

A Study on Post effect of Trauma in the Novel 26/11Unforgiven by Manish Jaitly

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ABSTRACT

Terrorism and trauma are inseparable twins. Terrorism shatters mankind and leaves them with irreparable trauma for the rest of their lives. Trauma acts as an important tool to be analyzed in this paper. This paper delineates about collective trauma and its symptoms like depression, guilt and revenge present in the select novel and it also attempts to unveil the act of revenge as the effect of posttraumatic experience in the novel. The novel has the theme as revenge. Kai T Erikson, American Sociologist's typology has been adopted to analyze the novel taken for the study is 26/11 Unforgiven by Manish Jaitly which is based on real terrorist attack in Mumbai (2008). It is an unsympathetic series of attack which was executed by ten terrorist of Lashkar-e-Taiba at six different places at Mumbai and it lasted for four days. In the attack 174 victims were killed and 300 were injured. Traumatic experiences of affected victims are always indescribable. Authors have made attempt to describe the traumatic event through innumerable works. This paper focus on the collective trauma, trauma symptoms presented in the novels. The paper also presents how the characters torment out of trauma and how trauma motivates the victim to march toward revenge.

Keywords

terrorism, trauma, revenge, victim, injustice

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Introduction

Since the epoch of India- Pakistan partition in 1947, the clash between the countries became a never ending war. Pakistan has made countless terrorist attack on our nation. Especially Mumbai has confronted numerous terrorist attacks which includes 12th March 1993 bomb blast killed 257, 6th Dec 2002 bomb in the bus killed 2, 27th January 2003 cycle bomb killed 1, 13th March 2003 bomb in the train killed 10, 28th July bomb in the bus killed 4, 26th November 2008 also named 26/11 attack is a massive bomb and shooting attack by made by the terrorists. It has created the devastating effect around the country. The ceaseless dispute between India and Pakistan is said to be the reason behind the attack. It is a brutal attack made by the members of Lashkar-e-Taiba and it took place in eight locations: Cama hospital, Hotel Obrai Traiden, Chharteapathi Shivaji Terminus, Metro Cinimas, Taj Palace and Tower, St Xavier, Mazagaon and Vile Parle. The Shooting between Mumbai police and the terrorist sustained for four day and has taken the lives of 174 people. The novel 26/ 11 unforgiven (2018) chosen for the study is influenced by this real terrorist attack which is scripted by Manish Jaitly. Manish Jaitly is a daring army officer who served in Indian army for 20 years. 2008 Mumbai attack also known as 26/11 has made the entire world to mourn for the innocent victims who died in the attack. Survivors of 26/11 and family members of the dead were thrown to terrific shock and depression. After the attack numerous novels and books emerged to picturize 26/11 horror like The Siege 2015, 26/11 stories of strength 2018, Mumbai Avengers (2015), 26/11 Unforgiven (2018)

Novel Summary :

The novel 26/11 Unforgiven by Manish Jaitly starts with protagonist Vikrant Maheshwarie, who is completely broken out of the lose of his beloved wife and daughter in the attack. As a successful businessman he is not able to return to his normal life even after the two years of the attack. He was extremely strained because of the loss of his beloved ones and other important reason behind his resentment is that justice is not attained for the merciless massacre. Indian government is very cautious in making any decision against Pakistan because that may create law and order issues in the country. Vikrant was not ready to accept his pathetic condition as a fate instead he seeks revenge with the help of a man who is connected with other terrorist group. In the mean while he was attracted towards the beautiful woman Farzana who worked under him in the office and get into relationship with her. Vikrant decides to kill the master mind behind the attack. Finally he kills the terrorists and escaped to other country. Revenge is the main theme of the novel and it is accomplished at the end of the novel

A Brief Note on Trauma Theory:

The term trauma delineates the physical and mental stress generated by catastrophic incidents, like natural disaster, terrorist attacks, war, massacres, etc. Trauma studies developed during 1990's. Despite Trauma studies began with Freud, Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman and Geoffery Hartman made the concept prominent to the literary circle. Luckhurst articulates that trauma studies attained popularity only after the II world War in diverse academic disciplines. Spectrum of researches have been started to emerge to analyze literary work under the domain of trauma theory.

Kai T Erikson, American Sociologist's typology has been adopted to analyze the selected text. According to him, Trauma is a painful blow to the psyche which experiences the unredeemable shock. An individual or a group which encounter any disastrous event will lead to post-traumatic disorder. The post traumatic disorder has the symptoms of strain, loneliness, guilt, revenge, anger and change in behavior. The model of Erickson is very pertinent to analyze the novel 26/11 Unforgiven by Manish Jaitly.

