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Identity, Remembrance and Insidious trauma: A Narrative Analysis of Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011)

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Abstract

Pakistan is one of the developing countries which is facing a significant increase in the rate of mental health problems as a result of ongoing political unrest, geographical conflict and large-scale violence (Munawar et al., 2020). The study examines the fictional portrayal of insidious trauma suffered by members of the Pakistani Christian community. The novel under study i.e. *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) by Hanif has been selected to fulfil the aforementioned objective. Embedded in literary trauma theory, this research is a qualitative exploratory study. It focusses on culture sensitive issues related to the field of trauma studies. The theoretical concept of insidious trauma and the related concepts such as oppression and privilege presented by Brown (2008) have been studied in detail. The text under study has been analyzed using the trauma literary model presented by Balaev (2012) which deals with the use of different narrative techniques in trauma fiction. The findings revealed that the protagonist of the novel Alice Bhatti who is a member of the Pakistani Christian community suffers from insidious trauma as a result of

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discrimination, bias and humiliation faced by her in daily life. The different narrative techniques employed in the novel include narrative dissociation, silence, landscape imagery and animal imagery (Balaev, 2012). These narrative techniques not only highlight the traumatized protagonist's psychological distress but also aid in establishing the relationship among identity, remembrance and place in the selected novel. The study delineates the role of place in shaping the consciousness of the traumatized protagonist. The present research aims to bring awareness among the Pakistani public regarding the psychological distress caused in minority communities as a result of their maltreatment by majority groups. This shall pave the way for future researchers to study the cultural specific issues related to trauma based on other underprivileged groups present in Pakistani society.

Keywords: cultural sensitivity, insidious trauma, minority groups, narrative techniques, trauma studies

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Mental health is as important as physical health for the healthy functioning of individuals, societies and countries. Reports show that mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, schizophrenia and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have significantly increased among the Pakistani public over the last few decades (Khalily, 2010). The socio-political disruption and continual state of violence in Pakistani society is one of the major reasons behind this increased rate of mental health problems. (Khalily et al., 2012). In the 1980s, Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) came to be widely known as a psychiatric disorder after it was included by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) for the first time in the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III). This classification initially dealt with victims of war and natural disasters, particularly veterans of the Vietnam War but was later on expanded to include the trauma suffered by other groups as well such as refugees, women, minorities, rape victims, etc. (Marsella, 2010).

Trauma studies as a field emerged as a rapidly growing discipline of study in 1990s.

The founding figures of the field include prominent literary critics such as Caruth (1995), Felman and Laub (1992), Hartman (1995), LaCapra (1994) and others. The works of such theorists on trauma as a literary theory have been vastly recognized as providing a new perspective to trauma theory based on explanations of trauma workings and the resulting human functioning in the aftermath of trauma (Visser, 2011). In the field of literature, this theory explores the depiction of traumatic incidents through fictional writings that portray characters suffering from war, natural disasters, domestic and sexual abuse and other forms of violence (Visser, 2011). In this regard, a few notable fictional works include West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), Bao Ninh's *The Sorrow*

of War (1987), Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) and others. However, such fictional writings are centred on depicting the traumas of Western world like characters suffering from the Holocaust, Vietnam War, World War I and II or the 9/11 attacks. The amount of research being done on the trauma-related fictional works by non-western writers focusing on the trauma of the non-western world is significantly less (Ullah, 2016). Therefore, there is a need to carry out an in-depth analysis of such fictional writings through research that may help in highlighting the trauma of people belonging to this region.

Keeping this in mind, the present research focusses on the insidious trauma of minority groups particularly Pakistani Christian minorities. The concept of insidious trauma studies the psychological distress and trauma suffered by members of minority groups such as women, lower class people, religious and ethnic minorities. This type of trauma occurs as a result of everyday forms of discrimination, bias, humiliation, oppression and violence carried out by people belonging to socially dominant groups (Craps, 2010). Within the Pakistani context, the trauma suffered by minority groups is relatively less explored. Keeping this in mind, the present study analyses the insidious trauma of Christian minorities in the light of one Pakistani novel i.e. *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011)

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The 1973 constitution of Pakistan safeguards the legitimate rights of all minority groups living in Pakistan (Shahjehan, 2014). In some cases, the non-Muslims suffer discriminatory attitude by the society that leads to psychological suppression and trauma within the minority communities. However, there is a lack of awareness among the general masses regarding the societal discrimination against minorities. There is also a dearth of research work from Pakistan that highlights this important issue. Moreover, due to the general public's interest in reading fictional works, they can serve as a crucial source to analyze the trauma of Christian minorities and their identity struggles. For this purpose, a novel *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) written by a Pakistani author Muhammad Hanif

has been selected.

