

## Narrating the indescribable: Psycho-traumatic persona of “the woman” in Rahimi’s *The Patience Stone*

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### Abstract

Literary writings provide the pivot to narrativize trauma, which is otherwise indescribable. The paper critiques Rahimi’s novel with reference to representation of the traumatic experiences of the protagonist. Conversing with relevant postulates of trauma theory, the researchers have identified different dimensions of the excruciating encounters and, also, their ramifications. With the purpose to look for traces of both collective and individual trauma in the novel, the article negotiates the portrayal of the female character to expose multiple layers of the agony triggered by the sense of being victimized unjustly. The mere depiction of trauma is the problem with most literary narratives without shedding light on the healing process, despite the fact that theorists have engaged with the possible solutions for overcoming trauma. However, this novel is an exception that is why the recuperative aspect has been specifically focused. The analysis suggests that the novel is an attempt to give voice to the unspeakable, narrating the traumatic history, with the help of fiction because, in the Freudian idiom, telling a story is a ‘talking cure,’ which helps in the healing process. Moreover, the act of narrating the traumatic history of a nation also proves to be palliative for the collective consciousness.

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## 1. Introduction

Writing history and writing trauma are practices poles apart. One is the description of experience and the other holds and hinders the expression of the past. The paper intends to analyze the character of “the woman” (the protagonist) in *The Patience Stone* by Atiq Rahimi, from the psycho-traumatic perspective. Rahimi is an expatriate Afghan Anglophone diasporic fiction writer residing in France. He discusses several issues in his novel including war, patriarchy, violence and the predicament of women. His novel is rich for investigation from a psychoanalytic point of view because his characters reveal ample evidence of suffering from dissociative identity disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder, which are the residual effects of traumatic experiences. The unique contribution of Rahimi, unlike other writers dealing with the theme, in trauma studies is that he has not just represented the trauma of an individual in his novel but has hinted at the possible solution of the problem and has also elaborated the healing process. It is the aim of this paper to view his suggested healing process through the lens of Trauma Theory, for which we have relied on the arguments of LaCapra (1999 & 2001), Caruth (1996) and Alexander (2012). This kind of analysis will prove helpful in highlighting the role of literature in dealing with trauma and its aftermath because writing trauma and writing literature are domains two poles apart from each other and the study intends to dissolve the dichotomy that exists between writing the history of trauma and narrativizing trauma in literature. The role of literature in recording trauma is undeniable but still, there is room for research to look at literature as a tool in the healing process.

Recording and writing trauma is not like recording and writing history because the nature of trauma resists writing and that makes it difficult for history to deal with it. Although, the way out is provided by literature through which one can bring into the folds of history the traumatic experiences of individuals and nations however, the role of literature as a tool and site for the healing process is still debatable. Moreover, the objectives of the paper are to trace the symptoms of dissociative identity disorder in the character of the woman, to highlight the effects of giving voice to the traumatic experiences on the personality of the protagonist and to show the possible ways of reconnecting and gaining self-actualization as suggested in the novel. Bearing the dichotomy between writing history and writing trauma in mind, the article will try to tackle the research questions: (a) What are the disruptive effects of trauma on the personality and psyche of the protagonist in the novel? (b) How does self-revelation play a recuperative role in the case of the protagonist? (c) How can the character of “the woman” be located *vis-à-vis* the symptoms of PTSD and Dissociative Identity Disorder?

### 1.1. Theoretical framework

Trauma can occur as a result of one single overwhelming event or it can be the result of prolonged and repeated abuse. This abuse is either in domestic and sexual spheres of life or in broader spheres of war and political life or yet again, in traditional spheres of men and women. In any case, the affected individuals are disempowered and disconnected from others. In the individual capacity, there is the loss of self-actualization and as a collective occurrence, it harms the social identity of the masses. The recovery is possible by empowering the survivors and by reconnecting and restoring meaningful relationships. But the process is not as simple as it may sound. For the theoretical aspects of the study, we draw on the arguments of LaCapra (1999 & 2001), Caruth (1996) and Alexander (2012).

