

Chapter 1

Solitude Mind as a Kind of Canker

Introduction

Sadeq Hedayat's famous novella *The Blind Owl*, is a narrative presented both in dream like fantasy and in realistic terms. The first part of the novel is a visionary painter's description of an old man and an imaginary ethereal girl, her death, and her burial. This sounds like a fantasy but the second part sounds realistic in which the narrator is presented as an invalid man annoyed by unfaithful wife whom he kills in the pretence of making love to her. The first event has a very strong impact on the narrator's mind and the effects of the event remains as a traumatic impression. Therefore, this study is an attempt to analyze the novella through the lens of traumatic influences to explore the ways in which trauma is represented. The main argument of this thesis is that parental absence, inability to attain desired love and unwanted behavior shown by the family members lead the major character to a traumatic situation.

The novella demonstrates how that traumatic condition disrupts an individual's mental process and inter-relationship among individuals by challenging fundamental assumptions about moral laws and social relationship. This situation is comparable to the condition of the major character (the painter) of the novel. The actions and other behavior of this character create the vagueness and traumatic reflection in the plot, and the reactions given by him are exotic

Hedayat sheds light on his own sufferings and depressions through the fictional character, the pen-case painter, who is a victim of great obsession initially caused by the absence of his parents who passed away long ago. The story of the novel revolves around strange activities of the obsessed painter who acts in a bizarre

way. Structurally, the novella has five chapters, but thematically it has two main parts. In the first part, the major character, who is a pen-case cover painter, seems to be unable to discover the root cause of stress and obsession and finds it difficult to convey the agony of that obsession. The writer portrays a visionary character having beliefs in oblivion brought about by wine and an artificial sleep induced by opium and other narcotics to repress trauma. The painter is heavily vexed by his unpleasant past and cannot make his thoughts and behavior normal. Anguished voice of trauma reflects the sorrow and acts of violence of this character. Trauma here is realized as the character's strong emotional response to an overwhelming personal event that disrupts normal notions of the sense of self.

The impact of the events deeply rooted in the mind of the pen-case painter disturbs him time and again. He expresses his feelings using stream of consciousness technique which emphasizes the regular flow of expression with no coherence. This technique helps analyze how a character suffers from traumatic experience. It reflects the feeling and perception of a character about an event.

The novella has the vicinity of the individual's details of traumatic events that include intense fear, helplessness or sorrow. Because of traumatic mentality, the narrator cannot get beyond fear, pessimism and helplessness. His thinking process and activities have no logical flow. Non-linearity of the plot structure is the surface representation of the major character's mental state and physical activities. The study examines the main character's psyche, his psychological injury, mind body relation, and the reaction through the consciousness to the physical world of the characters.

Trauma refers to a person's emotional response to an overwhelming personal event that disrupts previous notions of the sense of self. Understanding and accepting the nature of self in a world that appears transformed by the trauma may become a

difficult journey for trauma victims. The process of moving from traumatic, disruptive event to a potential process of healing and transformation becomes the core inner quest for the character of the novel.

Conflict, trauma and anxiety are interwoven in modern existence, and this phenomenon finds its reflection in this novella. The work is a Persian literary classic about madness, obsession, betrayal, murder, repression, and other psychological impact. It is a hallucinatory tale that is simultaneously sinister, troubling, and disturbing. The plot starts when the narrator appears as a modest simple man, who makes his living as an artist creating designs on the lids of pen-cases. The narrator designs the painting of the same thing and people. It is always a cypress tree, a bent old man under it, and an ethereal girl across a stream, but he is not sure whether those things or people were real or imaginary. "Had I seen the subject of this picture at some time in the past, or had it been revealed to me in a dream" (14)?

Disturbed mentality and unusual behavior of the narrator are the central theme of the story. This strangeness is caused by the orphan hood of the narrator and death of the ethereal young woman. In fact, the narrator wishes she were his life partner, but this accidental death as she approaches his room causes a mental break down to him. Like a maniac, he severs her head with a knife, dismembers other parts, disposes the dead body, carrying it in a suitcase to a cemetery, and buries it with help of the old man he visions under that cypress tree. This act of narrator represents the sense of a traffic accident, the blood, the dead body, the horror and terror. This woman's death makes him mangled. His obsessed mind in alienation gets even more tormented, and he finds himself in a situation of great desperation.

The narrator displays unusual behavior so as to have possessed the mind that is completely nervous breakdown. The world that he describes is that of a psychic and

traumatic. He has no real sense of time.

The narrator does not seem to have good sleep; he hardly eats, and it makes no difference to him. He becomes a slave to psychoneurosis. He says that a sensation which has long been familiar to him is that he is slowly decomposing while he is still alive. He finds himself having been alienated, ousted, despised and disgusted by others. He has been disgusted since he started realizing that his life deserved no value nor appreciation.

The narrator finds all activities on the part of other people disgusting. He is aware that his own life is finished and is slowly and painfully guttering out. He has nightmares of being beheaded or butchered. Memory of butcher's knife haunts him frequently and he wishes he had a knife like that of a butcher's to deal with the flesh of the dead animal. The knife here symbolizes his subconscious desire of committing suicide.

In fact, in the first chapter, very brief part of the story, we are amused by the mystique of his vision. Here he seems to be entirely psychic as he is to be determined to make sense of it. The episode of that bent old man and the ethereal woman are really mysterious but the narrator tries his best to make sense out of it. However, this chapter and some two or three others that follow sound like a fantasy or the tale of an insane narrator talking about hallucination.

In the second part of the novella, the narrator introduces himself as an invalid man rather than a painter. He is located with a nanni and his wife. He utterly loathes his wife, gets obsessed and returns time and again to key phrases and expression of hatred just like someone with a serious psychological crack in their worldview. His hatred for his wife gets expressed in linguistic form as 'the bitch' and says 'because no other name would suit her so well' and he believes her to have had countless affairs;

not even affairs, as such, but animalistic, sexual betrayals, sleeping with anyone she finds. His strong disgust towards his wife is based on her love and trust turned away from him. He believes that she never truly cares for him, but he has loved her for long. He is abnormally consumed by her, and wants to consume her; He feels humiliated, ridiculed, and belittled by her sexual betrayals and finds himself in a completely dejected condition.