1.3 Research Objectives

The present research aims to fulfil the following objectives:

- To investigate the narrative strategies employed in the selected text which render the protagonist Alice Bhatti as a victim of insidious trauma
- To examine the ways in which these narrative strategies shape the remembrance and identity of the protagonist in the novel

1.4 Research Questions

The present research aims to explore the following research questions:

- What narrative strategies are employed in the selected text to render the protagonist Alice Bhatti as a victim of insidious trauma?
- How do the narrative techniques shape the remembrance and identity of the protagonist in the novel?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Fictional narratives recreate the traumatic experiences of individuals in a society that help the readers to better understand the damaging psychological effects of trauma on individuals suffering from it. Owing to this, the present study would shed light on the traumas experienced by the minority groups in Pakistani society, particularly the Christian minority community. The study also encourages to conduct an in-depth analysis of fictional writings in Pakistan that depict the psychological sufferings of different underprivileged groups of the society such as the poor, women, and other religious/ethnic groups.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Traditional Model of Trauma Theory

Trauma according to the traditional model is an extreme stressor event "that is outside the range of human experience" (p. 250) and disrupts the psychic organization of one's mind (American Psychiatric Association, 1987). This psychological and emotional disturbance experienced in the

aftermath of the traumatic incident is recognized by the APA as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Luckhurst, 2008).

In terms of literary theorization of trauma, the works of prominent literary trauma theorists such as Caruth (1996), Erickson (1994), Felmen and Laub (1992), LaCapra (2001) and others show that they are centred around one historical event i.e. Holocaust that makes the traditional model of trauma a euro-centric model.

2.1.1 Studies on Trauma Fiction Based on Traditional Trauma Model

The majority of research that is conducted on literary texts and films deals with trauma from a Euro-centric perspective. In the light of Caruth's (1996) and LaCapra's (2001) trauma literary models, Saal (2011) has focused on individual trauma caused as a result of the 9/11 attacks in his research on Foer's (2005) novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close.* Pulsifier (2013) has utilized Caruth's (1996) theorization to study West's novel *The Return of the Soldier* (1918).

2.2 Pluralistic Model of Trauma Theory

The pluralistic trauma model moves beyond the concept of shattered identity and explores the new ways in which a traumatic experience shapes the consciousness of traumatized individuals (Balaev, 2018). In terms of literary trauma theory, trauma theorists such as Craps (2013) and Visser (2015) have focused on broadening the scope of Western-based trauma theory to incorporate the traumas suffered by minority groups belonging to the post-colonial world.

The most comprehensive framework focusing on the trauma of minority groups was provided by a feminist psychotherapist Maria Root (1992). She incorporated a feminist perspective into the study of trauma and studied socio-political and cultural perspectives involved in the marginalization and oppression of the underprivileged class. Root (1992) was the one who came up with the concept of insidious trauma that is related to instances of everyday bias, discrimination and oppression that members of minority groups face to make their survival possible within a

society. Craps and Buelens (2008) have based their study on the concept of insidious trauma by Brown (1991) by linking the concept of insidious trauma to the post-colonial context.

2.2.1 Studies on Trauma Fiction Based on the Pluralistic Trauma Model

Recent studies on trauma fiction highlight the trauma of marginalized communities particularly non-western minority groups suffering from racial or post-colonial trauma. Mandel (2006) has analysed Tony Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) by focusing on the silence of traumatized characters as a result of racial trauma. Balaev (2008) in her study moves beyond the pathologic traditional model and studies the role of place and the socio-political forces responsible for causing the transformed sense of self among the traumatized characters in Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) and Cao's *Monkey Bridge* (1997).

2.3 Studies on Trauma in Pakistani Fiction

Within the Pakistani context, Ullah and Kamran (2015) carried out a detailed study on the traumatic portrayal of characters in the novel *Earth and Ashes* (2002) by Rahimi. Khan and Chaudhary (2021) analyzed Aslam's *Blind Man's Garden* (2013) as a trauma fiction utilizing Whitehead's (2004) framework. The study focused on delineating the traumatic portrayal of Naheed and Rohan who continue to re-experience their trauma in the form of flashbacks and painful memories, which is expressed in the trauma narrative in the form of irregularity and disruption in the plot sequence. However, no significant research work has been carried out to trace the trauma suffered by marginalized women belonging to minority groups in Pakistani society. The present research aims to fill this gap in the existing literature.