Caruth (1996) in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* diverted the attention

of the critics towards the phenomenon of trauma, who regarded its study as a poststructuralist psychoanalytic approach and an unsolvable problem of the unconscious that illuminates the “inherent contradiction” of experience and language (p. 73). Her insights are valuable for the analysis of psychoanalytical aspects of trauma in the character of the protagonist as she is suffering from dissociative identity disorder. As far as the collective and social dimension of trauma of Afghanistan, as a nation, is concerned, we rely on the arguments of Alexander (2012) who in *Trauma: A Social Theory* has categorized trauma as a “collective” rather than an individual issue by exploring its social and psychological nature (p. 4).

So far as the relationship of history and literature is concerned, so writing history and writing literature are practices two poles apart. LaCapra's *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001) points out the same paradox. Writing history means capturing the past through writing and writing trauma means showing the resistance of the past to writing. In the title, as suggested by the comma between the key terms, these are not incompatible representational practices, even if they have been traditionally opposed as the dichotomy between history and literature, historicism and psychoanalysis or historiography and literary criticism (Sanyal, 2002). Rather than seeking a compromise between "writing history" and "writing trauma," LaCapra rethinks these terms in order to envision a hybrid historical practice attuned to the affective, literary and experiential dimensions of history, while also remaining mindful of regulative ideals, sociopolitical agency and the claims of reference. Rahimi is primarily concerned, in his novel, with giving voice to an Afghan woman and her traumatic experiences in the form of testimonials and self-revelations. As far as, the question of agency is concerned, Rahimi is trying to present his female protagonist as the representative voice, as an agency, for millions of Afghan women like her and thus, reimagines and reshapes the history of Afghan women with the help of his literary yield.

In *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, LaCapra also recapitulates the point of her earlier works that is the difference between "acting out" and "working through" a traumatic past in order to meditate more broadly on the critical methodology most appropriate for the traumatic inheritance of contemporary culture, a reflection that potentially encompasses other traumas such as slavery, nuclear destruction, or apartheid. In the context of Afghanistan, wars have a long history but the recent war is four-decades long, which has resulted in the collective as well as individual trauma of Afghan people. LaCapra, actually, proposes a historically and theoretically well-minded approach to trauma that would memorialize the peculiarity of historical wounds, while also knowing the ways in which this uncontrollable past tends to shape our existing conceptual and experiential landscape. However, for the sake of overcoming trauma, the losses of this past must be subjected to a collective process of mourning, “working through,” and moving on. This proposed trajectory will ultimately deliver the victims from a cycle of everlasting re-traumatization and will allow them to turn to future-oriented ethical and political projects. His idea to "write trauma," or to give voice to a wound that seems to defy representation is very pertinent for our analysis of the literary expression of trauma by the protagonist in *The Patience Stone*.

## **1.2. Rationale for the study**

In the International Multilingual Conference on Post-Conflict Literature, Trauma and Global Peace, held at National University of Modern Languages Islamabad on April 29-30, 2019, the traumatic experiences of the world, in a post-conflict situation, were discussed, especially after 9/11, with special reference to the people affected by the war on terror. This paper is significant

as it addresses the issue of reconciliation by suggesting the formation of a Truth Reconciliation Commission (TRC), on the example of South Africa, to find the truth about atrocities of war committed by NATO forces in Afghanistan, as well as by the forces fighting against insurgents in the former tribal built of Pakistan. In lieu of the posthumous apology by one of CIA’s officials clearing Usama Bin Laden of any involvement in the 9/11 attacks, the US-led NATO forces owe an apology to the people of Afghanistan who have been bombed for wrong intel. The thing is that we cannot persuade the US to apologize however, the fact remains the same that the damage has been done and the effects of the war cannot be reversed. Due to the war on terror, especially in the context of Pakistan, people can never be the same again but now that they have to live together, they need national reconciliation to work together for a common future. The purpose of this truth reconciliation commission would be to acknowledge the blamable and criminal activities, with the purpose of working through a past that had harshly damaged the victims. This intricately complex past needs now to be disclosed willfully, after knowing the truth so that a process of working it through begins. The chapter needs to be closed after being historically informed, with a chance of being politically and ritually effective in creating a livable society and strengthening the national collectivity. Both parties, the oppressed and the oppressor, will have to show flexibility and shun their rigid stances for achieving this goal.

