national from average family class background. He is a mountaineer by profession besides being a nurse in America. He comes from the family background whose parents were known for their social service. Initially, Mortenson was only an American as an individual who has a family and a sister. He developed an intense passion of the adventurous life as a mountaineer and started joining different mountaineering projects. He already had the record of successful mountain climbing. His sister was suffering from a strange health issue which continued to deteriorate adversely. After the sudden demise of his sister, he vowed a mountaineering voyage in order to pay the tribute in the memorization of his

dead sister. For this to happen, he decided a climbing on the summit of the world's second highest peak named Mount K2 which is situated at Pakistan. He then travelled to Pakistan in course of his mountaineering. His arrival to Pakistan at this moment was provoked by his personal reason. It was not guided by any humanitarian mission. It was a usual personal plan for the success of which he stepped into the land that is characterized by the terrorism and violence. It was the land which was taken to be an arch rival by America. However, Mortenson cared less about the political hostility between the two governments but focused more on the accomplishment of his family purpose.

In the course of steering forward for the top of the mountain engulfed by the moving masses of the glacial slopes, Mortenson experienced a tragic downfall. He collapsed while climbing the mount K2 in Himalayan region of the Pakistan. He found himself isolated in a secluded part of the glacier where he laid down helpless and hopeless:

He found a flat slab of rock that seemed stable enough, scooped icy snow into his water bottle with ungloved hands, and wrapped himself in his blanket, willing himself not to focus on how alone and exposed he was. His forearm was lashed with rope burns from the rescue, and he knew he should tear off the clotted gauze bandages and drain pus from the wounds that refused to heal at this altitude, but he couldn't quite locate the motivation. As he lay shivering on uneven rock, Mortenson watched as the light of the sun smoldered blood red on the daggeder summits to the east, then flared out, leaving their after-images burning in the blue-black. (11)

The given passage from the memoir narrates the graphic picture of the tumultuous and troubled life Mortenson lived in the course of the journey. However, he is rescued by

the local tribe called Korphe. Korphe is the backward community residing in the extreme remote of the mountainous region in the Pakistan. It is the community that is far from the central attention of its government. The Korphe locals showed a great gesture of humanity and generosity by rescuing him. His near-death life evacuated by the locals and treated him to the full recovery. He spent two weeks in the intimate company of the Korphe community. After his full recovery and domestic diagnosis, Mortenson found that the life characterized by malnutrition, poverty, illiteracy, lack of infrastructure such as transportation:

...after even a few days in the village, Mortenson began to see that Korphe was far from the pre Mortenson began to see that Korphe was far from the Prelapsarian paradise of western fantasy. In every home, at least one family member suffered from goiters or cataracts. The children, whose ginger hair he had admired, owed their coloring to a form of malnutrition called kawashiorkor. And he learned from his talks with Twahah, after the nurmadhar's son returned from evening prayer at the village Mosque, that the nearest doctor was a week's walk away in Skardu, and one out of every three Korphe children died before reaching their first birthday. (30)

After his intimate observation over the pathetic and backward living conditions of the Korphe people, he realized the new rays of perceptions germinating in his mind. He felt sorry for the misery of the Korphe folks whose sense of generosity towards him was not as poor as their physical living structure. He befriended the captain of the community, Haji Ali and promised to discover the meaning of his life through the means of service to humanity "There was a much more meaningful gesture he could make in honor of his sister's memory" (33). His determination took a shape to change him from a typical mountaineer to a humanitarian because he chose to improve the

living conditions of the Korphe community through the light of darkness. It marks the point of his transformation from a personal to public figure and a mountaineer to humanitarian icon. However, he had the fatal challenge ahead of him before he began the new chapter of his life as a humanitarian. It was about the practical but brutal reality of terrorism instigated by the extreme political atmosphere between the extremist Muslims and the American hegemonic discourse.

