

Double Trauma, Double Infliction: Caruth's Theory and the Paradoxical Entanglement of Pain and Survival in *Curfewed Night*

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Abstract

This qualitative case study examines Peer's *Curfewed Night* (2008) through the lens of Caruth's (1996) theory of double trauma, bringing the Kashmir conflict's devastating effects on the physical and psychological well-being of the individuals and communities to limelight. The study divulges the two-fold character of trauma maintaining that the moment of catastrophic suffering as well as the process of survival, are equally tragic, provided that the traumatic event corresponds with the healing process and lurks within as the survivor grapples with the repercussions of violence, making the revival fraught with guilt, pain, shame and struggle. Through a close reading of the text this research aims at the nuances of complex and compound trauma, furthering a deeper comprehension of the long-term and detrimental effects of sectarian violence and insurgency on non-combatant victims of war. The investigation yields an understanding of transformative potential of trauma: reshaping the healing trajectory of survivors; and, expanding this literary paradigm (double trauma) in scholarly circles. The study also serves as an implicit warning against wars and insurgent campaigns, showcasing the deep-seated and far-reaching consequences of such operations.

Key Words: Kashmir conflict, Caruth, double trauma, memory, testimony, survival.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

The conflict of Kashmir, a sore spot between Pakistan and India, has spawned several socio-politico-economic issues together with psychological ones. Particularly the psychological toll of the conflict is all the more accentuated, yielding to suffering humanity, displacements, trauma and PTSD among individuals and communities. These issues have made their way to and got exposure in Kashmiri literature notably the post 90's fiction and poetry like Agha Shahid Ali's *A Country without a Post Office* (1997), Lalita Pandit Hogan's *Kashmir: The Unheard Voices*

(2019), Amin Kamil's *Yatra* (1985), Rehman Rahi's *Kashmir: A Dirge* (1990) and Shafique Shauq's *Reflection of Kashmir* (2002), to cite a few. The present study investigates one aspect of such psychological toll, double trauma, in Peer's memoir *Curfewed Night* that offers a forceful and poignant description of human experience under siege, and provides a unique lens to view the life of those caught in the trap of the conflict. Double trauma, as advanced by Caruth (1996), postulates that trauma's travail is twofold, entailing that passing through the cataclysmic event is not the only suffering but the process of revival and recovery is as much traumatic; thus, offering a valuable paradigm to understand the multifarious character of trauma in the perspective of political dogmatism and sectarian lunaticism.

Borrowing the basic concept of belated enactment of trauma from Sigmund Freud (1924), Caruth presented the idea of intrinsic potential of trauma which means that the trauma survivors, after a certain period of time, often experience or relive the traumatic incidents in the form of flashbacks and nightmares (1996). A traumatic occurrence is traumatic, she says, because of its unusual nature as compared to normal human experiences so much so that the survivor totes a confused state of mind which incapacitates him from understanding the incident immediately. In addition to that, Caruth claims that a trauma survivor goes through a double trauma, the trauma of death and the trauma of survival, in that he witnesses the trauma of other people's death on one hand, and on the other hand, he views his own survival as traumatic. In other words, the very existence for the survivor becomes traumatic as he sees the deaths of people constantly haunting his memory by flashbacks or nightmares.

Caruth's invaluable insights play a vital part in examining the trauma suffered by different characters in Peer's memoir. Following the ideas of Caruth, the study answers why some of the characters are unable to recollect their traumatic memories and why they require some time before relating their traumatic experience. Additionally, Caruth's contributions are also useful to understand how the apocalyptic incident and the revival synthesize to shape the traumatic experience.

The existing database on the conflict of Kashmir and the trauma engendered by it (the detailed review discussed in the upcoming section on Literature Review) is mostly concerned with various mental-health challenges, individual and collective trauma, gender-based suffering, displacement, coping mechanisms and resilience. However, the theory of double trauma has not been executed to study the case. Also the previous trauma studies deal with the trauma suffered by the war veterans. This study concerns with the non-combatant victims of trauma who, being untrained for such issues, are more vulnerable to the suffering. The present study fills this gap venturing into the work's implications to double trauma, probing the entanglement between the moment of catastrophe and the process of survival. This nuanced exploration of the memoir employing double trauma theory, seeks to advance understanding of the complex and far reaching effects of extrajudicial violence perpetrated by insurgent groups on human experience,

with insinuations for trauma survivors, scholars of trauma theory and Kashmiri community at large. It also acts as a nod of caution for the NGO's and human rights activists to take steps to stop such violations not only in Kashmir, but also in other parts of the world.