In order to achieve the objectives and answer the research questions, the paper, firstly, reviews the literature pertinent to the topic, for the purpose to provide solid information on the up-to-date research carried out in the field. Secondly, the methodology section specifies the step-by-step process of how the researchers have analyzed the primary text, in line with the theoretical framework. Moving in the same logical order, the analysis and discussion section is an application of the theoretical postulates, propounded by the key theorists of trauma, on the primary texts. The analysis has been supported by enough textual references and relevant discussion, which, in turn, are supported by theoretical triangulation, in order to prove the stance of the researchers. Lastly, the conclusion summarizes the main points of the discussion. Moreover, it states the major findings and also recommends new areas for further research.

## **2. Literature review**

After 9/11, trauma theory and trauma studies of literary works have shifted another gear and are now moving forward with a speed never to have been witnessed in the past. Countless articles and books have been written on the effects of trauma on the victims and survivors. In the context of South Asia, which has suffered the severe blow of the effects of the war on terror, fictional works have been produced to look at the phenomena in the aftermath of war. The review section moves in a linear fashion from the East of South Asia to the West of it Bangladesh, Kashmir, Pakistan, the Tribal Belt of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In the Pakistani context, more specifically, the conflict in East Pakistan and the war of 1971, which resulted in the creation of Bangladesh, has been well documented and theorized, discussing the perspectives of both sides. The article “Trauma, Memory and Cognition of Remembered Self: A Case Study of *Wastes of Times: Reflections on Decline and Fall of East Pakistan*” is based on the memoir of Professor Dr. Sajjad Hussain, Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University at the time of this national and human tragedy. He recollects and reflects on the events and memories of 1971, 1947, and the movement of independence beyond 1947 in an attempt to provide a complete historical, cultural and political context to the Fall of Dhaka. The context in which the memoir was written i.e., author’s trauma of physical torture at the hands

of *Mukti Bahani* (Bengali Separatists) that crippled him for life, and the psychological trauma he suffered during his imprisonment in the Central Jail Dhaka (1971-73), plays a significant role in shaping the content of the memoir and the function it serves for the author. In her analysis of the book, Ghazala Tabassum points out and highlights selections, signification and omissions in the representation of the past. The author has focused on certain details, marginalized some other while completely omitted some well-known historical facts related to the subject. He includes only those details that fit neatly into his perception of the event and conform most cleanly to the self-image he wishes to evolve for himself. In fact, the writing of memoir, thus, is a cognitive attempt of decolonizing trauma (Tabassum, 2019).

The issue of Kashmir also deserves a mention here, which is the bone of contention between the two atomic powers of the region for the last seventy years. The atrocities and war crimes committed by the Indian forces in the disputed Jammu and Kashmir are not a secret although there is a severe check on the freedom of expression there, even then writers have raised their voices to narrativize the traumatic history of Kashmir and the plight of its people. Fatima Syeda and Muhammad Abdullah have written an article with the title “Narrativizing Traumatic Memory: A Re-traumatizing Asperity or A Sanative Antidote for the Victims of Kashmir Conflict” that discusses a shift in the lives of the natives as a result of the clash between military and freedom fighters. The natives, irrespective of religious affiliations, endure the worst of violence. The collective cries for freedom resulted in attracting the antagonism of the Indian Army for the Kashmiri Muslims, as well as the exodus of the Kashmiri pundits. The trauma of exile as well as the trauma of the violence perpetrated by the Indian Army is formative of a memory, which becomes a permanent communal identity marker of Kashmiris. With each violent event, the traumatic memory evolves, and each tragedy contributes to complete the picture of victimization in the conflict zone. Whereas the violent events reduce the Kashmiris to living ghosts, the narrations of the stories of these victims help them relieve the burden of their traumatic memory.