2.4 Relevant Studies on the Selected Text

Khan (2015) studies the characters of Alice and Teddy utilizing Freud's notion of melancholia (1917) to highlight a constant shift in the psyche of these characters. Das (2021) has employed the theoretical frameworks of Lacanian Symbolic Order and Althusser's Ideology and Ideological State

Apparatuses (2014) to highlight the sufferings of Christian minorities in the novel *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) in the light of contemporary Islamic ideology in Pakistan. However, none of the prior studies on the selected texts outlined the traumogenic effects of oppression on the characters representing the Pakistani Christian community which is the focus of the current study.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The present research is a qualitative study and falls under exploratory research. For this research, Brown's (2008) concept of insidious trauma is employed as the theoretical basis. Furthermore, Michelle Balaev's (2012) trauma literary model is utilized for the analysis of the selected text.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

To study the trauma suffered by the Pakistani Christian Community, this research employs Brown's (2008) concept of 'insidious trauma'. She advocates for a broader definition of trauma incorporating every individual's unique experience related to trauma rather than solely focusing on a fixed list of diagnostic categories for trauma patients prescribed by Western psychiatrists. She has highlighted the social constructs of privilege and oppression and also sheds light on the notion of dominant group privilege. She then links the concept of insidious trauma to matters of privilege, oppression and other such culture-specific factors. She also highlights the different survival strategies that too are culture-specific that are adopted by members of oppressed groups both at the time of ongoing trauma and after it.

Brown (2008) builds on Root's (1992) concept of insidious trauma in which Root asserts that minority groups such as women, the poor, homosexuals, and people possessing different religious/racial/ethnic/cultural identities suffer oppression and abuse on a daily basis by those in power. The concept of insidious trauma highlights

the long-term damaging consequences of institutionalized and societal oppression on the minds of individuals belonging to minority groups. Although, not always violent, they are rendered traumogenic which means that they negatively affect the psyche of the individuals facing them. It incorporates external factors such as social, cultural or political as the reason behind the psychological distress of an individual or a particular marginalized community (Brown, 2008).

Furthermore, Brown (2008) highlights that trauma plays a significant role in shaping the identity of traumatized victims. The traumatized individual's identity exists in a constant state of transition. Trauma alters the way a traumatized victim starts seeing his sense of self, previously held values and the world around him.

3.3 Analytical Framework

The text under study has been analyzed using the trauma literary model presented by Balaev (2012). Contrary to the disease-oriented traditional model of trauma, this model takes into account the social factors and cultural contexts that shape the meaning of the traumatic experiences (Balaev, 2012).

Balaev (2012) asserts that place in trauma fiction becomes an active site where the memories and feelings related to the traumatic events are organized. It works as a significant contextual factor that excites the haunting memories of the past through the process of remembrance. The role of geographic place is emphasized through the use of trauma imagery, particularly landscape imagery. Emphasis on the role of place shows that both the individual personality traits and cultural factors are involved in shaping the consciousness of individuals and communities affected by traumatic circumstances.

Therefore, Balaev (2012) points out that the identity of a traumatized character is shaped in relation to the place of trauma and the memories associated with it that are realized in the narrative through the remembrance of past events. This means that identity is an active on-going process that is constantly changing with the experiences of a

traumatized character in a particular geographic place with its metaphoric and symbolic dimensions and keeps on shaping the character's relation with the 'self', the memories of the past and the outer world.

3.3.1 Narrative Techniques

Balaev (2012) highlights that the trauma novel employs certain narrative techniques to highlight the remembrance of trauma and the transformation of traumatized individuals that are influenced by contextual factors.

3.3.1.1 Narrative Dissociation

Narrative dissociation is an important narrative technique that signals the transformed state of consciousness of the traumatized character. The shift in traumatized character's coherent sense of self is conveyed through a sudden shift in the narrative between the past and the present signaled in the narrative in terms of rhetorical strategies such as atemporality or achronological plot (Balaev, 2012).

3.3.1.2 Silence

Silence is another important narrative technique employed by trauma fiction writers to portray the psychologically disturbed mental state of the traumatized characters. The character in this state is unable to vocalize the memories associated with his/her traumatic past (Balaev, 2012).