1.2 Research Statement

The insurgent violence in Kashmir has culminated into massive infringement of human rights, rendering the victims displaced, tortured, traumatized and even executed. The complex nature of extrajudicial torture and resultant trauma in this context, have largely been understudied.

Curfewed Night successfully portrays the devastating impact of militancy in Kashmir and has been studied for various implications of trauma related issues; yet, a thorough analysis of the text with respect to Caruth's insights into double trauma remain wanted, which are sought to address in this research, investigating the parallel role of traumatic occurrence and the struggle for survival in determining human suffering, with a focus on informing the mental health initiatives and policy updates.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To offer a fresh and astute comprehension of Caruth's theory of double trauma and its relevance to the human suffering in face of wars and conflicts.
2. To explore the possibilities of narrativization in representing and shaping our understanding of traumatic experiences.
3. To pave the way for psychological care reforms and policy shifts.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Investigating the memoir by Peer, the study amplifies the issues faced by the victims of political transgressions, offering them a platform to bear testimony to and process their traumatic experience. By utilizing Caruth's lens of double trauma in analyzing *Curfewed Night*, the study enriches the literary archives offering an understanding of entangled and complex nature of trauma. By featuring the complexity of trauma, the study aids, informing mental health reforms and highlights the importance of devising sensitive strategies and comprehensive approaches to treat such issues. Along the same lines, by highlighting the tragic consequences of wars and paramilitary campaigns, the study also informs the quarters concerned to take steps to stop such activities not only in Kashmir but also in other parts of the globe

2. Literature Review

2.1 Double Natured Trauma

Caruth advances her invaluable theory of double trauma in her acknowledged work, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996), in which she emphasizes that both, the moment of catastrophe and the process of survival, are equally important in determining an

individual's psychological disorder, emotional numbing and delayed recovery. Inspired by Freud's definition of traumatic neurosis as an intricate duo of trauma and survival, with the incident playing a vital role in determining the survivor's response, Caruth grounds her concept of double trauma on the duality of sufferings, comprising the actual event of trauma and the passage out of it (Caruth, 1996, p.10) which is wrought with flashbacks, nightmares, hyper-vigilance, repetition-compulsion and isolation (LaCapra, Personal Communication, June 1998). (Kahn, 1974) also backed this concept of cumulative trauma and juxtaposed it with Freudian description of trauma as "unbearable effects". It is pertinent to note that surviving a traumatic occurrence is not connotative for a revival to normal life, as the fallout of the event is as much traumatic (Caruth, 1996, p.60). Paralleling, Kohut's (1984) traditional theory of psychological trauma underscores the ferocity of traumatic experience that calls upon both external events and internal psychological drives.

Caruth contended further that the germaneness of the concept of double trauma to the wars and genocidal campaigns is above broad given the prolonged nature of violence and the long-term effects of the reign of terror (1996, p. 9). Hence, the study of trauma in intersection with war-related dialogue has gain a rising interest, particularly in pursuance of the wars and conflicts across the globe as witnessed by the previous century in the shape of WWI, WWII, Vietnam War, American Wars on Terror 9/11 (Tutte, 2003). *Trauma and Recovery* by Herman, for example, investigates the complex and far-reaching impact of trauma on individuals and communities, advancing a thorough explanation of trauma accompanied by long-lasting political violence. Another example is Daas's work *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* (2007), spotlighting the specters of political violence creeping into everyday life of the victims, emphasizing that trauma can become embedded in daily life.