Basharat Peer, the writer of *Curfewed Nights* (2010), feels the drive to write on Kashmir each time he comes across a victim. *Curfewed Nights* manifests the force of the traumatic narrations which compel the writer to listen to the tragedies and to pen these down. Writing becomes an obligation for the author because it seems to work not merely as his own catharsis but also as a means to recover the victims. The works of Caruth (1996), Shoshana Felman (2002), and other writers in Trauma Studies support the study of the text *Curfewed Nights*. This research article concludes that narrating the traumatic experiences by the victims is therapeutic in nature for them and narrativizing the collective traumatic memory is helpful in relieving the writer of the pain inflicted upon him/her by bearing the burden of an ever-growing traumatic memory (Syeda & Abdullah, 2019). Indeed, the practice of writing is therapeutic for authors but what about those victims who are unable to write. That is why Rahimi has adopted a hybrid authorial strategy i.e. confessional tales, for depicting the trauma of such victims who are not able to narrativize it themselves.

The above mentioned case was that of a disputed territory, now coming to the effects of war on terror on common Pakistani citizens as discussed by Mohsin Iqbal Butt and Saima Anwar in “Collective Trauma Wounds Social Identity: A Post-9/11 Study of Ali’s Traumatic Script” that explores the collective trauma of Pakistani community from the post 9/11 perspective while proposing civil repair rather than an individual one by analyzing Usman Ali’s Play *The Odyssey* (2016). The research probes into collective trauma in the Pakistani society that is haunted by war on terror and has destroyed the balance of the whole society, as portrayed in

the play. The traumatic events that took place after the incident of 9/11 became major causes of social turmoil and imbalance (Ali, 2016). This paper also provides a detailed and practical solution for the well-being of the world in general and Pakistan in particular by concluding that the narratives of 9/11 should be reconstructed and broader solidarity must be established, so that there could be civil repair and wounds of the past could be healed by promoting a narrative of peace for all. It also suggests that war cannot end war. Only peace dialogues, equal chances of liberty to every citizen and respect for the sovereignty of every country can stop such events from happening that bring a large-scale physical and psychological tension and violence in communities (Butt & Anwar, 2019). The article gives a solution by suggesting collective efforts from masses and international community, ignoring the victimized individual.

Moving further up our linear line, the tribal belt of Pakistan served as a buffer zone that allowed only the filtered effects of war reaching the rest of the country; which were in no way less catastrophic. Now, one can imagine the original and unfiltered effects of war on the tribal belt and its people. The new generation of which can rightly be called the lost generation because these are the children of war. Amal Sayyid and Zahida Younas in their research article “Trauma, Testimony and Critical Refashioning of the Self in Selected Pashtun Songs about Waziristan” have presented a rather hopeful condition for the survivors of the war on terror by suggesting that they are not just the passive victims of war and trauma rather they encounter it. The paper is an analysis of selected contemporary Pashtun songs about Waziristan as a sample of testimonial narratives that enable the Pashtun community to narrate their traumatic experiences of living under the necropolitical regime of drone attacks. It focuses on how Pashtuns are not merely passive victims who endure trauma, rather the selected songs recast the Pashtun community as survivors who consciously bear witness to trauma in order to disrupt official discourses of counterterrorism, rewrite history from the perspective of the marginalized, and reconfigure the self and national belonging. This study draws upon John Beverley’s and George Yudice’s theoretical conceptualization of the creative and critical potential of testimonials in the shaping of a poetics of resistance. In addition, LaCapra’s and Brison’s characterization of trauma as enabling a critical refashioning of the self were also employed to explore how the selected songs enable the Pashtun community to challenge the necropolitical regime and achieve self-representation (Syid & Younas, 2019). The focus of the research is the rise of a poetics of resistance which, again, is a collective effort. The work does not hints at any healing process for individuals in order to overcome their trauma.

Going in the same linear fashion towards the west of South Asia, crossing the tribal belt and the boarder of Pakistan, we now entering the arena where the whole drama was staged—Afghanistan. Here we have to fasten our seat belts as we are going to encounter the turmoil and turbulence never to have been encountered in the world except in Syria, Iraq and Philistine. Even the comprador intelligentsia from Afghanistan has highlighted the themes of trauma and the suffering of war, although their major aim was the justification of the US attack. Khalid Hosseini and Atiq Rahimi have hinted at the deformed social relations and the traumatic effects of war on terror in their novels.