3.3.1.3 Trauma Imagery

Balaev (2012) highlights that trauma fiction significantly employs the narrative technique of trauma imagery to signal the psychological distress suffered by traumatized characters in symbolic dimensions. Landscape imagery is one such technique. The emotional action of the plot is signaled through the use of landscape imagery that further highlights the role of place in shaping the meaning of the traumatic experience.

This struggle between the internal environment (self) and the outside environment (landscape/ place) is further highlighted in the trauma fiction through the use of animal imagery. The disturbed emotional state of the protagonist is highlighted in the narration by focusing on the presence of an animal in the outside environment that symbolically

highlights the internal environment of the character (Balaev, 2012).

3.4 Research Method

The present research investigates the selected text from the lens of trauma theory. Close reading method has been utilized to study the selected text in detail. The analysis has been carried out in two steps: First of all, the researcher has uncovered different narrative techniques employed in the selected text to delineate the insidious trauma of the protagonist. Afterwards, the analysis explored the ways in which the contextual factors portrayed through different narrative techniques help in shaping the identity and remembrance of the protagonist.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Insidious Trauma and the Narrative Innovations

The protagonist of the novel, Alice Bhatti suffers from psychological distress as a result of verbal abuse, harassment and threats to physical safety in her daily life since childhood referring to her insidious trauma. She is constantly being devalued and reminded of her *Choohra* identity since her early years. As Brown (2008) highlights that these constant reminders of minority status have the potential for the traumatization of minority members. During her job interview for the position of a junior nurse at the Sacred Heart Hospital, she was constantly asked non-professional questions related to her Christian faith and her father's *Choohra* status by the Head of the Orthopedic Unit referred to as Ortho Sir. For instance, he asks Alice, "Are you ashamed of your father's name?" (Hanif, 2011, p. 8). This makes Alice nervous, and her psychological distress is apparent throughout the interview. These reminders are often intimidating which can arouse apparent stress and anxiety in the minority members during their interaction with the majority members (Brown, 2008).

The insidious trauma faced by Alice in the novel can be analyzed by using certain narrative techniques (Balaev, 2012) employed by the writer to convey the psychological and emotional suffering of the protagonist. Narrative dissociation is one such narrative technique employed by the

writer in the selected text. It is linked to remembrance where a traumatic memory of the past hits the character in the present and takes it back to some painful happening in the past. In this way, there is a contradictory tension going on between the past and the present (Balaev, 2012).

This shifting between the past and the present is realized in the narrative either in the form of achronological plot or atemporality. During the interview, Alice's disgust for Ortho Sir's unethical questions and her insidious trauma was realized in her dissociative moment when she suddenly remembers the humiliation and harassment, she had to face being a Christian woman on a daily basis.

> She has a whole doctrine perfected over the years to deal with all of that…It is in this moment that Alice Bhatti realizes that even if she gets this job, she might end up castrating someone. (Hanif, 2011, p. 14)

In the above-mentioned passage, dissociation in the narrative is signaled through Alice's disturbed thoughts in the form of anger and frustration. Her thoughts shifted between the past and the present as she was unable to differentiate between them in that particular moment.

Balaev (2012) highlights that silence is an important narrative technique that signals the protagonist's emotional suffering, confusion and inability to vocalize the traumatic experience. In the text, silence is portrayed by the use of a rhetorical strategy called narrative ellipses that portrays the disturbed mental state of the protagonist. During the interview at the hospital, Alice was unable to bear the humiliation by Ortho Sir. When asked a simple job-related question by him after all the discriminatory remarks, Alice was unable to answer at first. "A strange croak comes out of her mouth, a voice that surprises her" (Hanif, 2011, p. 10). Here Alice was unable to put her thoughts into words as a result of her disturbed mental state. She then gathered the courage to answer the question, but the use of ellipses further portrays her emotional distress and insidious trauma. "I have qualifications…' She realizes that she has forgotten the

rest of her answer" (Hanif, 2011, p. 10).