2.2 Trauma in the Context of Kashmir Conflict

War induced trauma in the context of excessive militarization and the conflict of Kashmir, has resulted into severe repercussions such as emotional and psychological challenges, behavioral shifts, displacements (Hoskote, 2018), cognitive impairments, existential crises and daily routine life (Khan et al, 2022). All these and other issues engendered by this situation have made their way to various genres in literature e.g. poetry, fiction and non-fiction, dramatizing the nuances of the issue and its backlash on the individual victims, communities and the all-encompassing territory. One such example is Kak's "Untill my Freedom has Come: The New Intifada in Kashmir" (2011), reckoning the human toll of war in Kashmir, featuring the diverse experiences of the victims and necessitating a profound understanding of trauma related issues. Mathur's "The Human Toll of Kashmir Conflict" (2016) investigates the psychological and emotional injuries in the backdrop of Kashmir Conflict, stressing the necessity of initiatives for holistic mental health service and policy reformations.

Another example is Peer's *Curfewed Night*, epitomizing the sufferings of his people, offering a vigorous and pungent depiction of their struggles and entanglement with multiple psychological

issues under siege, thereby accentuating the wholesale devastation of society brought by wars and conflicts. (Shakeel & Ahmad, 2021) investigate how “violence and coercion adopted by Indian soldiers” turn the memories of victims to “traumatic memories”, applying a multitheoretical framework, engaging Wrong, Caruth, Alexander and Herman’s theories on trauma.

The present study, though built on yet different from the previous studies, focuses on the unstudied theory, double trauma, to analyze the nature and severity of suffering with war in the context. Also the previous studies are mostly directed to deal with the trauma of combatant survivors of war, this study is concerned with the nuances of traumatic suffering by the non-combatant victims of war.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Data Collection and Sampling

This qualitative research uses case study design examining the rendition of double trauma by Peer in his award winning memoir, *Curfewed Night*. This has been done by synthesizing critical discourse analysis and psychoanalytic criticism. Peer’s memoir serves as the source of primary data, supplemented by retrospective data on trauma, violence, insurgency and Kashmir conflict, drawn from literary archives, online books and journal publications. The episodes related to double trauma in the work have been selected by applying close reading and coding technique, and by doing thematic analysis. The study is guided by the questions: How does the selected text exemplify the concept of double trauma as speculated by Cathy Caruth? and To what extent can the synthesis of catastrophic event and the process of survival be implemented to understand the human experience in the context of Kashmir conflict? However, the methodological constraints of the study are exclusive for this research, which restrict its generalizability to other cases. Further, although objective approach has been maintained to carry out the research, the researchers’ biases and emotional affiliation with the people of Kashmir, has been observed, particularly in the selection of topic and theoretical framework.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

The research paradigm fuelling this analysis is Caruth’s (1996) theory of double trauma. Caruth affirms that traumatic experience is composed of two separate yet non-overlapping happenings: the actual event of calamity and the struggle for revival (1996). “The double trauma is the way in which traumatic event is experienced as both a catastrophic event and a transformative experience” (Caruth, 1996, p.63). This debate finds its foundation in Herman’s (1992) claim that trauma has complex and pervasive impact on the individuals and communities. Caruth comments that the notion of double trauma is not associated to the “content of experience”, it is linked with “its intensity”. She further says that trauma is excessive stimulus which springs from unpleasant or frustrating experiences. She also adds that trauma does not only involve the extrovert

happenings rather, it involves the merging of exterior incidents and inner psychological institutions. Here, the link with the war trauma and genocidal campaigns around the Muslim world is obvious as the prolonged exposure to war under which a whole generation has born and grown up; has created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty among the victims. Based on these suppositions the study is grounded in the following assumptions;

- Trauma's terrain is double faceted; it inflicts the individuals not only during the incident, but with a similar force during the process of survival
- The fallout of traumatic suffering can be more painful than the actual event.
- Trauma is associated with the degree of severity with which it hits an individual, rather than with its content.
- Trauma incorporates both external stimuli as well as inner psychological drives.

In the light of these assumptions the study sanctions that traumatic experience is a complex, multifarious phenomenon which shakes an individual profoundly, extending across the actual moment of suffering.

4. Analysis and Discussion

Curfewed Night offers a powerful picture of growing up in Kashmir amidst the tumultuous events of 1990's, a time-period marked by trauma, loss and violence. This critical analysis examines the way that *Curfewed Night* celebrates double trauma, consisting of two unique moments: the moment when the actual catastrophe befalls and the grappling out of the flashpoint.