The extremist Muslim group Taliban was another greatest threat whose fundamental religious doctrine ban girls from going to school. He is deeply moved by their adverse condition of life and promised to build schools and educate them to fight against the terrorism. He came to learn that the lack of education is responsible for the rise of terrorism unlike western's stereotyping of Muslims as inborn terrorist and barbaric. Despite his religious identity as Christian and American nationality, he stands above any religious and national boundaries and dedicate himself for the service of humanity in reforming the lifestyle of Korphe people. In spite of being from a society that celebrates the value of individualism, he follows the eastern philosophy of humanitarianism and serves for the benevolence of the Pakistani poor tribe. So, his act of remembering his journey in the memoir shows his transformation from mountaineer to humanitarian, personal to social, individualism to humanitarianism which challenges the general assumptions of westerners as individualistic. This mode of transformation in the protagonist is the area of study for Bildungsroman.

Bildungsroman is the genre of writings in which the story has the narration at the mode of progression. Such style of narration deals with the psychological, physical or emotional transformations on the part of the protagonists. It is basically concerned with the gradual development of the plot that is characterized by the

progressive growth and maturity of the protagonists. This kind of writing begins with the characters at the initial state of innocence, personal need, young, and naivety. However, as the story unfolds further, the development in the personality of the protagonist is actualized by the enlightened state of their understanding as Sidone Smith and Julia Watson define:

[T]additionally the Bildungsroman has been regarded as the novel of development and social formation of a young man. It recounts the youth and young manhood of a sensitive protagonist who is attempting to learn the nature of the world, discover its meaning and patterns, and acquire a philosophy of life and the art of living. The plot of development may involve escape from a repressive family, schooling and a journey into the wide world of urban life where encounters with a series of mentors, romantic involvements and entrepreneurial ventures lead the protagonists to reevaluate assumptions. (189)

Such development and growth arises because of the harsh and hard circumstances that the characters must go through. These enduring circumstances introduce a point of transformation on the level of the protagonists' perception of the world. They rise from personal world of innocence, naivety and youth to the practical world of realism. Mortenson is seen being spiritually transformed after his intimacy with the backward community of Korphe tribe. The memoir deals with Mortenson's development from being an ordinary mountaineer to a humanitarian icon. His point of spiritual growth is realized at his shocking encounter with the pathetic lifestyle of the Korphe community. He could differentiate the sophisticated living standards of the Americans and the disadvantaged life of the Korphe whose generosity is like the peak of the mount K2. His family circumstances with the death of his beloved sister, his own

tragic failure during mountaineering as well as his observation upon the primitive life of the Korphe community forces his spiritual change. His spiritual transformation can be felt in the line that reads, “During the last decade, since a series of failures and accidents transformed him from a mountaineer to humanitarian” (Relin 3). Such spiritual transformation seems to contradict the general cultural dichotomy between the east and the west. Mortenson’s newly born humanitarian discourse that advocates for the importance of schools and education to battle against the terrorism dismantles the American cultural politics of war on Pakistan for the eradication of terrorism rampant in Pakistani soil.

The historical relation between the West, America in particular and Pakistan is full of conflicts and unhealthy wars. Mortenson’s act of remembering which concerns with the encounter between a man from American nationality in contact with the Pakistan, so-called land misrepresented as the manufacturer of terrorists indicates a collapse of the long-held American hostile perception of Muslim identity. America has always been aggressive towards Pakistan, especially post-9/11 attack upon the twin towers. It has further worsened the interaction between the two worlds. Within such a political and cultural division, Mortenson’s recollection of his humanitarian interaction with the Pakistani community proves to his proposal for an alternative anti-terrorist discourse in the form of humanitarian discourse instead of the long-standing war-driven military bombing for the end of the terrorism. America has always taken a political intervention within the internal affairs of the Pakistan and Afghanistan in the mask of annihilating the terrorism from its root. The intervention is characterized by the heavy deployment of military troops and the arms and ammunitions. The war against the terrorist attack is the mainstream politics of America at its supposedly mission for peace and prosperity across the world. But

Mortenson's intervention is prone to nongovernmental approaches that reject the American policy of military bombings for the extermination of terrorism but advocate for the rise of education because the terrorism is an outcome of ignorance. It is the result of darkness in the Muslims land like Pakistan. He was against the bloody war as the instrument for fighting the terrorism. He went on building the schools and library in the remote part of Pakistan and Afghanistan to promote the education for the promising future of the children. He held the belief that the remote Muslim lands could be improved and turned into the land of peace and property only through the books but not the bombs:

In the long term, we have to help feed and clothe people where terrorists are recruiting volunteers. And we have to educate them-especially the girls. We have to prove to them that the world can be better place. If we truly want a legacy of peace for our children, we need to understand that this is a war that will ultimately be won with books, not with bombs. (qtd. in *Wiley* 294)

The given statement echoes the apolitical spirit of Mortenson who valorizes the need of humanitarian need to overcome the issue of terrorism in replacement of American discourse of war that only takes innocent lives. He advices to win the hearts of the Muslims and bring them to the world of civilization through the means of education. Bombs only complicate the enmity between the worlds resulting the bloody destruction of innocent lives. Mortenson, however, did not have an easy journey during his humanitarian mission. His position as a Christian and American invited an equal level of threat during his philanthropic work in the Pakistan. The Muslims holding an extremist ideology expressed a strong indignation and accused him of trying to influence the Muslim traditions. Such dichotomy rises because of the cultural differences between the two worlds. Characterizing the difference between

West and non-western traditions, cultural critic Ziauddin Sardar argues:

In the western liberal framework, the individual is constantly at war with the community. The individual's main concern is to keep his/her identity intact, separate from all others, to preserve the boundaries at all cost, to enclose herself/himself within a protective wall. Whereas in non-western cultures, morality is defined by the community or society. (61-2)

These lines express the most sickening value of individualism in the western world like America. However, going through Mortenson's memory of his humanitarian relation with the Korphe Muslims and his unconditional mission for building schools to educate them gives us alternative reality that not all westerners are extremely individualistic and self-centric as concluded by Sardar. Mortenson's acceptance of Korphe Muslims' religious prayers, reading *Quran*, greeting them in their mother language shows the message for mutual tolerance and indicates his philosophy of humanity instead of any binary politics. Since peaceful acceptance of others culture is a humanitarian discourse for bridging the cultural gap between the two cultural worlds, Mortenson started giving away deep sense of reverence and respect to the religious books and prayers of the Muslim. He joined the Korphe community in the time of prayer sessions and greeted them in their own cultural manners. It allowed Muslim to trust him because it made them feel that their religion is valued equally. Instead of ongoing American politics of glorifying Christianity and stereotyping the Islam religion as the religion of violence and blood, Mortenson impressed them with the value of cultural diversity.

Likewise, reading Mortenson's memories of his humanitarian works in Pakistan also provides the horrendous picture of the adversity, illiteracy, poverty and the most difficult life the Korphe Muslims have been living through. Conventionally,

there has always been held the sharp dichotomy between the private and public. The public is given a high position by branding the private to a space that merely expresses the private experiences. These private experiences have no connection to the public dimension of the life. But, going through Mortenson's memoir which is entirely the documentation of his personal experiences that he got during his humanitarian works in the remote part of Pakistan. Although the memories filled with a wide range of experiences come from Mortenson's private space but these experiences evidently embody a larger picture of the public world of the Korphe community. It gives a vivid picture of how backward and underprivileged Korphe community is. While talking about the nature of Korphe's living conditions, the narration reads:

Mortenson began to see that Korphe was far from the Prelapsarian paradise of western fantasy. In every home, at least one family member suffered from goiters or cataracts. The children, whose ginger hair he had admired, owed their coloring to a form of malnutrition called kawashiorkor. And he learned from his talks with Twahah, after the nurmadhar's son returned from evening prayer at the village Mosque, that the nearest doctor was a week's walk away in Skardu, and one out of every three Korphe children died before reaching their first birthday. (30)