Another important narrative technique employed by the writer in the text is the use of trauma imagery which quite significantly portrays the psychological distress suffered by the protagonist in the novel. Balaev (2012) points out that the wide range of trauma imagery used in trauma fiction shows the multiple dimensions of emotional pain that traumatized individuals have to go through in their lives. The texts under study have made use of it in the form of animal imagery and landscape imagery. The writer has intelligently employed animal imagery in the text to metaphorically present the disturbed mental and emotional state of the protagonist. During the interview, Alice tried to divert her mind from the humiliating remarks of Ortho Sir by "looking at a lizard on the wall, desperately willing it to move, as if its movement will affect the movement of her stars" (Hanif, 2011, p. 6). Here, in her mind, Alice was comparing the stagnation in her life because of her circumstances and minority status with the stagnant position of the lizard. Alice's disturbed mental state here causes her to forget her sense of purpose as she was too distracted by Ortho Sir's demeaning responses.

Furthermore, another kind of trauma imagery i.e., landscape imagery is also used in trauma novels to depict the character's anxieties and fears in symbolic dimensions (Balaev, 2012). Alice's deep fears were provoked when she was assigned the night duty in the VIP room. Sister Hina Alvi informs Alice about the admitted patient named Begum Qaz and their family's association with the Sacred Hospital by referring to the patient as "old money" (Hanif, 2011, p. 81) and one with "roots" (Hanif, 2011, p. 81) at the hospital. Here, Alice's thought process shifted to the famous tree at the hospital named Old Doctor.

> Alice Bhatti had a vision of the Old Doctor in the courtyard, its trunk made up of gleaming Hilux metal, its branches twisted Kalashinikov barrels, little birds in black uniforms and dark sunglasses and oversized berets hopping on its branches. (Hanif, 2011, p. 81)

In the above-mentioned lines, it can be seen that Alice Bhatti could anticipate the impending danger that she was about to encounter, and her

psychological distress was apparent here through the use of landscape imagery.

4.2 Identity, Remembrance and Place

Balaev (2012) points out that the traumatic events not only contribute to moving forward the plot of the novel, but they also provide the emotional action of the narrative in the form of the transformed consciousness of the protagonist. The protagonist's perceptions regarding the 'self' and the world are altered during the course of the narration and this transformation in consciousness shapes the identity of the protagonist. Furthermore, the identity of the traumatized character is shaped in relation to the place of trauma and its remembrance by the affected character.

Narrative techniques as discussed above in detail not only highlight the traumatized character's psychological distress but also aid in establishing the relationship among identity, remembrance and place. In the text, Alice's coming back to French Colony after her marriage with a Muslim named Teddy made her to contemplate about her own self/ identity which was aided through the use of landscape imagery. As Balaev (2012) points out that place becomes the locus to organize memories and emotional responses related to trauma. Alice looks around the colony and wonders, "…How about real miracles, like drains shall remain unclogged? Or the hungry shall be fed? Or our beloved French Colony shall stop smelling like a sewer?" (Hanif, 2011, p. 169). Alice then enters her own house to look out for her father. She then starts packing her things to take with her to Al-Aman and her estrangement with the place was realized in the following lines. "It's only after she has placed her bag in the middle of the bed that she realizes how little she's taking from this home" (Hanif, 2011, p. 170). It can be seen that Alice's visible estrangement with her father and the place of her birth takes her back to the memory of her mother's death when she was just twelve years old.

Here remembrance is realized in the narrative through the narrative strategy of dissociation. Alice's disturbed relation with the place/ landscape i.e. French colony takes her back to the past which shows that these unresolved memories from her past are a cause of Alice's insidious trauma "At the age of twelve, Alice Bhatti is not sure if her mother has just passed away, or has died in a tragic accident, or left this world to become Yassoo's eternal bride" (Hanif, 2011, p. 171).

This painful memory of her mother's death reminds Alice of the cause of her mother's death. This excites rage and anger inside her as she was raped at the place of her work and was hurled down the stairs, but it is not very likely that when you slip on the staircase, you'll also accidentally scratch yourself on your left breast with such violence that

those who wash your body will see four parallel sharp gashes drawn with human nails. (Hanif, 2011, p. 175) In the above-mentioned lines, Alice's insidious trauma is apparent when she remembers the violence that happened to her mother being the minority member and the loss Alice herself suffered as a result of her mother's death is portrayed through remembrance.

The above-mentioned incident of Alice visiting the French Colony after her marriage to a Muslim man and Alice contemplating her surroundings shows Alice's trauma and the psychological impact this trauma is creating on Alice. Alice was unable to realize her sense of self and this dilemma was apparent in the above-mentioned lines. Here, Alice's conflicting identity is presented through the narrative techniques of landscape imagery and remembrance.