In “The Role of Native Informers in Representation of 9/11: A Critical Study of Khaled Hosseini’s Novels”, Waheed Ahmad Khan is of the view that the event of 9/11 has changed not only the political scenario of Afghanistan but also the mode of literature written about this country, its people and culture. The attack on Afghanistan is justified in the name of peace by the writers who are acclaimed for their knowledge production especially after 9/11. This kind of knowledge production mainly misrepresents the subaltern and legitimizes US domination.

Hosseini is a native informer who paves the ground for the US warmongering in the form of knowledge production from Afghanistan in order to serve the interests of US imperialism. He represents American forces as saviors who help the Afghan people. In his novels, he does not reveal the failure of American forces in Afghanistan. For him, the presence of American forces is inevitable because without them Afghanistan will not prosper. However, the Taliban-US talks, which should have been the first option in 2001, in Doha in 2019 shows the failure of the US in Afghanistan. The representation of 9/11 and post-9/11 needs to be questioned in the manner of ‘counter-knowledge production’. The subalterns, instead of being represented, needs to represent themselves. It is better that the ‘self-appointed interlocutor’ may be challenged, not only at the political level but also in terms of literature. Native informers rely on the imperium of the US for their knowledge production that ensures the promotion of their careers and the interest-based agenda of the US Empire (Khan, 2019). This ought to stop. The native informants must adapt their writings to show the trauma of Afghan people and use literature as a tool of historicizing fiction and narrativizing the traumatic history of Afghanistan.

The reviewed literature strengthens our claim that most literary pieces only depict trauma and do not throw light on the healing process, despite the fact that critics have engaged with the role literature could play in overcoming trauma. However, *The Patience Stone* stands out as an exception, which focuses on an individual who is unable to write his own trauma by adopting hybrid authorial strategy that is confessional tales or testimonial narratives. The book also elaborates the healing process for overcoming trauma, which highlights the role of literature in recording trauma by narrativizing it.

### **3. Research methodology**

With the objective to view the traumatic events that took place before and after the incident of 9/11 that became the major causes of personal and social imbalance, the paper probes into the issues of the collective and individual trauma in *The Patience Stone*. The first step in this regard is to analyze the persona of the protagonist for the symptoms of PTSD and Dissociative Identity Disorder by identifying the classical symptoms of this disease in her personality. American Psychiatric Association (APA) has explained the symptoms. The paper also digs out the solution proposed by the author in the text for bringing proportion in the personality of the victim. Symptoms of DID include experiences which are very common and can be experienced by many people ranging from mild, common dissociation to highway hypnosis or “getting lost” in a work, that involve “losing touch”, of one’s surroundings, with awareness. However, when coupled with trauma, the symptoms may include:

- Two or more personality states of distinct identities, observable by others or sometimes reported by the individuals themselves, accompanied by mood swings and changing in thinking, behavior and memory.
- Constant memory-gaps regarding everyday actions, information and past traumatic experiences.
- The symptoms often cause a significant amount of distress or problems in occupational, social and other areas of operation (APA).
- The experiences of being possessed. The victims feel as if they have two distinct entities within them. This happens to people with dissociative identity disorder.
- The personal preferences of persons with DID about food, clothes and other routine activities may suddenly swing and then swing back again.

- The multiple identities are involuntary and happen unwantedly that cause distress.
- Individuals with DID may suddenly become observers of their own actions and speech or they may feel their bodies becoming different for example a child-like, opposite gender like, muscular or huge (The Sidran Institute).

Close reading and deconstruction as methodological tools have been used for the analysis of the text. Because the ideas that the researchers are looking for are not to be found on the surface-level rather they are situated between the lines, which require close reading, and deconstruction of the text. Moreover, for the identification of symptoms of DID, the study also uses the model of thematic analysis presented by Braun and Clarke (2006). In order to locate and code the specific textual instances and pieces of evidence in support of the arguments. The textual evidences are then supported through the theoretical underpinnings of our selected trauma theorists.

#### **4. Analysis and discussion**

The story of the novel unfolds in a small, shabby, drab-looking room and the whole action revolves around the character of the unnamed female heroine who is being referred to as ‘the woman’. There are only a few women in the story whose life stories have been narrated to us by the protagonist. We come to know about them from her description. The act of not giving the protagonist a name is intentional on the part of Rahimi and this indicates two aspects of her role. The unnamed heroine is significant, firstly, as the writer wants to present her as a proxy, a conduit for representing millions of Afghan women like her and, secondly, this points out the identitarian crisis going inside her and causing a disturbance in her personality.