These lines show an excellent of how Mortenson's act of remembering succeeds in exposing the graphic picture of the most deprived and poor life that the backward Muslim community such as Korphe "Everything about their life was struggle" (31). After his observation of such life, he initiates a humanitarian movement of building the schools "I will build school, I promise" (33) to educate them and improve their life despite the threats from few Muslims extremist who accused of imposing western

cultures and overshadowing Muslim cultures “This man doesn’t follow Islam. He follows his mind” (193). This moment of his memoir gives us the picture of the political and religious enmity rooted between the two worlds. However, Mortenson’s determined mission to do humanitarian works and rescue the Korphe Muslims from the poverty and terrorism with the means of peace and education challenges the America’s constant valorization of military forces to fight Muslims. His memory conveys the message of humanity. The subtitle of the memoir *One Man’s Mission to Peace... One School at a Time* shows the humanitarian politics of Mortenson’s reason for scripting the memoir. Talking about the significance of the book as the value of message for altruism, Andrew Nicholas in his review states, “For the readers interested in a book about altruism, Mortenson’s effort not unlike those of Jody William’s in her personal campaign to ban land mines, he constructed over seventy-eight schools in one of the most remote and dangerous area of the world” (22), This review evidently valorizes the importance of altruism as seen in Mortenson’s apolitical engagement with Korphe people and for their better life. His review sheds a deep light on the innermost purpose of Mortenson’s efforts to serve the Korphe people. The politics of Mortenson’s remembering is explicitly observed and explored by this review which rewards the works of Mortenson as the act of humanitarianism dedicated to imparting the light of knowledge through the construction of the schools because Mortenson evolved over the period of time during his stay in the community that the terrorism is not because they were born to be entitled but because they are misled by the limited groups’ extremist ideology that instigate in them a sense of retaliation and revenge. Such a transformation on the part of Mortenson’s understanding encouraged him to initiate the course of philanthropy to educate them and end the bloodshed policy of terrorism. Mortenson advocates for the discourse of

altruism rather than the American discourse of interventionism to fight against the terrorism which is where the politics of remembering is found working.

Although Mortenson's dedication towards his humanitarian works in Pakistan is an outcome of his pure reasons, the memoir has been criticized for its unstated political discourse. There are critics who blame that Mortenson's act of remembering his philanthropic interaction with the Pakistani promotes the belief that the American interventionism should be fundamental in establishing the peace and eradicating the terrorism. Mortenson's American nationality and his nongovernmental involvement into the improvement of the Korphe people's backward lives is a disguised form of the white man's burden in civilizing the uncivilized lands. In his article entitled *Books vs Bombs? Humanitarian Development and the narrative of terror in Northern Pakistan*, Nosheen Ali identifies:

In TCT the relationality of the American self and the Pakistani other disappears in a discourse of poverty and ignorance that is largely closed, self-evident and self-affirming- and thus orientalising. While the crude caricaturing of the Muslim is replaced with a more humanizing one that respects and works with the local, the narrative nevertheless remains locked in a discourse that celebrates us humanity in the face of the assumed ignorance and terrorism of the Muslim. (552)

In the light of the given lines, it is obvious to learn that Mortenson has been misinterpreted under the historical context of orientalism. Ali seems to argue that Mortenson's self is affected by the American hegemonic discourse that renders the non-west as the other which depends on the west for its civilization. Mortenson's exploration of ignorance and lack of education as the primary factors for the emergence of terrorism across the Muslims lands has been politicized as the

nongovernmental style of orientalising that demeans the civilizational value of the nonwestern world. Ali's criticism of Mortenson's humanitarian message through his remembering sounds to be more similar to what cultural critic Edward Said propounded as orientalism. In an attempt to make a operational study into western approaches and attitudes towards the east, Said emerged as the renowned cultural and political critics and a theorist. His theoretical masterpiece *Orientalism* changed the world by shaking up the western consciousness towards eastern. His theoretical interrogation into the character of western discourse towards eastern opened a platform for the critical discussion over the western rhetorical intervention upon the eastern. Said's orientalism directs its attention at the political approach of the western world into the internal affairs of the non-western. It dictates into the discourses that western apply as an effort to stereotype the non-western and render it as the other. As a non-western thinker, Said defines *Orientalism* as:

Orientalism...is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the orient' and (most of the time) 'the occident'...Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the orient-dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it...orientalism is premised upon exteriority, that is, on the fact that Orientalist...makes orient speak, describes the orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West. (21-22)