The main character seems to suffer from psychosis and derangement through his endless circling, repeating thoughts, and hallucinatory memories. His guilt weighs down on him as the weight he feels on his chest bearing down on him with the body/remains of his wife.

The psychoanalytical approach under the leadership of Sigmund Freud has a significant role in literature. Almost every literary text includes certain characters. This approach analyzes the characters by attempting to enter their psyche to find out their faults, unusual behaviors and the events that have victimized them. Sometimes, readers cannot understand why a character does something wrong or unacceptable. In such cases, Freud puts forward the theory of repression:

Most of our conflicts and lacks in our personalities occur due to our repressed desires, feelings or childhood traumas. As long as healthy and stable personality is not constituted, the existence of conflict is inevitable. Human beings have tendency of repressing their unwanted and unvoiced desires in their unconscious level. (qtd.in Isalgov 500)

Personality is the reflection of our feelings, accustomed activities and desire. No one can escape from repressed desires and emotions which shape the future of people.

In human psyche, id, ego, and superego are the three distinct interacting agents that create conflict. If the conflict cannot be settled in a normal way, traumatic

situation is very likely to take place. If someone experiences clashes between these three parts of the psyche, it is not possible to form a stable and healthy personality.

The Blind Owl represents the night visions of its narrator. It is non-linear in its construction. The writer has put his novella in the cosmopolitan of post-modernist literature. The children are forbidden to read it for fear that it might inspire them to commit suicide. Bounding with such thematic remarks, the problematic aspects of this research is how trauma in the mind of pen-case painter is represented, viewed and engaged. The next problem is to quest how the psyche of the characters can be evaluated through psychic trauma even if it has been reviewed as culture based novel.

One of Hedayat's examples of his rambling mind is that he borrows the philosophy of Buddhism and presents it in the novella. The narrator speaks about a dungeon, a nag serpent and his parents. Through this reference, he tries to settle the issue of his parentage as he had heard that his father was identified through an ordeal with a serpent in a dungeon since two young men were under suspicion. Getting beyond cultural remarks, the purpose of the study is to quest whether the characters in the text accommodate violent and traumatic personal episodes by reflecting on the actions. The study will further explore that the main character encompasses personal trauma caused by childhood experiences and unpleasant events at present. The enigmatic psychic performance of the pen-case cover painter is resulted by his trauma stricken psyche.

The study will be based on library study, supervisor's advice and extensive textual reading. Journals, magazines, different articles and other reliable electronic sources will be taken as secondary sources. For detailed study Sigmund Freud's the traumatic theory under psychoanalysis will be applied.

Review of the Literature

There are various critical opinions about the novel, *The Blind Owl*. Many writings have already been created through various perspectives on the basis of multiple theories.

Regarding this novel, Kramer opines, "The novel like other real artistic works of art is required to delineate a humanistic Psychological, spiritual or moral issue, and by way of human nature" (41). The significant aspect in this definition is the revelatory aspect of the genre which reveals a new dimension in human existence. Previously, it was an unknown aspect of human nature.

Kastner illustrates, "The novel is not about a brief description of an exclusive accident with a romantic climax as it were previously; rather, the genre flirts with one of the most difficult forms of prose, namely, the play" (122). The novella depicts the romantic love story of the characters as dramatic representation.

The Blind Owl is a surrealist novel since it has strong resemblance to surrealist works. Hedayat has used in his work many familiar devices to surrealism such as vagueness of setting, distortion of time and role of intoxication. Joseph Johnson has tried to compare it with other surrealist works. He assumes the novel, "the multi form of identity" (124). The writer shows the multi-dimensional identity of the character. The same character is reflected in many guises.

Hedayat maintains a scholarly interest in Indian love and both Hindu and Buddhist Indian philosophy throughout his literary career. In this connection, Kamshad remarks, "It seems perfectly natural that *The Blind Owl* contains numerous references to India and Indian images" (178). The writer has borrowed the Buddhist theme in his writing to provoke solace in traumatic mind.

The novel quickly attained the status of the most controversial and renowned

piece of modern fiction in Iran. The Iranian writer, Jalal describes *The Blind Owl* as, "a miscellany and composite of ancient Aryan skepticism of Buddha's *nirvana*, of Iranian Gnosticism of the Yogi-like seclusion of the oriental person, the scope of which an Iranian, an oriental with all his/her mental background oriental with all his/her mental background tries to achieve within his or her self" (129). Borrowing theoretical background of western technique, Hedayat represents the character from eastern periphery.

Simidchieva expresses his views about the women presented in the novel. He tells, "It focuses on the representation of women in modern-day literature, scholarly and visual texts produced by both men and women in Muslim- majority countries and their Diasporas in the west" (1). It has explored the issues of genders as reflected in the novel and discussed the factors which affect the perception of gender roles and representation of women in the culture.

Sharifzadeh adds something regarding love. He asserts *The Blind Owl* demonstrates the notions of melancholy love in many of his works" (13). It is the portrait of sad love between husband and wife. Zarook further explains, *The Blind Owl* is a love story basically focus on any sort of love affairs that is free of lust. They all demonstrate pure love that creates a hijab between lovers too. There are full of sufferings and separations" (122). The girl is remembered by the narrator frequently. He imagines her face and behavior. The positive thinking of him regards that they have love affair with each other.

Mirdami states, "The existence of a death- conscious in Iran, traceable in religious and literary texts, and manifested strongly in the discourse following the Iran- Iraq war and the culture that influences articulation and experiences as felt by Iranian patients" (2). The novel is the replica of the psychological trauma brought by

the war between Iran and Iraq.

Organization of Study

This study is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is about the introductory background of the study. This chapter contains introduction of the topic, statement of problem, objectives and significance of the study. Similarly, literature review is also incorporated in this chapter.

The Second chapter is the theoretical part. It deals with the trauma theory in brief. This chapter highlights the nature of psychological trauma and its impact on a person's psyche.

The Third chapter is an analytical part which deals with the psychic reaction of the main character, the pen-case- painter. This is the main part of the thesis. Discussion will be centered on how the major character gets traumatized and how he reacts to the later stimuli.

