

AKSHARA

Multidisciplinary Research Journal

Peer-Reviewed & Refereed International Research Journal

July 2022 Special Issue 05 [Volume V]

Queer Studies and Literature Nature, Scope and Future



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**Reflection of Queer Trauma in Nemant Sadat's
Novel *The Carpet Weaver*****Madhuri Subhash Pawar**

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Abstract

Nemant Sadat, a US based Afgan-American Gay writer. He is well known activist and journalist whose debut novel *The Carpet Weaver*, is an incredibly ambitious novel, and depicts the life of Gay people who are always abused, neglected and killed by the society. The writer himself considers as a gay in the Afghanistan who first publically came out as a gay in the world. His aim is to develop empathy for LGBTQIA+ by showing what it means to be a gay person and how to live a fake life that corrupted by a hypocrisy and secrets in a repressive society. And the present novel is a best example of Queer Literature. The novel unfolds around the life of the central character Kanishka Nurzada who seems to face the problem of identity crisis trapped in religious and social conflicts. The Afgan society is enjoying this homosexuality but social acceptance is strictly prohibited. The novel is set in the backdrop of war during the time of Sour Revolution in 1978s. But the author has developed the novel from the beginning by telling the protagonist's true identity which is known to his family and society what he is. In this way, the novel successfully articulates the traumatic lives of gays and their struggle towards survival.

Key Words: Queer, Trauma, Identity Crisis, Gay etc.**Queer Trauma:**

There is strong connection between queer and trauma theory. So to understand the connection between these two terms, we need to study these two terms in detail and to analyze the novel in connection with these terms and it helps to prove the novel as a gay novel, the novel reveals both aspects through the characters who face the stress and hurdles when they come out of their closet.

Queer:

Queer is an umbrella term which denotes sexual identity within a particular community. It is made up of people who identify as a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and others. Some of them are homosexual or changed their gender or their instinct. It is used to denote deeply personal identity and define political perspective to the individual who has sexuality other than heterosexuality. It is disparaging term first to describe homosexual in West. Now it becomes a name for a community and movement. It encompasses multiple desires and identifies. It discards two prime established things of the society: that are primacy of heterosexuality and patriarchal family set up. It captures identities and desires of same sex people. Along with sexuality of same sex people, it tries to understand politics of sexuality that inevitably connected with class, gender, cast and religion. Queer and trauma are linked with each other that describe events and circumstances which are physically, emotionally, socially, life threatening and harmful to these community. On 1990 onwards the study of these people are increased. Even in India, we can see that there is a prejudice about these people. This community is always neglected, insulted and rejected. Society sees them in a very different

way. They never allow them in any social phenomenon. As a result, they face immense difficulties in their life causes to frustration and death.

Trauma:

The term Trauma is a complex issue that always faced by the LGBTQIA+. It is not often linked to single events but a bulk of incidents and events. It is a response to a deeply distressing or disturbing event that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope, causes feeling of helplessness, diminishes their sense of self and their ability to feel full range of emotions and experience. Originally, the word Trauma is derived from the Greek word 'Traumatizo' which means 'wound'. It is a piercing of the skin, a breaking of the bodily envelope" (Garland, 1998. P.9). Then Freud describes trauma as a mental disturbance of survivors of devastating events which involve in a risk of life, such as railway disasters, accidents or the terrible war which just ended (Freud, 1990, p.104). The term trauma has also become a key term in cultural criticism and literary theory. Cathy Caruth, one of the most innovative scholars on trauma theory, defines trauma as " the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, or other repetitive phenomena" (Caruth. 1996, p. 91)

About Author:

Nemant Sadat is a well known Gay scholar, prominent Activist and journalist, human Rights Activist and a Former Professor of Political Science at the American University of Afganistan. He is one of the first Afgans to have openly come out as a gay in the world and he started campaign for LGBTQIA+ and rights, gender, freedom and sexual liberty in Afganistan.

Aim:

The present paper tries to prove that how protagonist is trapped under the hardships of the Civil war and Saur Revolution and he come out of this stigma to survive in the society.