Here, Said coins the terminology to expose the political discourse of western world. He calls it *Orientalism* which is the western construction of the system of thought by which the western world creates the binary in terms of thoughts, culture, traditions, and religion and demeans the non-western world as the other or inferior one. Such discourse of orientalism that divides the world as Western and non-Western with the

former in the superior position is forcefully imposed into Mortenson's retrospective narrative in the memoir. Ali further critiques:

In the aftermath of 9/11 the cause of terrorism was traced and confined to the problem of Islam. In part through TCT this religio-cultural narrative has been complicated by combining the problem of Islam with that of poverty and illiteracy. Muslims are still the problems-no longer because of Islam per se, but because they are poor and ignorant, and easily amenable to extremist interpretations of Islam. Hence, it remains an Islam versus the west narrative, but now combined with the white man's burden. By locating the root cause of terrorism in poverty and ignorance-naturalized as the most defining features of Muslim lands-TCT provides a thoroughly depoliticized and ahistorical narrative of terrorism in which the devastating effects of US interventionism in the region are erased, and thus the US rendered innocent. (549)

In these lines, Ali's imposed political reading on Mortenson's apolitical humanitarian discourse does not sound very convincing. It is an act of overcritical reading and overlooked reviews because it lacks the ethical understanding on the part of the autobiographer's personal motive and the tropes of historically-driven political discourse overshadowed the personal intention in Mortenson's act of remembering. Mortenson's retrospective narration does not entertain and enforce the discourse of Said's orientalism because it does not intend to promote the politics of binary for hierarchical division between the two worlds. Rather it is guided by the humanitarian approach for the eradication of the cultural politics of war and advocates for the humanity as the basis of relation between the two countries and cultures. His vehement criticism against American policy of bombings for ending terrorism evidently testifies if his humanitarian work is political exercise of oriental discourse

or a purely philanthropic charity and it can be sensed when his retrospective lines reads:

I'm no military expert, and these figures might not be exactly right. But as best as I can tell, we've launched 114 Tomahawk cruise missiles into Afghanistan so far. Now take the cost of one of those missiles tipped with a Raytheon guidance systems, which I think is about \$840,000. For that much money, you could build dozens of schools that could provide tens of thousands of students with a balanced nonextremist education over the course of a generation. Which do you think will make us more secure?...I realized my credibility in that part of the world depended on me not being associated with the American governments, especially its military. (294-95)

In these lines, we can sense Mortenson's apolitical overtone and the humanitarian discourse to fight the terrorism. He shows the indignation towards the application of military powers because it only creates the bloodshed war which is not the root cause for the rise of terrorism. According to him, the fundamental cause of the terrorism is the lack of education which resulted in by the ignorance and poverty. His interrogative tone in the given statement "what do you think will secure us? reflects the sense of collective responsibility. It is not only the Muslims who are severely affected by the terrorist extremist ideology but the western peace will be disturbed. It questions about the sustainable peace with the permanent end of terrorism which is possible only through the education that educate and enlighten the upcoming generations about the dark reality of extremist ideology and enable them to fight against it but not adhere to it. The last line in the statement depicts him making a point of departure from American militaristic approach. He feels confident that his humanitarian approach is more credible than American bombings. This humanitarian

discourse of him sets him apart from the orientalist discourse of western politics. His philanthropic approach subverts the generalized assumption of western culture as the culture of individualism. His adoption of eastern value of communitarianism as Sardar distinguished earlier can be realized through his discovery of dehumanizing effects of western valorization of rugged individualism:

For years, Mortenson had known, intellectually, that the word “Muslim” means, literally, “to submit”. And like many Americans, who worshipped at the temple of rugged individualism, he had found the idea dehumanizing. But for the first time, kneeling among one hundred strangers, watching them wash away not only impurities, but also, obviously, the aches and cares of their daily lives, he glimpsed the pleasure to be found in submission to a ritualized fellowship of prayer. (68)

In the light of this narrative line as a part of Mortenson’s recollected memories, it is clear to see Mortenson’s cultural assimilation and reverence for co-existence. His embracing of eastern tradition of communitarianism over the western valorization of individualism speaks excellent of his motive behind humanitarian message for bringing the cultural harmony between the divided worlds. So, it is irrelevant claim to assert his humanitarian discourse as the disguise of binary politics. On top, Mortenson’s embracing of the eastern value of communitarianism shows his transformation from an individualized American fellow to the social and secularized human being.