The fourth chapter is the conclusion of this dissertation. This part of the thesis is the overview of whatever has been written in the first, second and the third chapter.

Chapter 2

Trauma: Theory and Practice in Literature

The word 'trauma' is derived from the Greek word 'trauma' that means "wound" and dates back to 17th century. It was not popular until the advent of Freud's psychoanalysis theories in the nineteenth century when the word came to be applied to psychological injury suggestive of its affective state. In other words, trauma has been defined to involve, "physical trauma and emotional or psychological trauma" (Pitt 18). Physical trauma results from a serious injury, shock to the body such as war, physical injury, rape, disease or illness. On the other hand, psychological trauma results from an emotional wound or shock that creates an emotional injury to the psychological well-being of the individual. Psychological trauma is the major concern of discussion in this thesis.

Trauma is a psychological or emotional response to an event or experience that has deeply distressing, or upsetting impact on a person's psyche. The events like being involved in an accident, losing a loved one, having an illness, or going through a divorce are some of the causes of trauma. In other words, trauma is considered a disorder of the mind that happens as a result of paining events. It refers to the experiences that cause intense physical and psychological stress reaction. Trauma is the result of unpleasant event that overcomes one's capability to cope with the emotions involved with the experience. Lois Tyson defines it as, "Trauma is also used, of course to refer to a painful experience that scars us psychologically" (21).

Pain is the cause of unpleasant experience and it is stamped on the mind forever. Tyson further talks about childhood trauma and adult life trauma. The former according to him is caused by the loss of siblings, illness, accidental death, or suicide, and the latter is the result of being flooded by all the guilt, deprivation and conflict. (21)

A single agony or unpleasant event that has already existed may result in trauma which can hamper a person for weeks, years, or even decades as the person faces difficulties to cope with the recent circumstances. Ultimately, it leads to severe and perennial negative consequences. It means some traumas may have long lasting impact on a person's psyche, as Michael Ryan puts, "Moreover, traumas leave their mark on the psyche, and abused children recall and continue to act out the feelings that accompany trauma even as adults" (113).

The subjective experiences of individuals shape the bases for the differences of trauma and therefore, people react to similar traumatic events differently. All the people who experience a potentially traumatic event may actually become psychologically traumatized. However, it is possible for some people to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after being exposed to a major traumatic event.

Vejling asserts:

In the wake of second world war, a new group for study emerged that has since 'enjoyed' much attention from the community, a group called concentration camp survivors. Many studies pointed to the same diagnostics that has since been included under the umbrella term Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PSTD), and well on enduring personality changes. (7)

This conflict in risk rate can be supported to protective factors. Some individual may have enabled them to cope with trauma. They are related to emotional and environmental factors from among others.

Trauma is an experience of personal event which causes actual or threatened death or somber injury. Memories connected with trauma are implicit, pre-verbal and cannot be recalled, but can be activated by "stimuli" (Vejling 24) from the

environment. Varvin develops theory as a key concept in trauma research. He asserts, "Trauma concerns the ego's inability to deal with the stimuli and the affects aroused because of the impact of the event and later because of the memories of it" (19). The individual's reaction to apathetic details of traumatic event includes intense fear, helplessness or horror. It is reflected as disorganized or agitated behavior in children.

Implicit memory is the memory for those aspects of experience that are not consciously processed at the time. Certain information may be stored in memory without having consciousness of its occurrence, and it can influence current functioning without being experienced as conscious remembering. Regarding memory, Varvin tells:

This concerns memory for shape and form (primary memory), emotion (emotional memory) and skills, habits and routines (procedural memory) each of which is processed in different brain systems.

Procedural memory has been central in the discussion on trauma and has been incorporated in psychoanalytic theorizing as it concerns how internal object-relations are constructed and affected by hardship or traumas. (25)

Varvin clearly points out the role of procedural memory that is responsible to traumatic condition. It shows that disturbance in memory brings strangeness to a person's habit, skills, and routine.

Trauma theory is a theoretical aspect popularized after the advent of Freudian psychoanalysis early in the 20th century. Freud conceptualizes several central concepts of trauma theory. In Freud's view, "the mind is protected by a membrane keeping control of the stimulus, but if a stimulus passes through the membrane, it directly affects the mind" (243). This is Freud's way of relating the word 'trauma' to its origin

as a word for bodily wounds, where Freud introduces it as a wound on the mind's protective shield.

Furthermore, the concept of "traumatic neurosis" (Freud 6) is developed to elaborate the situation of First World War veterans. Freud imitates an issue with these traumatized individuals relating to a repetition of traumatizing events or an attempt to fully avoid them. Freud writes an essay considering trauma on symptoms relating to trauma, leading to a shorter essay, "Mourning and Melancholia" (245) that discusses the two different states of grief and loss. Freud assigns mourning as a natural state which gradually disappears over time following a loss. Melancholy is also a state of grief following a loss, but Freud argues, "Mourning is a disconnection from the world, whereas melancholia is a disconnection from oneself" (246). Trauma might cause a melancholic experience that seems to adhere to the rules stipulated about trauma as something not yet experienced.

Trauma in Relation to Violence

Although violence does not always lead to trauma, some forms of traumatic experiences may emerge from violence. Oppression and violence are resulted especially from gender and race conflict. It is not false claim that the violent experiences result in traumatization. In any traumatizing violence the traumatizer and traumatized have different experiences. The former enjoys the event whereas the latter finds it fearful and life threatening. Judith Herman notes, "That violence committed by someone the victim knows is particularly traumatizing", she further states, "In most instances of rape, for example, the offender is known to the victim... the rapist often enjoys higher status than his victim within their shared community" (62). Herman backs the plausible relationship between violence and trauma by unpacking any violence the women fall victim to, "The malignant effects of rape are not

surprising given the particular nature of the trauma. The essential element of rape is physical, psychological, and moral violation of the person" (Herman 57). Trauma is not only the consequence of rape; others like physical, psychological and moral violence are also the factors of traumatic experiences.