The narrative unfolds with the vivid description of the 1990's separatist movement in Kashmir, thereby portraying the moment of catastrophe, with sudden and unprecedented violence unleashed in the region. The Gawkadal Bridge Massacre, claiming about 160 lives and hundreds of injuries, serves as a prelude for what is going to befall on the armless Kashmiris. Dubbed as "The worst massacre in Kashmiri history", the incident ignited further demonstrations and protests, met with further operations by CRP, so much so that it took the shape of a rebellious movement against the unconstitutional Indian Occupation of Kashmir. Peer's own observations and experiences of the conflict aid him illustrate the event in more powerful terms, emphasizing the way that trauma can be sudden and prodigious.

Gawkadal Massacre, being the pivotal moment of the conflict, marks the start of an interminable chain of traumatic events. The story of Farooq, the eye-witness of the event, narrates what happened that day. The way he pretended to being dead to be saved from being killed, and the eventual remembering of the traumatic event, underscores the abiding effect of trauma on the victims. The incident of Gawkadal is followed by other such events, one of these being Hawal massacre, when the CRPF start firing at a funeral procession, with almost hundred men being

killed. Like Gawkadal, this event too left long-term impression on the collective traumatic memory of Kashmir.

Trauma now becomes ubiquitous. Srinagar, previously a vibrant city, now embodies loss, absences and curfews, accommodating world's largest military presence. "Dirty war" has brought the "mothers to city squares" (135), such as Noora whose son was abducted by the Border Security Forces (BSF) and who spent eight fruitless years to find her son. Another such story is Mubeena's, who lost her sixteen years son in the conflict, however, instead of accepting the consolation price from the government which for her was like selling her son (137), inkling that trauma cannot be compensated for.

In the upcoming chapters of the book, Peer chronicles the stories of the prisoners of Papa 2, a notorious detention cell, established by the BSF. Many of the civilian captives of Papa 2 never returned or returned handicapped and wrecked who suffered the aftermath of the wreckage in form of trauma. The traumatic testimonies of the victims like Shafi and Hussein, who underwent physical and mental torture in Papa 2, are the vigorous examples of double trauma. Shafi details the type of torture he suffered in the prison;

They made you sit on a chair, tied you with ropes. One soldier held your neck, two others pulled your legs in different directions, and three more rolled a heavy concrete roller over your legs. They asked you questions and if you didn't answer they would burn you with cigarettes...the worst part was the psychological torture. (Peer, 2008, p. 146)

In this and other such accounts by Shafi and Hussein, trauma can be seen not only as a cataclysmic event, but also a transformative experience, leaving individuals and communities suffer forever. Caruth views that in this way double trauma becomes a site for "both a destruction and a creation: a destruction of the old life and a creation of the new one" (Caruth, 1996, p. 10-11). Shafi's loss of eye-sight and Hussein's turning impotent and eventual refusal to get marry, mark the residual effects of continued trauma. Caruth quotes in this context, "the survival of trauma is not just a matter of surviving the event, but of surviving the aftermath, the memories, the flashbacks, the nightmare" (1996, p. 62). The stories of mubeena, Shafi and Hussein elucidate the theory of double trauma, where the actual suffering precedes the ongoing process of survival, marking the continuity of memory, loss and trauma.

Rasheed and Mubina is a couple whose story accentuates the double nature of trauma. The wedding procession was assaulted when Rasheed was coming back home after getting married. The new bride was raped by the soldiers of BSF. Rashid's family refused to accept Mubeena as their daughter-in-law claiming that she is ill-fated "crossfire bride", making the survival all the more painful. The village women would ask her meaningful questions; "aren't you the bride who was raped? Aren't you the one who brought ill-luck?" (159). Her trauma continues with the

taunts which she hears from “in-laws, neighbors and village folk”. She startles over petty “altercations” which remind her of trauma (Peer, 2008, p. 159). Peer inscribes;

Mothers washed the bloodstained apparels of their grooms
On stream banks,
Bridal wear burns to ash,
Bridesmaids cry
And the Jhelum flows

(Peer, 2008, p. 160)