About novel:

The Carpet Weaver is one of the best Queer and Gay novel. It is also known as a debut and historical novel set in Afganistan in 1970. It depicts the love story of the same sex which means shaming and death penalty. It is about homosexuality, religious intolerance and political upheavals in Afganistan.

Plot of the novel:

The present novel is a brutal story of love and betrayal in the time of war. It is a heart-break story of two young friend of having same sex in the Afgan. It explores the life of 'Kuni'(gay) who are neglected, abused and killed by the hypocratic society. The author has very skillfully portrayed the life of gay people through the character of Kanishka Nurzada, a son of affluent carpet seller. He is the protagonist of the novel and the whole story unfolds around the life of him, whose life is trapped in religious conflict and horrifying aspects of human world. The book illustrates the traumatic and miserable life of gay in Afgan community and paints the real picture which is not pretty because these homosexual men are being labeled as shunned, kuni, gay and experiences hardships of violence physically as well as mentally.

The story begins happily with the celebration of the 16th birthday of the protagonist, named Kanishka at the ballroom. At the beginning he faces the problem of identity as a gay and finds difficulty in coming out in front of his parents and his society. He hides his true identity of being gay from everyone in the society due to fundamental rules of the country. He falls in love with his close friend, Maihan, having same sex and same age. He doesn't bother and loves continuously.

The author has created a very sensitive character of the novel, Kanishka Nurzada, a young boy and son of carpet seller. His father has his independent shop. He belongs to a Moist group where he works secretly to eradicate the current President of country. Another character of this novel is a Rustam, a friend of his father was also a gay who hides his sexuality for the sake of his family and for himself in the normative, constructive society. Kanishka tries to impress his father by telling lie that he has deep feelings for Maihan's cousin Lampa. On the contrary he falls in love having with same sex, his friend Maihan and both keep the secret of their relationship even from their close friend Faiz but they had doubt on them.

During the time of Saur Revolution, it shows there is a break in their teenage love and it takes unexpected turn in their lives due to aftermath of war. Every person has to face their personal life with political upheavals, hardships of revolution made their lives miserable. They suffer a lot the social stigma of being a gay in the traditional customs of Afganistan and Muslim society. They became a prey to this injustice and faced internal, interpersonal and societal level of conflicts. Their condition became so worse and suffered mentally and physically which comes to an end. During the same time Kanishka's father was arrested and tortured mentally and physically because of being a member of Moist group. When Kanishka and his mother knew about him, they were enquiring about him every day. They were in illusion that one day his father will release soon. But when the officail list of dead people came in their observation that time they come to know about his death. It was very heart touching and terrifying stigma for his family. It was unbearable situation for him because unexpectedly, unfortunately his father was killed in detection camp. This made his family to suffer and went into depression.

Later, Maihan's mother gets to know about the secrets of their relationships through letter read by her which was written by Kanishka for his father, kept in his pocket. She visits the Kanishka's house and talks about this affair and warns Kanishka's mother not to see him around Maihan. The family was already disturbed and depressed due to familial loss. So she takes a decision of leaving this country and shift to Pakistan. But unfortunately, they again trapped in Toofan Khan who sells them to detention camp in Pakistan where they are forced to make carpets. His childhood knowledge helped him to make designer carpets to survive. Then he finds Rustam there and with the help of him, he made a plan of killing Taur Gaul, but he failed in his plan and succeed in escaping from the camp.

Finally, Maihan changed his decision and married to Lamba due to social pressure and has no desire to be in the hands of men but secretly indulge in gay relationship with other men. The duel life of gay men makes Kanishka to reveal his identity and makes him to live life honestly and independently. Finally, he goes to New York where he can live peaceful life.

The Carpet Weaver as a Queer Trauma:

The homosexual novel resolves around the central character Kanishka, a gay young that is surrounded by many people but not happy towards society who is ruling. As a gay boy he struggles in a conservative society to survive war, identity crisis, war, starvation and intense family loss. He confronts constant struggles of his personal life that deals with aftermath of war, politics and his sexuality. It is a love story of two young friends who caught in Saur Revolution of 1978s. It depicts the story of these characters who hide their identity for better life and betray their nation. He faces painful struggle to overcome these hurdles. Here same-sex love is prohibited and threatened with violence during revolution, in spite of which Kanishka keeps his love for his friend Maihan which blossoms in deadly secrets. His family believes in the concept of man-woman relationship but Kanishka was totally opposite character that falls in love with opposite sex.