One should look after the psychological aspects to understand the general symptoms of trauma. An event is considered traumatic if it is resulted in death or threatened death, physical injury or sexual violence. Physical and sexual violence elicits serious psychological symptoms that include feelings of intense fear, helplessness, and horror. There are three cardinal symptoms associated with traumatic events "hyper arousal", "intrusion", and "constriction" (Herman 35). "Hyper arousal involves the expectation of danger, intrusion involves the lasting traumatic memory left on individuals, and constriction involves the paralyzing feelings connected to surrendering" (Herman 35). During the traumatic experiences, victims frequently report feelings of confusion and helplessness.

Trauma and Inter-Personal Relationships

The relationship of people is directly affected by the traumatic situation. It easily overwhelms the circumstances of traumatic events to influence one's interactions with friends, family, coworkers, and others. Most people share some typical responses to what has happened to them while these reactions are unique to each person and are related to their particular experience of trauma. It deeply challenges people's sense of safety and security in the world. Their confidence in the future may be shaken; the way they understand the meaning of life may be changed, and the way they think and feel about themselves may be different.

The circumstances and the events that one tolerates such as sudden death of a loved one, an aviation disaster, a hat crime, childhood abuse, sexual assault, war, are

the experience to affect relationships with others. These events that happen once or continue over time are caused naturally or intentionally and affect a person together with others in the community or individually. Apart from these experiences, the disruption to people's lives from traumatic events may also cause disruptions in their feelings for and connections to others.

expectations of danger, betrayal, or potential harm are the common features of those who have suffered from traumatic experiences. These people often have doubt and confusion about their safety. It is common they find it very difficult to trust those whom they easily trusted in the past. These trauma victims foster fear to get in touch with other people because they feel unsafe and this situation leads them to feel unpleasant to others and helpless about their conditions. There is a feeling of loss of self-control with these trauma victims, so they suffer from pessimism to a great extent. These people often show their anger and aggression not because of others but due to their own feeling of being aloof and helpless.

Psychoanalysis and Trauma

The relation of external reality to psychic reality is one of the major aspects of traumatization in psychoanalysis. Though debatable, it is often said that the external events and early environment have major roles to cause and maintain psychic distress and illness. Experience is revealed in the psyche. Conflicts play important role in making of the perception of personal experience. The internal world of wishes is in conflicts and that is negotiated through human interaction.

Theoretical discourse has been obscured in clinical dialogues by the imprecise use of trauma concept. In population where massive traumatization has occurred, the victim or survivors have few words and feel too much shame making it impossible to relate what happened, and others, including professional health workers, turn a blind

eye to the traumatized person who then become isolated with his/her suffering. In this regard, Krystal states, "The victim, or survivor, of extreme experiences suffers, however, and there is convincing clinical and empirical evidence that changes and adaptations after such overwhelming experiences are of long duration, complex and far-reaching involving effects in biological psychological and relational dimensions" (81). Psychiatricians have discussed on the relative effect of heredity and external influences in causing mental illness.

The concept and theories on trauma can be seen in the light of historical, social and cultural contexts rather than seeing them as a linear development of a growing concern about personal psyche. The understanding and acknowledgement of trauma during the last century is an eloquent example on how theories and concepts are influenced by social forces and represents in itself a critique of the belief in a progressive development in science.

The field of trauma studies in literary criticism gained significant attention in 1996 with the publication of Lathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma Narrative*, and Kali Tal's *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the literature of Trauma*. A *Theoretical Trend* was introduced by Scholars like Caruth, who pioneered a psychoanalytical post structural approach that suggests trauma is an unsolvable problem of the unconscious that illuminates the inherent contradictions of experience and language.

"The Lacanian approach crafts a concept of trauma as a recurring sense of absence that sunders knowledge of the extreme experience, thus preventing linguistic value other than a referential expression" (Balaev 170). The evolution of trauma theory in literary criticism might best be understood in terms of the changing psychological definitions of trauma as well as the semiotic, rhetorical, and social

concerns that are part of the study of trauma in literature and society.

Many studies that focus on trauma in literature focus a great deal on repetitions that exist within the literary work because repetition is a common response to trauma and easily identifiable in text. Many survivors of trauma repeat aspects or the entirety of the event that was traumatic in their life in their mind and, sometimes, in their literature. Literary trauma theorists make note of these elements of repetition in a literary work and discuss the correlation therein. Nandi makes note on how literary trauma theory takes into account, "What cannot be fully remembered, the illegible, the unspeakable, with something repeated, be it an image, a phrase, a metaphor, even a syllable or sound" (1). Literature is the reflective means for expressive trauma.

Trauma can be caused by a wide variety of events. There is frequently a violation of human rights, leaving the person in a condition of adverse confusion and insecurity. It can be when organizations struggle for survival they violate, embarrass, deceive or cause major losses or separations instead of provoking aspects like positive self worth, safe boundaries and personal liberty.

Traumatic experiences are frequently associated with physical trauma that threatens one's survival and sense of security. It has typical causes such as harassment, embarrassment, abandonment, abusive relationships, physical assault, sexual abuse, discrimination, misconduct, bullying, domestic violence, indoctrination, alcoholic parent, the treat of violence in childhood, and medication-induced trauma.

Furthermore, catastrophic natural disasters, accidents, terrorist attacks, sex trafficking can also cause psychological trauma. In addition to these, long term exposure to situations such as extreme poverty or other forms of abuse, seem free of physical trauma, but still lead to psychological trauma. It is suggested that childhood

trauma, can increase one's risk for mental disorders including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and substance abuse.

People who have the experiences of extreme traumatic situation display certain symptoms and problems afterward. The level of extremity of trauma depends on the person, the type of trauma involved, and emotional assistance they acquire from others. The level of reactions to and symptoms of trauma varies in asperity from person to person. A traumatized person may experience one or more of them.

Person may have mental and physical trauma, after a traumatic experience hence trauma reminders can be uncomfortable and even painful. These reminders store flashbacks, which are dissociative experiences where the person feels as though the events are recurring. Re-experiencing of symptoms is a sign that the body and mind are actively struggling to cope with the traumatic experience. The reminders of the trauma can cause anxiety and other associated emotions. Sometimes the person is unaware about the root remained in his mind. This may lead a person to suffer form traumatic disorders to engage in disruptive behaviors or self-destructive coping mechanism, often without being fully aware of the nature or causes of their own actions. Panic attacks are the examples of a psychosomatic response to such emotional causes.