In the perspective, double trauma manifests itself more pronouncedly, with the victim suffering again and again. Caruth annotates that the aftermath of trauma “can last for years or even a lifetime, as not just a matter of memory, but of the way in which the event is experienced, again and again, in the present” (1996, p. 60-61). Caruth comments further;

The double trauma, then, is not just a matter of the event itself, but of the way in which the event is experienced, remembered, and passed on. It is a matter of the way in which the event continues to shape and define one’s life, long after the event itself has passed. The double trauma, in other words, is the way in which the event becomes a part of one’s life, a part of one’s identity, a part of one’s very being. (Caruth, 1996, p. 64-65)

The non-cooperative behavior of the villagers and Rashid’s own family make her revival more challenging than the actual event, and prolong the trauma she has been through. In still other stories borrowed from “The new Disease” by Akhtar Mohiuddin and “Khol Do” by Saadat Hassan Manto, Peer expands on the long lasting effects of trauma. In the story of “The new Disease” a man is brought to the hospital, who stands for a long time at his house gate seeming to be standing in a queue, before entering inside. The doctor says that because of excessive frisking the victims have developed a new disease. They have to be frisked when “they see a gate” (166). Similarly, in the story “Khol do” a girl is brought to the hospital after being kidnapped and raped during the riots. The doctor attending her, asks the girl’s father to open the window to let the fresh air come in. When she hears “khol do” as doctor said about window, she takes off her pants. She was repeatedly raped by the activists and she took the phrase ‘khol do’ with the command of the rapist to undress herself (154). Here too the double trauma is evident with the victim’s reliving the event again and again, making the survival replete with guilt, pain and struggle. Caruth remarks on this situation:

The survival of trauma, as we have seen, is not just a matter of surviving the event, but of surviving the aftermath, the memories, the flashbacks, the nightmares. It is a matter of surviving the way in the event continues to shape and

define one's life, long after the event itself has passed. The survival of trauma, in other words, is a matter of surviving the present, of surviving the way in which the past continues to haunt and define one's life. (Caruth, 1996, p. 62-63)

Caruth's theory hypothesizing that the victim's struggle with revival is routed through a revival to traumatic event, is obvious in the stories of various characters in the text. Their experiences are marked by repetition compulsion of traumatic events where they reenact their trauma and try to revive back to normal life. The stories also underline how the surrounding environment, chance reminders, acquaintances and relatives, play a negative role in predisposing the victim to his trauma. In all these and other tales of pain, loss, death and shadow, double trauma seems indispensable, prolonging the physical and psychic injuries. Notwithstanding the feats of fortitude and resilience, the trauma continues to haunt the survivors, thereby claiming a long-lasting character. The constant prevalence of trauma in Kashmir, where it persists in haunting the individuals, exemplifies the complex relationship between trauma and survival. Peer ends the narrative, alluding to the double trauma and entanglement of pain and survival, in the following concluding remarks

The journey was not over yet; it will never be. The sky has been red, the days fear filled, and the nights curfewed since 1990...both Kashmir and I had changed the heady rebellious Kashmir I left as a teenager was now a land of brutalized, exhausted and uncertain people... the conflict might leave the streets but it might not leave the souls. (Peer, 2008, p. 241)

Conclusion and Recommendations

Peer's book *Curfewed Night* successfully portrays the notion of double trauma, as theorized by Caruth. The narrative vividly implies that both the devastated event and the process of survival equally contribute to inflict suffering on the victim, leading to ongoing and complex cycle of trauma. Applying double trauma to the human experience of political violence, the study foregrounds the necessity of reformations and policy updates on the part of mental health professionals, demanding a redressal for the wide ranging and long-term impact of trauma in war zone and assurance of the provision of supportive environment for recovery.

Future researchers aspiring to conduct research in this paradigm can carry out quantitative or qualitative case studies, surveys or focus groups, applying double trauma to several other contexts such as Palestinian War, US-Iraq war, Afghan Wars and genocidal campaigns in Burma and Palestine. Other traumatic incidents such as natural disasters, domestic violence and refugee experiences are also open for research. There is also room for research on intersection of double trauma to other related forms of trauma like collective trauma and intergenerational trauma.

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