The traumatic experience shared by a group of people, community and the nation are named as collective trauma because the entire community who got affected directly and indirectly by it are under the same dreadful experience. In the novel the entire nation is downcast and memorializes the death of the victims. It is highly impossible for the victim community to get relieved from the devastating shock.

K.T Erikson rightly observes:

Collective trauma is: Refers to a blow to the tissues of the body –or more frequently now to the tissues of the mind–that results in an injury or some other disturbance. It is not an infection welling up from within, then. It is not a growth or a rupture or a blockage that originates inside. It is an assault from outside the breaks into the space one occupies as a person and damages the interior (Erikson 455).

In the novel, the first anniversary of the attack is commemorated at the hotel Taj, a small memorial is constructed by the hotel. Same way for the second anniversary of the attack people from various parts of the nation mourn for the casualty. People paid obeisance to the dead through burning candles and bouquets. The external attack has damaged the entire community internally. "The burning candles, bouquets and the multitude of dejected faces offering obeisance to the victims" (Jaitly 2).

"A memorial function was to be organized at the Taj and other locations in the city

to pay homage to the victims of the tragedy" (Jaitly 51).

The people were intensely depressed, the death of 175 people and the four days of terror attack could not be erased from their minds. They were experiencing collective trauma. The phrase 'dejected faces' from the above quotation is the apt expression to reveal the mental state of the people. Even after the bitter encounter of such cruelties they could do nothing and feel helpless and humiliated.

Volkan defines collective trauma as follows:

Volkan, calls collective trauma as chosen trauma "...refers to the mental representation of an event that has caused a large group to face drastic losses, feel helpless and victimized by another group, and share a humiliating injury" (Volkan 4).

Thus the collective trauma is represented in the novel.

The traumatized victims have build up a certain characteristics which includes depression, resentment, anger, disbelief, obsession, guilt and revenge. Though all these traumatic symptoms could be traced from the behavior of the protagonist in the novel. The paper focuses on trauma of depression, guilt and revenge found in the character Vikrant, the survivor of 2008 Mumbai attack who lost his daughter (Mega) and wife (kirti) in the attack. He is very much obsessed with the thought of the lose and injustice. The Vikrant was emotionally defeated and he questions

about his purpose of existence. As he lost his dearest souls, he feels there is nothing to be done in the world without them." Vikrant sat there looking at the ceiling, wondering if he really had any purpose left in his life "(Jaitly 36).

Depression and haunting memories are the traits of traumatic condition. The forth coming paragraph will unearth the distress of the protagonist Vikrant in the novel. On 26.11.2008 at Taj Vikrant witnessed the fire splashing from the AK 47 and the innocent people were collapsed to the ground as lifeless bodies. He is also shot in the leg and abdomen despite the agonizing pain he searched for his loved ones to save them but to his horror both his wife and daughter lay in the pool of blood, both of them were shot in their abdomen. Six months have passed; Vikrant could not retrieve himself from the cruel incident. The assault continuously reverberates both in his mind and memory. It is highly impossible for anyone to forget such unexpected tragedy.

Vikrant's condition is best explained by Hanif Samia :

"The inner catastrophe leaves wounds and scars on the memory that cannot be erased and later on influences the later Behavior in much unexpected ways" (samia 5).

Though Vikrant suffer out of physical pain for him mental pain is excruciating and it is better understood through the below lines:

"He could bare the physical pain, but it was the mental agony which was impossible to endure. The saddest part was that he wasn't able to attend his wife and daughter's last traits" (Jaitly 11).

In another instance Vikrant recalled his nostalgic memories with his wife kirti and daughter Mega. If that mad attack had not happened his beloved ones will be full of love and laughter and joyfully they would have returned to their home. While recalling the memories he sobbed and tears rolled down on his face. Out of depression Vikrant cried for the irredeemable loss.

"A sob escaped from Vikrant's throat. He felt tears roll down his cheeks. He took out his handkerchief and covered his face" (Jaitly 52)

Loneliness is another vital trait of trauma that is the pain of being left alone. Vikrant lead a happy life with kirti and mega, their absence is unbelievable to him. During day time he will be busy with his work but at the evening he miss them badly and long for their presence.

While driving home alone, Vikrant began to realize the fathomless depths of his loneliness (Jaitly 50).

Vikrant being a single child lost his parents, later Kirti and Mega are everything to him but unfortunately he lost them in the tragedy. Now he is alone and he could not bear this loneliness. Moreover the image his family members lay hand in hand near the swimming pool flashes in his mind raises his solitude. That is better understood through the lines:

The last picture of his family in his mind were the ones in which they lay in a stream of blood next to the swimming pool. It was agony for him to have such a last memory of his

loved ones. Their loss had left him all alone in this world (Jaitly 11).