The preoccupied memories of images, thoughts, or flashbacks, may haunt the person time and again. Restlessness occurs as awaiting fears that make the person vigilant and on the lookout for danger, throughout the day and night.

Repressed memory causes to the traumatic being constantly experienced as if they were happening in the present, preventing the subject from gaining perspective on the experience. It produces a pattern of prolonged periods of acute activation underlined by period of physical and mental exhaustion. Furthermore, it results to

mental health disorders like in tensed stress and anxiety disorder, psychotic disorder, adjustment disorder etc.

Emotional exhaustion plays an important role in leading to distraction and clear thinking that may be awkward and impossible. Emotional detachment as well as dissociation occasionally occurs. It creates panic emotion including numbing all emotion, and the person be seem emotionally flat, preoccupied, distant, or cold. Exposure to and re-experiencing trauma causes neurophysiologic changes like slowed neuron function, abnormalities in cognitive and effective impairment. This is crucial in brain scan studies done regarding higher order function assessment with children and youth who were in vulnerable environment.

Some people feel themselves as the victim of trauma symptoms and cannot go away. That's why; they do not believe that their condition improves. It causes them to be despaired, profound emptiness, suicidal, loss of self-esteem, and depression. If important aspects of the person's self and world understanding have been violated, the person may call their own identity into question. Often despite their best efforts, traumatized parents may have difficulty assisting their child with emotion of regulation, attribution of meaning, and containment of post-traumatic fear in the wake of the child's traumatization leading to adverse consequences for the child. In such instances, seeing counseling in appropriate mental health services is in the best interests and solutions for the trauma.

Chapter 3

Traumatic Impact on the Narrator in *The Blind Owl*

The novel, *The Blind owl* reveals the traumatic representation of an unnamed pen- case cover painter who revolves around the stress that overcomes his capability to cope with his emotions involved with the experience. It is an Iranian work that is frightening and puzzling. It is a psycho-fiction that depicts the fear of death, loss and horror causing psychosis as traumatic reflection.

The narrator has been a victim of psychological trauma. The first traumatic impact upon him is of the absence of his parents. He has just heard stories about his parents. He makes it sure that, his mother was a temple attendant in India, but he has not been able to ascertain himself about the clear identity of his father. Stories about his father are heard but none of them sounds reliable. Now he is parentless. He has been brought up and looked after by a nanny; but he feels a great gap in his life because he could not enjoy parental love. This gap of life has been a traumatic experience in his life that is why he behaves eccentrically from the very beginning in the novel.

The very first sentence of the novel *The Blind Owl* “There are sores which slowly erode the mind in solitude like a kind of canker” (1) foreshadows the whole story of the novel. The expression is suggestive in the sense that the narrator is in a painful condition at present, and this pain is progressively plaguing the mind even in future. The same situation is reflected in the story of the novel.

The study explores how trauma, its experience and its recollections, is transformative and disruptive, yet incapable of being fully mastered. The experience of trauma is encoded in memory. *The Blind Owl* depicts the sub-conscious behavior and reaction of the pen-case cover painter which is filled with multilayered incident of

violence.

The Blind Owl is a psycho-fiction that is characterized by a general sense of melancholy, absurdism, insanity, pessimism, nihilism, and fatalism. The whole story of an unnamed narrator turns around the deliriums, delusions, and nightmare of a deeply traumatized and paralyzed mind.

Before encountering the events that unfold in the novel, the title itself is the semantic vehicle of trauma and its representation. The narrator confesses his hideous crime to an owl like shadow reflected on the wall of his gloomy and bleak room. He is totally suffocated within his premises without any hope. His confessions and reminiscences do not follow a chronological or linear order and are often cyclically repeated with ironical nuances in themes, characters, and structural details, which embody recurrent motifs.

The cyclic rotation of the plot, the very few characters, the repeated setting and the scenes, and the recurring of the same events are the pictures that can be judged as the mental state of the narrator. Mostly, the story of the novel moves around the thinking and perceptions of the narrator over certain circumstances. The terrible scene of the murder of narrator's wife, and the cutting the carcass of beloved girl are extremely fearful events for the readers. The events are difficult to be digested by any readers easily. It is because of the perfection that emerges at a very time of a mad man.

Psychic mentality of the pen-case cover painter and the other strange activities associated with the character are prominent features of the novel. The stream of consciousness technique in the narration, hallucination, fantasy, mystery, open-endedness are the reflective aspects of psychological trauma of the main character in the novel. It bases on horror, shadow, and surrealist theme. Regarding this, Coulter

argues, "It lays bare the mental turmoil of an individual who falls deeper and deeper into the abyss of uncertainty and madness" (2). The Psychic performance and thinking of the narrator depicts the uncertainty and insanity of his mental upheaval. The scene of cutting down the corpse of a girl into pieces is the crystal example of insane behavior of the narrator, "Finally an idea comes to me. I would cut up her body, pack it in a suitcase, my old suitcase, take it away with me to some place far, very far from people's eyes, and bury it there" (Hedayat 37). Cutting the corpse of human body is beyond the imagination of general people. That performance is the reflection of psychosis and insanity of the narrator.

Trauma theory is concerned with how the traumatic experiences of authors have affected their literary works. The same is true in case of *The Blind Owl*. Hedayat has presented his own story and sufferings as well as the perception through the main character, the pen-case cover painter. The performances of the narrator are connected with the life events of the writer himself. The recklessness of the writer in his life and the narrator's behaviours and activities in the novella are comparable, so the work clearly presents the proof that he himself was in psychic trauma. He could not make firm decision and so he roamed in different places and countries without completing the essence of staying there. Hedayat travelled many countries of Europe for study. In Belgium, he went for engineering but abandoned after a year and went to France to study architecture. There, he gave up architecture in turn to pursue dentistry. Even he could not complete his study there. In 1927, he became acquainted with a Persian girl with whom he had a love affair. After a year, he attempted suicide by throwing himself into the Marne river of France, but was rescued by a fishing boat. Four years later in France, he came back to his home without receiving a degree.

In Iran, Hedayat did various jobs in short period of time. His fluctuating

mental psyche could not let him stay in a single country to complete the targeted task. He was traumatized by his real incidents and tried to have suicide. In 1951, he committed suicide by gassing himself in a small rented apartment plugging all the gaps in the windows and door with cottons. All these activities are directly or indirectly reflected in the novella.