Since Bildungsroman is about the growth of protagonist that comes from the experiencing of all kinds of experiences like it is seen in Mortenson’s narrative, the memoir is modeled within the style of Bildungsroman style of narration. Pointing out the progressive mode of Bildungsroman, Marianne Hirsch describes it as, “a progression of connected events leading up to a definite denouement” (293). Like

Hirsch characterizes Bildungsroman style of narration, *The Three Cups of Tea* shows the journey of Mortenson at his progressive development of new perspective and attitudes towards life and others culture. The book begins with him being a typical American with the mission for mountaineering. He carries with him the western ways of looking at another culture. At his initial days in the Pakistan, he didn't have any well-planned humanitarian project. He was as normal American as anyone around. He came there with a sole mission for stepping on the summit of the mountain k2. His beliefs, thoughts, perceptions of life were identical to how American are taught. But his constant and essential encounters with the Korphe people and their lifestyles as well as ignorance and poverty changed him from an individual to social being with a social responsibility of serving the people in difficulties. His life witnessed a series of events and incidents that began to contradict his earlier perceptions and thoughts. The following confessional line specifies his point of transformation from western thought to humanitarian discourse: "I support the war in Afghanistan. I believed in it because I believed we were serious when we said we planned to rebuild Afghanistan. I'm here because I know that military victory is only the first phase of winning the war on terror and I'm afraid we're not willing to take the next steps" (294). These lines reflect Mortenson's departure from his American consciousness to humanitarian consciousness. Initially, he was in support of American politics of war for he thought it was an important tool to drain out terrorism from the region. But, as he observes the internal reality of the Korphe community and some terrorism-affected communities of Afghanistan, he evolves in his understanding of the reality. He learns that the lack of education is the primary reason for the rampant of terrorism. Thus, he makes a shift at his consciousness towards Muslims and Pakistan as a whole and argues against the American politics of war.

However, mainstream American politics of stereotyping Muslims or eastern world still seems to be working, be consciously or unconsciously. His implicit political overtone is realized when he says, “The British policy was ‘divide and conquer’. But I say ‘unite and conquer’” (189). Here, he means to unite all regardless of any religious, cultural and any other differences. Still, his reference from British colonial history makes him sound political in the tone. Similarly, the following narrative lines expose the ugliness of the Pakistani world:

Don’t go to any place alone. Find a host you trust, a village chief would be best, and wait until he invites you to his home to drink tea. Only in this way will you be safe.

Finding someone to trust in Peshawar was turning out to be harder than Mortenson imagined. As a hub for Pakistani’s black-market economy, the city was filled with unsavory characters. Opium, arms, and carpets were the town’s lifeblood, and the men he’d met since arriving seemed as shabby and disreputable as his cheap hotel. (156)

These narrative lines overtly underestimate the image of Pakistan as a land filled with fear, insecurity, betrayal, violence and Pakistani as treacherous. It might be Mortenson’s objective explanation of what he saw there but the narrative representation seems to go extreme. There are best parts of Pakistani civilization. Mortenson’s explanation of Korphe as a community suffering from disease, starvation, lack of education and Peshawar city as violent world with terrible environment shows Pakistan as a country in pity. It somehow depicts the working of Mortenson’s bias from western superiority. Yet, details of his works and sufferings throughout the memoir suggest more about his humanitarian spirit.

His transformation from a mountaineer to humanitarian fellow becomes the

inspirational story for many western people who still look down upon the Muslim as a symbol of terrorist. Mortenson's memorization in the memoir presents him in the process of becoming like Mikhail Bakhtin argues that Bildungsroman style of narration presents the reader "the image of man in the process of becoming" (19). Here, the line implies that the individual being does not stay stagnant or static because it evolves through the passage of time. It is through one's experiences and actions that one begins to learn more and be shaped by them for the times to come. This memoir has the protagonist flowing through a constant flow of changes in his perceptions and understanding of life by the influence of the powerful events and circumstances. Mortenson's retrospective remembering establishes himself as the symbol of humanitarian figure whose unconditional dedication for the service of humanity regardless of diverse cultural, religious, and political boundaries spreads the message that the feeling of humanity and humane is the peaceful weapon to bridge any difference. His humanitarian identity promotes the fact that education is a key to fight terrorism and create the peace on the earth. His transformation within himself does not stop at one place. After his successful construction of schools in Korphe community in Pakistan, he diversified his works by extending it to the Afghanistan, another land devastated by the brutality of terrorism.