In the beginning of the novel, the protagonist faces the problem of identity crisis when his father's friend Rustam makes an adult jokes on him and insults him by telling everyone that he is a gay man but Kanishka's father didn't like it. The dream of their family is based on their children's position but Kanishka leave the business of his father and starts his own designing carpet. The idea of becoming a lawmaker became incomplete. At that time, Afganistan was shrouded in war and his father was arrested by police and family was totally unaware of his condition whether he is alive or not. At that time, they came to know his father killed and died. He had faced the trauma of losing his father .

"Each night, I abruptly awoke from more nightmares, heart thumping and my face beaded in cold sweat. Eventually I would drift back to sleep as image of him, abused and stripped of his resolute spirit, flashed through mind. (P.141).

This emotional trauma haunts him and has captured him mentally doesn't stop him in a nightmare which flashes continuously in his mind. He had faced the trauma of losing his father.

After his father's death, the protagonist goes through a lot of trauma in his life. The trauma of being a gay deal with their emotions, feelings, their identity and they face all these difficulties when they lose safety, trust, choice and the novel is the best example of it because the protagonist seems to be facing every kind of situation, harshness which is worse than normal people. The novel explores this kind of harassment through the friends who were teasing protagonist as gay 'kuni'. He was in fear after losing his father that his identity will come out to the society and they will spoil his family. So he tries to take some steps to compromise himself for the sake of his family. But he is very strong enough to overcome such trauma of rejection. It doesn't affect on his mind hearing the death of his father. In the novel, it shows how the protagonist is facing such a terrifying situation every time. Because the family left him alone without a proper person and being a gay, he was unable to handle the situation. As a result, this trauma haunts him in his own dream that he was responsible for his father's death.

"They declared, 'You must be punished for your sons depravity.

One man yelled, this is your punishment for raising a Kuni!" (P. 142)

This death of his father continuously runs in his mind and disturbs mentally that he was not able to overcome the lust on men. Then we can see that how Kanishka and Maihan meet up at Café secretly to exchange words of their past and present lives. During their conversation, Maihan avoids him and informs that he is going to marry Lamba and asks him to forget the past. It was difficult for Kanishka to overcome all these obstacles without Maihan and living life without him was a deep sorrow for him which haunted him in dream. The novel portrays the miserable life of this gay man. Another prominent character to be seen after kanishka, was Rustam, handsome man. He keeps secret of his own identity from the society and never want to judge by anyone for being a gay. We see that how Rustam chats about a Gay and criticizes him and tries acting as if he is out of box. But in real life, he is a gay and beholds his secret for the sake of himself and family. He was very clever enough and not true for himself due to his religion. In Kanishka's part, he was betrayed by his own friend in the school and treated as a waste and punished for being a gay. In the whole novel, the humiliated, abused and insulted. From the beginning to till the end, the novel tries to point out the troubles, struggles and miserable things that one has to go in his life and even though they have become sucesful in coming out of it. The author brings out these incidents through the character of Rustam who was witnessed. It explores the reality of the sexual identification of the characters, their struggles and compromising their emotions to the goodness of the family.

Conclusion:



The present research paper explores the queer trauma that reflected in the novel *The Carpet weaver*. It discusses about the trauma is faced by the queer person in Afgan community. From the beginning, the trauma traced the protagonist from his self- realization of being a gay and the obstacles he faces to come out to his parents and survive in the society. But this trauma didn't help him at all and while growing, it only haunts him in his dream. The author himself is a gay and the protagonist has been by the author. He also developed some more characters who also are gay and accepted their opposite gender to change their identity. These people are afraid of coming out to the society, who lived disguised life. In this way, the author raises the social issues. Islamic Community, religion and trauma very skillfully. Thus , the novel articulated the atrocities that are committed on people after Saur Revolution that changed the course of life of the characters and author became successful deliberately elaborating the details of these community.

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