In the novel, Hedayat explores his own sufferings through the main character, the pen-case cover painter. He shows how he suffered from the mental disease which is incurable, "The reason for his incomprehension is that mankind has not yet discovered a cure of this disease. Relief is found only in the oblivion brought about by wine and the artificial sleep induced by opium" (Hedayat 7). There is no solution for mental disorder. The relief from opium is only temporary. It is quite different to cope with this state of mind. The rooted experiences are inevitable and they haunt time and again. Here, the disease of the speaker is deeply rooted trauma and depression.

The narrator is crippled by horrific visions, feverish nightmares, and an existentialistic obsession with death, "We are the offspring of death and death delivers us from the tantalizing fraudulent attractions of lie ... throughout our lives, the finger of death points at us" (Hedayat 55). The death is exaggerated as the solace of every obstacle.

Trauma is the subjective experience. What is traumatic for one person may not necessarily be traumatic for another. What's traumatic depends on the person's ability to cope with stresses and changes in their environment which is usually a combination of temperament, genetic and intelligence. It contains within organic whole which is radically impressionistic and subjective. In his crisis of cognition, the nameless narrator cannot tell the world of reality from the world of shadows, "My shadow had become more real than myself. The old odds-ends man, the butcher, Nanny and the

where, my wife, were my own shadows-shadows in the midst of which I was impressed" (Hedayat 95). Narrator's chaotic and deceptive mental ability reflects the crisis of his understanding.

Uncertainty is one aspect of psychological trauma. The novel displays the major character's characteristics of uncertainty and unexpected shifts. Such oscillation gives the setting a peculiar and even paradoxical nature. The character expresses this quivering of his psyche as in a straightforward way. "The scene appeared to me to be far and near at the same time" (Hedayat 18). Regarding this novel, Kazemi remarks, "None of scenes and incidents of the narrative remain stable in, or are reducible to, certain time or place" (380). What we observe here is not a logical progression from point A to B.

Sometimes, the narrator starts his narration by describing his bleak room or people about him, but ends up living in an exotic land in a very distant past, "I moved in the regions where life and death fuse together and perverse images come into being and ancient, extinct desires, vague, strangled desires, again come to life and cry out for vengeance" (Hedayat 64). An imaginary journey takes him to an imaginary place or is unexpectedly replaced by another unknown place.

Traumatization includes the relation of external reality to psychic reality in focus. It has been a conflicting theme for psychoanalysis which assigns to external events and early environment in the causation and maintenance of psychic distress and illness. The organization of the deep mentality and perception of hidden layers of traumatized characters' mind lack structure, organization and integrity. The speaker goes on expressing his/her ideas connecting diverse things and events without any coherence.

Speaker with psychosis focus only on expression but not on contents and

coherence. This type of technique is called stream of consciences and this is the technique used in this novella. Humphrey illustrates, "The novel of stream of consciousness emphasizes first and foremost on excavation of mental and deep internal perception layers to set forth an analysis of mental and psychic aspects of the fictional character" (4). The pre-occupied events emphasize the perception of the people. On the perception, they show their behaviors. The novel depicts the perceptions, feeling and uncensored mentality of the pen-case cover painter.

The Blind Owl was written at the time of national despair and distress. This situation, besides others, might have been a factor of the traumatic psyche of the writer. Along with that the socio-political condition that plagued soul and mind of the writer in isolation may have contributed to the disturbed mentality of the author.

The world of nihilism and alienation is depicted wherein humans are hopeless and suffer from despair and depression. In the novel, the world is depicted as though the narrator and the prostitute are its sole inhabitants, living a life of isolation and alienation. Hedayat's astute depiction of narratorial structure proves that he has instability in his mind that is because of his depression and trauma:

There are certain sores in life that, like a canker, grow at the soul in solitude and diminish it. Since generally, it is the custom to attribute these incredible sufferings to the realm of rare and singular accidents and happening, if it is not possible to speak about them to other. If one does talk or write about them, people pretend to accept them with sarcastic remarks and dubious smiles ... The reason is that these pains do not have a remedy. The only remedy is forgetfulness induced by opium and other narcotic. (Hedayat 9)

The writer talks about the reality about how the normal people fall prey to the

sufferings of traumatized personality. Hedayat clearly expresses his impression of other people's hypocritical reactions to his expressions of pain and sufferings. These statements captivate the reader from the early stages of narrative enticing them to know more about this vague world of pain and distress until the very last page. It is a deep psychological pain that has plagued the modern man which has remained incurable and rare. The pain that has a direct effect on the mind and soul of the man is so deep.

The pains and plights of the author can be looked through political lens. Such starkness is as a result of socio-political injustice that has plagued Iranians, pushing the individual to indulge in their dreams. The major character is so much skeptical about others, "I can talk freely only with myself" (Hedayat 21). The pain during his time is an excessive pervasive hopelessness that has painted the world unimaginably dark and dismal.

Psychological pressures have exceeded the people's threshold, making them exasperated with such an inclusive prison called nation. "These pains can be considered as a mirror to social pains and how the outburst of emotions would create a mad-house of every community and society" (Estrami 104). Such misunderstanding drove a number of people mad like Hedayat.

Trauma is the result of stress that overcomes one's capacity to cope with the emotions involved with the experience. A single agony or resuming unpleasant event may result in trauma that happens in weeks, years or decades as the person faces difficulties to cope with the recent circumstances, "I propose to deal with only case of this disease. It concerned me personally and it so shattered my mind. The evil impression with it left how to a degree that surpasses human understanding, poisoned my life for all time to come" (Hedayat 8). The narrator is unable to get beyond from

agony that has already inhabited in him.

The narrator compares his lover with a ray of sunlight with a passing gleam, a falling star which flashes him in the form of women and he becomes psychic as the girl leaves him within 2 months and four days. He compares all events within this time interval. The image of his imagined girl friend provokes in him a strong desire of having her as his life friend, but he cannot fulfill his desire. On the contrary, he loses her for ever as she dies. It has been a great factor to cause to him a strong psychological blow. This is the main reason that he has pre-occupied with trauma in his mind:

After, that brightness disappeared again in the whirlpool of darkness in which it was bound inevitably to disappear. I was unable to retain that passing gleam. It is three months-no, it is two month and four days- since I lost her from sight but the memory of those magic eyes, of the fatal radiance of those eyes; he remained with me at all times.