Guilt is the next important traumatic symptom to be analyzed. Erikson explicates the traumatic symptoms of guilt as; the survivors of the tragic event were under deep despair mainly of their helpless condition to protect their loved ones. Though Vikrant was available in the Hotel Taj at the time of attack, he was not able to protect them. In many places of the novel Vikrant has expressed his guilt of being helpless. For example:

“He couldn’t live without his family. He was responsible for their safety but had failed in his duty. They were alone when the attackers came, and the feeling of pain and guilt nagged at him” (Jaitly 13,14)

The same idea has been shared by Hanif and Ullah

Erikson explains the traumatic nature of death which is different on the battlefield,

but here at home death reminds the survivor how vulnerable and uncertain life is. People punish themselves for not being able to protect their families. (Hanif, Ullah 2018)

At times his guilty feeling has reached its extremes and also feels like committing suicide. How Vikrant is traumatized owing to his loss and guilt is conspicuous in the below lines:

“He often wept silently and bitterly, and wished he too had died alongside them. At his more despondent moments, he had even thought of committing suicide” (Jaitly 13).

Many people were affected in the 26/11 attack but most of the people just accept the tragedy as their fate and strongly believed nothing could change other being mere witness. The protagonist Vikrant has burning desire for revenge. He is in the state of depression and disbelief with the Indian government who seek only justice and not revenge. He waited for the government will do something against the terrorist but two years have passed still we are sending evidences to the Pakistan to seek justice.

“Vikrant is very angry to witness the inability of the government to demand justice. The government had disappointed him [...] it had done nothing which could be construed as seeking justice, leave alone. Proud nations taking revenge, not just seek justice. Nation that only seeks justice cowards” (Jaitly 2).

Hermann describes , the traumatized person believes to revenge thought.

Though the traumatized person imagines that revenge will bring relief, repetitive revenge fantasies actually increase her torment.

Violent, graphic revenge fantasies may be as arousing, frightening, and intrusive as images of the original trauma. (Hermann 189)

Trauma which he is experiencing motivates him to kill the master minds who is behind the attack. On 26 /11 Vikrant and his family went to hotel Taj to celebrate their wedding anniversary it is the horrible irony the day become their death anniversary. According to orth, revenge is the feeling which will be alive even after many years. Vikrant kills the master mind after two years. He has only one motto in life that is to kill Colonel Iftikhar and High Commissioner Waheed who were the conspirators

“Victims of crimes such as rape ,assault, robbery and deprivation of liberty have been reported to experience

intense and persistence feeling of revenge even years after the offense”(Orth et al 2006).

Colonel Iftikhar and High Commissioner Waheed under the advice of David Hesley and they are also planning numerous terrorist attacks in India. When Vikrant learnt this from General Prabhakar, who is his father’s friend, Vikrant couldn’t tolerate such demons to destroy the peace of India.” Keeping the fire burning in his heart to seek his revenge”.(Jaitly 189) The thought of revenge raise to the peak and he determined to kill Colonel Iftikhar and High Commissioner Waheeds.

As government disappointed Vikrant he dares to deal law in his hands. Vikrant strongly believed only the death of Colonel Iftikhar and High Commissioner Waheed will seek justice for his loved ones and also other victims. As he is under the traumatized condition of depression, loneliness, and guilt which facilitates his action of revenge that is to execute the murder. To the law it is a crime but for him it is the justice. Vikrant was mentally ready to murder Colonel Iftikhar. According to the plan Zakir brought Colonel Iftikhar to the spot . Vikrant with Khukri(a kind of knife)marched toward Iftikhar and struck it hard in his abdomen, Iftikhar was petrified and descend to the floor. The death Iftikhar has brought Vikrant the sense of consolation.

“Vikrant tapped Iftikhar on his shoulder. He turned to look at him. Vikrant struck his khukri into his stomach with all his strength[...] Iftikhar’s eyes shot wide open, his mouth rounded in a silenced scream[...] watching Iftikhar die was partly supposed to give closure to his wounds.(Jitly 226)

The next person to be killed is Waheed so he kidnapped him with the help of Zakir. Vikrant took out his Khukri but Waheed cried for his life. At last he spare him to be a evidence to the massacre but Vikrant shot zakir because he demanded one crore for his assistance. He was pleased through his act of revenge because he has killed the demons who plan terrorist attack every year. In every attack India loses innocent lives. At last Vikrant left the country. Police came to spot to recover the dead bodies. They searched for finger prints and clues vain before leaving the room they looked at the calendar and surprised the date is 26.11.2011.

From the novel 26/1 unforgiven, traumatic trait exhibited by the character and the presence of collective trauma in the novel have been unearthed, . The protagonist expresses the traumatic characteristics like depression, loneliness, guilt and revenge. The study also pictured how the character, who is under traumatic condition motivated him towards revenge.

Documentation

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