As Brown (2008) highlights that the traumatized individual's identity remains in a constant state of transition because of his/her altered sense of self. Alice was seen to be in search of her internal self and her conflict with the 'self' is not resolved throughout the narration It can be seen in the text that the reality regarding Teddy's profession comes as a revelation to her when she starts questioning her sense of self, her sudden decision of marrying Teddy and the future of her unborn child. Here, again her conflicting identity is presented in terms of Alice's contemplation of the 'self' through the use of landscape imagery. On her way back from the G Squad Centre Alice tries to divert her psychological distress and her conflict with the 'self' by focusing on the external surroundings. "She looks at the bus conductors, who yell and sing and hawk their destinations, thump the sides of their buses, scream at the drivers to change the music" (Hanif, 2011, p. 320). Here, Alice's internal conflict with the 'self' is apparent as she diverts her anger and anxiety to her surroundings, i.e., landscape, which is apparent in the way she looks at the streets of the bazaars that she passes by. Alice's disturbed mental state gets worse when she looks at the billboard displaying the poster of a bodybuilder that reminds her of Teddy. "A giant cut-out of a bodybuilder announcing physical and spiritual revival in a seven-day crash course hovers over a street corner; she feels a lump in her throat" (Hanif, 2011, p. 320).

Alice's disturbed mental state takes her to her past where she remembers about the humiliations, she had to face all her life. Here narrative dissociation is used to portray Alice's disturbed thoughts and her unresolved memories of the past that are still psychologically disturbing for the protagonist. "Her experience of walking in bazaars, travelling in buses, going to shops has taught her that whatever their status in life, whatever they might need from her, they always have a

reason to stare at her…" (Hanif, 2011, p. 321).

Balaev (2012) terms the protagonist's subjectivity as constantly evolving in the face of traumatic incidents that the character experiences in the course of the novel. Alice's changed perceptions regarding her sense of self and her surroundings make her question everything. "She tries to remember something about Teddy's job… She wishes she remembers a title, work timings, pension plan, a salary, and she realizes she doesn't know any of these things" (Hanif, 2011, p. 322). It can be seen that her conflict with the 'self' and the surroundings continued throughout this incident.

The above analysis clearly shows that Alice's identity is working as a composite formed out of her relationship with her 'self', her surroundings i.e. her community and her society and her disturbing memories of the past that refer to her insidious trauma. Balaev (2012) highlights that recovery of the traumatized character depends upon the character's acceptance of his/her own identity. In the text, it can be seen that Alice is still confused about her identity. Although, the reorientation of perception experienced by her in the aftermath of her pregnancy and her search for Teddy shows that she was on her path to accepting her identity. She starts questioning her previous conceptions regarding her 'self' and her surroundings but could not fully recover on account of her murder committed by her Muslim husband Teddy.

5 Conclusion

The present study investigated the insidious trauma of the protagonist Alice Bhatti in the novel *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) by Hanif. For this purpose, Brown's (2008) concept of insidious trauma was used as a theoretical framework and Balaev's (2012) pluralistic trauma model was utilized as an analytical framework. The findings revealed that the protagonist of the novel Alice Bhatti is subjected to discrimination, humiliation and bias on a daily basis which results in her distressed psychological state and mental confusion as well as her anger and frustration towards the dominant Muslim group (Brown, 2008). This refers to her insidious trauma which is realized in the novel in the form of certain narrative techniques such as narrative dissociation, silence, landscape imagery and animal imagery (Balaev, 2012). Furthermore, the analysis showed that the selected text has employed these narrative techniques to emphasize the relationship among the identity of the traumatized protagonist, her remembrance of the traumatic events and the place of the occurrence of her insidious trauma. The research will be beneficial in comprehending the role played by different cultural factors in the traumas suffered by different minority groups living in Pakistan. This research is just a small contribution towards understanding the

psychological sufferings of the Pakistani Christian community as a result of the recent wave of violence against religious minority groups as well as the cultural attitudes of the dominant Muslim majority Pakistani society towards the religious minority groups living in Pakistan. The present study was delimited to the study of one novel i.e. *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti (2011).* Future researchers can explore the concept of insidious trauma suffered by other religious minority groups such as Ahmadis and Shias in other contemporary Pakistani novels to have a better understanding of the psychological struggles and marginalization faced by minority communities in Pakistani society. The researcher also recommends prospective researchers to study the fictional works highlighting the insidious trauma suffered by Muslim minority communities living in the Western world.

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