(Hedayat 11)

The painter's words echo the impression of that beauty in his mind. The girl whom he thought a gleaming star is the reason for his traumatic depression. The memories are implicitly connected with trauma.

Repressed memories make the traumatic person constantly feel as if the past happenings were happening in the present. It produces a pattern of prolonged period of acute activation underlined by period of physical and mental exhaustion. It results to mental health disorder like in tensed stress and anxiety, "I would mention a strange, incredible thing. For some reason unknown to me the subject of all my painting was from the very beginning one and the same. It consisted always of a cypress tree at the fast of which was squatting a bent old man like an Indian Fakir"

(Hedayat 13). The speaker is in illusion and finds that the man like an Indian Fakir is the disturbance between him and his lover. He cannot avoid the memory from his mind.

The narrator's dream like perception moves to a certain direction and he reaches such a condition that he happens to vision absurd ideas. The act of searching wine put on the top shelf long time before makes him have a perception to a girl at the foot of the cypress tree. She seems like a morning glory for him. He is acquainted with her and keeps looking without caring about the arrival of his uncle. His deeply rooted libido desire for a girl is permeated through the lenses of a window grille. He is totally lost on the scene of the girl, "The magnetic mirror drew my entire being towards it with inconceivable force" (Hedayat 17). He continuously stares at that imagined lost girl but cannot find any view of her. It also causes some mental trouble to him.

Implicit memory is the aspect of experience that is not consciously processed at the time. Certain information is stored in memory without any consciousness of its manifestation. The girl who is seen by the narrator from his window remains in his mind as his memory. He is unable to forget her. The memory of this girl haunts him every moment, pushing him to uneasiness. He tries to minimize the flashback of that girl but he cannot explain why he cannot get rid of that. He confesses, "On the contrary, day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, the memory of her, of her body of her face, took shape in my mind more clearly than before" (Hedayat 23). Her memory even increases more clearly than before.

The narrator finds it very difficult to forget her. In an attempt to forget her, he increases his doses of wine and opium, "but remedies of despair failed to numb and paralyze my mind. I was unable to forget" (Hedayat 23). He finds that it is quite

difficult to lessen her recollection. Her picture always remains indelible in his mind and eyes day and night. Such a persistent impression of an unattainable goal certainly leaves a permanent anguish in a person's psyche.

Reveries and hallucination are the reflective forms of deeply rooted trauma and memory. The memory that has already been in mind is reflected through the way of dream, and reveries. Here, the narrator hallucinates with the vision of a beautiful lady which is like an angel. All of sudden, she appears at his door only to die only in his bed, "As I came up to the entrance. I observe a female form clad in black sitting on the stone bench outside the door ... I recognized two slanting eyes, two great black eyes set in a thin face of moon-light paleness, two eyes which gazed unseeing at my face" (Hedayat 2). He is overwhelmed when he sees her. He wants her to be in his bed, as he wishes, she moves towards his bed.

The traumatic influences make the person mad. The painter does not have a desire to do anything new rather than thinking only about the deeply rooted event in the mind. It becomes the mental illness. The person who has the reflection of this conditional ways performs unusual activities. Such people do what normal people do not. In the novella, the narrator cuts the dead body of a girl who comes in his room and dies. He does not hesitate to cut into many pieces, "Finally an idea came to me. I would cut her body, pack it in a suitcase, my old suitcase, take it in away with me to some place far, very far from people's eyes, and bury it there," (Hedayat 37). The narrator is ready even to have a physical contact to the carcass. He has such strength to cut the dead body and physical contact with it.

The people are victimized by their peers, relatives and family members. Sometimes, they have the painful situation of their member's death. It causes the psychic impact in the mind. In reaction to this, the person starts to live in isolation. He

wants to have silence and solitariness. He thinks that he is deprived of the inclusion as he is rejected by others and consequently he develops self-esteem feeling in his mind "There was complete silence everywhere. I felt that all mankind had rejected one and took refuge with inanimate things" (Hedayat 46). The narrator feels alone when he finishes managing the corpse of his imaginary girl. The victimizers expect that they should be cared with love. If anyone does not pay attention, he gets frustrated and has rapid reaction.

Memory is described as the ability of an organism to store, retain, and subsequently retrieve information. When an individual experiences a traumatic event whether physical or psychological, the memory can be affected in many ways. The past memories occur time and again in the mind. The nostalgic feeling starts to be succinct in the mind, "One by one past experiences of childhood recurred to me. Not only I saw these things but I took part in the bustle of bygone activity, was wholly immersed in it" (Hedayat 96). The narrator remembers his bygone days with full of innocent characteristics. The memories passed in the past were quite mesmerizing. But, those are turn into experience at present.

Life is a blend of compromising. We compromise by means of many aspects. Sometimes we are ready to accept whatever is not our expectation. We are compelled to learn what we expect. In the novel, the narrator has not seen his parents. He has the thirst of his parent's love that is quenched by an old woman, Nanny. He has intimacy to her. He loves her very much who takes care of him. In this regard, he gets ready to get married to Nanny's daughter though he has no interest in her. He even hardly believes her daughter.

The narrator is ready even at the time when he has not removed the memory of his dream girl," Her mother was to all intents and purposes mine too because I never

saw my parents but was brought up by her mother, a tall grey-haired woman. I love her as much as if she had been my real mother, and that was the reason why I married her daughter" (Hedayat 70). Though narrator is not interested in her, he gets ready for her because he sees his mother in her mother.

Implicit memory is the memory for those aspects of experience that are not consciously processed at the time. Sometimes, the memory haunts us which is not experienced and gets beyond our experience. Certain types of information are stored in memory without being conscious of its occurrence, and it can influence current functioning of the mind without being experienced as conscious memorizing. The pen-case-cover painter loses his parents in his childhood. He has not even seen them. The only story of his parents' love affair and their marriage revolves around his mind. He knows the background of his father and mother. He remembers this event time and again. But, he is deprived of listening to the story of his parents from their mouth. "All these things revived distant dead memories in my father's mind. He fell in love with Bugam Dasi, so deeply in love that he embraced the dancing girl's religion, the lingam cult" (Hedayat 72-73). His mother was the dancing girl at temple. His father was fascinated with her and her love affair.