When Afghanistan locals from the region where terrorism severely affected them came to appeal Mortenson for his humanitarian support to rescue them. Mortenson was very aware of the plight and pathetic conditions of Afghanistan since it is continually plagued by American bombings in the name of finishing the existence of terrorism. His empathetic inclination towards Afghanistan and his anti-military message can be sense in the lines in which he challenges some American officers who held him under custody after learning his intimacy with the Muslims:

I'm no military expert. And these figures might not be exactly right. But as best as I can tell, we've launched 114 Tomahawk cruise missiles into Afghanistan so far. Now take the cost of one of those missiles tipped with a Raytheon guidance system, which I think is about \$ 840,000. For that much money, you could build dozens of schools that could provide tens of thousands of students with a balanced education over the course of a generation. Which do you think will make us more secure?

These narrative lines from Mortenson place him on the ethical line. He adopts non-violence principle and raises the ethical questions over the American approach towards terrorism. His insistence on the education as a only weapon to fight terrorism resonates very strongly. The lines appear as Mortenson's defensive voice for the protection of Afghanistan land from the American bloody discourse of war. His emphasis sits on the schools and education to alleviate the illiteracy and ignorance from Afghanistan. He founded a charitable organization in order to strengthen and extend the humanitarian service. His charitable organization is named Central Asia Institute which is run and sponsored by different donations. He started building schools and recruit teachers by using the economic resources from CAI. With the establishment of this charitable organization, he expanded his mission for schools in Afghanistan too:

Like most everything else in Kabul, the city's schools had been badly damaged in the fighting. They were officially slated to reopen later that spring. Mortenson told Hash and Abdullah that he wanted to see how Kabul's schools were coming along, so they set out together in Abdullah's yellow Toyota, trying to find them. Only 20 percent of Kabul's 159 schools were functional enough to begin holding classes, Mortenson learned. They would have to

struggle to accommodate the city's three hundred thousand students in shifts, holding classes outdoors, or in buildings so shattered they provided only rubble around which to gather, not actual shelter. (283)

Here, the lines explain evidently how Mortenson's unending mission for schools and education doesn't get confined to any particular region and culture. He moves beyond any boundary in order to carry out his mission for education as an alternative to fight the terrorism. His expansion of building schools as far as Afghanistan proves his ambition to replace American war by walls of school. Concluding how Mortenson's mission for schools pointed the failure of America's discourse of war, *New York Review of Books* evaluates, "Mortenson's book has much to say about the American Failures in Afghanistan" (qtd. in *Three Cups of Tea* vi). This review evidently echoes that the argument of the research that Mortenson's politics of remembering through the autobiographical memoir is to repel the American politics of war against Pakistan and promote the discourse of humanitarianism as an alternative approach to fight terrorism. Hence, his memory revolves around this social context of American war and crisis of humanitarianism.

In fact, memory is the process of associating the personal memories with its social dimension because one's personal memories are socially articulated. To some extent, one's personal memories are affiliated and associated with the collective identity. Talking about the nature of memory, Anne Whitehead argues, "Memory is a specifically social phenomenon" (123). That is to say that memory is socially articulated. Memories may be coming from the personal space but still they hold their origin from the social dimension. What one remembers does not go beyond the boundary of the social phenomenon but captures the moments played out within the zone of one's social spectrum. Talking in the same vein emphasizing on how