The suspicion mind of pen-case cover painter makes him judge the virginity of his wife. He suspects that she is not virgin and pretending as if she is loyal wife. By that thought, he never addresses his wife with respectful words. He frequently uses the word 'bitch' while taking her name. The activities that she performs are the bases for his suspect, "She had prepared her virginity taken before hand. I don't know perhaps, she had sprinkled the cloth with the blood of partridge or perhaps it was a cloth, she had kept from the first night of gallantries in order to make a bigger fool of me" (Hedoyat 79). The narrator is not satisfied with her. Her behaviors make him feel

frustrated and he loathes to her.

Being tired of the memory of the past, the narrator returns to the present when he is presented as an invalid man. He is no longer an artist. It may not be wrong to say that his invalidity may be the outcome of his traumatic experience with people and environment in the past.

When we tried to analyze the structure of the novella, it seems to be problematic. The first part of the narrator is surreal and the second real. The sense of mystery and imagination in the opening scene develops into a tone of realism or dullness. Contrary to the common readers' expectation, the more realistic lies within the less realistic. The structure of the work is a reflection of the narrator's traumatically disturbed mentally.

The narrator goes on weakening his mental power. The final part of the novella shows a climactic scene in which the narrator, though invalid, visits his wife in disguise, holding a knife in his hand, and he kills her. He professes that he killed her but says it was accidental, during love making process, "I involuntarily jerked my hand. I felt the knife, which I was still holding, sink somewhere into her flesh" (Hedayat 152-153). After killing her, the narrator tries to prove that his act was accidental but his explanation does not sound reliable, so readers conclude that it is a murder rather than an accident. The trauma stricken character not only displays bizarre behavior and mental states but acts in an abnormal way.

Chapter 4

Impact of Trauma: Protagonist's Incurable Mental Illness

Representations of trauma through the activities and behavior of the main character, the pen-case cover painter, in *The Blind Owl* is significant issue of the study regarding consciousness and psychological trauma. The narrator approaches to trauma in the areas of individual experience, emotions, dissociation, communication, and the reflection. The impact of traumatic events on the narrator's mind and his overall behaviour is the major focus of this study.

The narrator's solitary mind as a source of a canker has not found any solution as his remedy. He searches many ways, eats opium, and drinks alcohol, but they are only the means of solace for short period of time. They cannot be the solutions to reduce the repressed desire and trauma of the character. His mental illness seems incurable. The same thoughts and events are repeatedly reflected in his mind and concept. He cannot put himself away from such thoughts. They enter as the germs in human body and make it defile and contaminated. He is not free until the end of the novel. The same things occur frequently in his mind.

The narrator's individual experience, range of emotional responses to those experiences, and the way he deals with the situation appeared before him clearly define him as a trauma stricken personality. The novel situates trauma in specific individual and relevant context that allow readers to grab the complex interplay between character's individual experiences and environment, as well as the diverse features of traumatic responses and defenses. It enhances clinical conceptualization of traumatic emotion and memory by providing unique access into psychological states, including the effects of trauma on the individual's sense of self and relation to the world. Portrayal of dissociation depicts the difficulty of integrating traumatic

experience into memory and identity.

The novel delineates the disruption of the narrator's mind following his painful experiences of the past. The existing situation and other characters' actions provoke traumatic reactions in the narrator in the first part of the novel. The novel starts with the stream of consciousness and ends with the same state of mind. The novel moves from nowhere to anywhere. The starting becomes the end of the novel. The narrator cannot achieve the recovery over his reveries and hallucination deeply rooted in his psyche.

There is no locational initiation of the story in the novel. The novel starts with the concept of the pen-case cover painter and his perception about the world. The plot is like a scene of a dream. Linearity in arrangement has been violated. There is affluent reflection of psychic presentation over syntactic and semantic perception in the text.

Hedayat clearly demonstrates his own sufferings and depressions as the fictional character, the pen-case cover painter. The narrator becomes the reflective figure of the writer himself. The writer has psychic problem himself. He frequently tries to commit suicide. His mind is not static but is fluctuated abnormally. The themes in the novel are the vehicles to depict the message that it is the traumatic novel of traumatic writer and the character.

The events deeply rooted in the mind of the character haunts him time and again. He feels it difficult to forget those traumatic events. They have been the indispensable parts of his life. There is no hope for better life of future. Everything is shadowed with depression, darkness, and melancholic feelings. The remedies taken to solace the fire of mind have not worked properly. The opium taken as a remedy does not work for a long time. The divided personality of the main character is the

reflection of his psychic defects.

The narrator shows behavior as with his mind that is completely deviated from reality. He has no real sense of time and period. Sometimes, he discusses present situation and goes to the future very soon. He is addicted to opium with increasing doses, and drinks alcohol. He presents himself as if he is confused and self conflicted. He cannot think properly. Sometimes, he tells his story, at the same time, he states that he smokes opium because he wants to forget; and that he is not even sure what really happened.

Abnormal behavior of the narrator is repeated frequently through language and the behavior of the characters. The scene of the cutting the dead body into pieces and the interest of having physical contact with the carcass are the insane behavior. He is not a normal person. He finds it difficult to adjust himself in the society.

The linguistic ambiguity and the narrator's confused mentality add complexity to the novel. No character is represented as sane and positive figure. Everyone is under the shadow of confusion and abnormalities.

The narrator does not give respect to other characters. He does not use polite words to his wife and her mother, Nanny. The novel is the depiction of trauma and its impact upon a vulnerable character. The experience of trauma is encoded in the memory. The codes are the inevitable parts of his life.

The bizarre starting of the novel and similar types of ending achieve nothing. The plot starts from nowhere and moves to absurdity. It revolves around the mental psyche and meaningless state of the characters. These reactions of the pen-case cover painter are reflection of traumatic disorder of his mind. That's why; the study has explored and proved that the influence of the traumatic events of the character is an important aspect of the novel.

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