memories are more social, Avishahi Margalit asserts, “We usually care about our parents, children, spouses, lovers, friends, and by extension about some significant groups to which we belong” (32), because of which, memory is, “the cement that holds thick relations together” (8). Here, Avishahi gives a clear-cut world of memory. The contents of one’s memory do not come from the vacuum but come from the process of socialization. In the course of living in the society, he keep on imprinting our moments with family, parents, groups and communities into our memory. Memory is thus a documentation of what we see and experiences during the social living in which we share attachments with different organs of the society as Avishahi listed above. Like these characteristics of memory, *The Three Cups of Tea* shows the articulation of Mortenson’s experiences that are related to the Muslim community that he cared the most and became a part of. His act of remembering makes an assertion about his social and cultural intimacy with the community. At the same time, his memorization reflects the cultural and social reality between the Korphe community, Muslim world and its tussle with the western world. Mortenson’s description of ignorance and poverty as well as lack of education is his objective reflection of the reality of the remote Muslim community of Pakistan. His recollected narrative brings into the spotlight the actuality behind the persistent rise of terrorism and also recommends an alternative course of action in the humanitarian discourse of education to educate the children and keep them away from the extremist ideology.

In this way, the research project concludes that the act of remembering by Mortenson in his memoir intends to fulfill certain motives. Autobiographical study of memory claims that no act of remembering is neutral or passive but it is embroiled with some kind of motive lurking at the back of the writer’s head. The writer prefers to bring their memories back to the surface for a number of purposes which is where

the politics of memory can be seen being functional. The politics here does not imply the general sense of political power, government, institutions. It refers to the intention and motive that drives the writer into remembering his/her past memories. Memory serves as the vehicle to channel back to the history and accumulate the memories. Every memory has its own significance. The writer structures the model of retrieving those memories so that the intended goal is accomplished. Mortenson in the memoir follows the progressive model of narration in order to show the transformation during his journey from being a mountaineer to humanitarian. This progressive narration in which the protagonist is presented in the flux of constant changes echoes the narrative style of Bildungsroman writing. It is a tradition of writing in which the protagonist undergoes a series of changes, be physically or mentally.

Mortenson undergoes a change in his perception of life and his understanding of terrorism. By documenting his direct encounters with the Muslims in Pakistan and Afghanistan, two nations with greater issue of terrorism, and his experiences of working with them shows his mode of transformation from a typical American fellow to a humanitarian icon. Although his representation of Korphe community exposes its ugliness in the form of its illiteracy and conservative practices, all those challenges, sufferings, pains and troubles he faced during the mountaineering and explains the reasons he transformed himself from being a normal American mountaineer to a humanitarian. It doesn't seem to justify his ideological motive to stereotype east, Pakistan in particular, as an uneducated and uncivilized land. His memory dominantly speaks against the American politics of war to fight the terrorism. Directly encountering with local Muslims' lifestyle, he comes to learn that the terrorism exists due to lack of education. Thus, he composes a message from the memoir to spread the education through the schools and set the light of knowledge to educate them because

bombings only cause destruction and it can't resolve the root cause of terrorism.

#### Works Cited

- Ali, Nosheen. "Books vs Bombs? Humanitarian Development and the narrative of terror in Northern Pakistan." *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 4, 2010, pp. 541-59.
- Bakhtin, M. M. "Rethinking the *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Towards a Historical Typology of the Novel)." *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*, edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. U of Texas Press, 1986.
- Hirsch, Marianne. "The Novel of Formation as Genre: Between Great Expectations and Lost Illusions." *Genre* 12, 1979, pp. 293-311.
- Margalit, Avishai. *The Ethics of Memory*. Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Mortenson, Greg and David Oliver Relin. *Three Cups of Tea*. Penguin Books, 2007, Print.
- Nicholas, Andrew. "Three Cups of Tea: One man's mission to Promote Peace...one school at a time." *Middle East Quarterly*, Summer, 2009.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Random House, 1978.
- Sardar, Ziauddin. *Postmodernism and the Other: The New Imperialism of Western Culture*. London: Pluto Press, 1990.
- Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. University of Minnesota Press, 2010.
- Whitehead, Anne. *Memory: The New Critical Idiom*. Routledge, 2009.
- Wiley. "Books versus Terrorism." *The Reading Teacher*, vol.57, no. 3, 2003, p.294.