The protagonist herself is not made of the heroine-stuff. The fact is that she is not much of a heroine. In the words of the author of *The Kite Runner*: “Rahimi’s heroine is brave, resilient, a devout mother, but she is also flawed in fundamentally human ways, a woman capable of lying, manipulating, of being spiteful, a creature that, pushed hard enough, bares her teeth” (Rahimi, 2008). The character of the woman needs to be analyzed deeply from a psychoanalytic perspective because she has demonstrated the qualities of a complex individual with grave psychological problems. She qualifies for trauma analysis as she has witnessed the ‘death or near death’ of her relatives and especially that of her husband who is laying brain dead while a bullet lodged in his neck. Her monologues reveal that she may be suffering from DID (formerly referred to as Multiple Personality Disorder). The causes of this personality disorder are many but in her case, it is abuse in childhood and in adult life. As physical and mental abuse are major causes of this disorder, therefore, it is very much possible in the case of the protagonist to have fallen victim to this illness, because she had been abused physically by her father during childhood, over slight mistakes. Moreover, she had also been mistreated by her husband and in-laws for several years.

Here, we would look for the symptoms of this disorder in her character, as described by APA, one by one. The first symptom is the existence of two or more personality states of distinct identities, observable by others or sometimes reported by the individuals themselves, accompanied by mood swings and changing in thinking, behavior and memory. The protagonist is experiencing, throughout the novel, the conflict of multiple personalities that is because she had been playing a role assign to her by society that has resulted in the suppression of her true self. Now that her true personality is revealing itself, she is afraid of it. She is

perplexed and unable to know the reason for this phenomenal experience and concludes: “I really am possessed... Yes, I see the dead... people who aren’t there... I am...” (Rahimi, 2008, p. 33). This leads us on to the second symptom that is hallucination; an extreme level of DID condition when the victim sees the dead or people who are not present in reality. She tells her husband that she talks with her dead father all the time and that he asks her about the lost peacock’s feather. She confesses of seeing the dead all the time. Due to these illusive visions, she is unable to make a clear difference between the present and the past, between reality and illusion, eventually resulting in memory lapses and the constant memory gaps regarding everyday actions, information and her past traumatic experiences.

Another symptom is experiencing a condition of being possessed. The victims feel as if they have two distinct entities within them. This happens to people with dissociative identity disorder, as noted by the Sidran Institute. In such a case, the multiple personalities exist with their own way of thinking and remembrance about themselves and their lives (American Psychiatric Association). She explains her doubtful situation: “This isn’t me. No, it isn’t me talking... it’s someone else, talking through me ... with my tongue. Someone has entered my body ... I am possessed. I really do have a demon inside me. It’s she who’s speaking... she makes love with that boy...” (Rahimi, 2008, p.30). The multiple personalities are at conflict inside her and she is unable to decide who she really is. Is she the mother of two daughters and the wife of a sick husband to care for or is she the lover of that young boy whom she likes and makes love to? This psychosis causes a change in her personal preferences about food, clothes and other routine activities that suddenly swing and then swing back again. She leaves her husband unattended for a whole day to be on his own and may die but the next day, she comes back from her aunts in a worried state and is sorry for her action. After meeting the young boy, she even starts beautifying herself and wears good clothes (Rahimi, 2008).

Moreover, she becomes critical of her own speech and an aggression takes place in her talk. The multiple identities are involuntary and happen, unwantedly that causes distress. Individuals with DID may suddenly become observers of their own actions and speech, or they may feel their bodies becoming different for example a child-like, opposite gender like, muscular or huge, etc. (APA). The last symptom is that sometimes the victims often attribute their multiple personalities to some supernatural and transcendental experience and may see themselves as deities or as apostles, receiving some revelation. In the last scene of the novel the protagonist, when she explains the names of God and discusses the 99<sup>th</sup> name of God, she says:

“Yes, my *sang-e saboor* ... do you know the ninety-ninth, which is to say the last name of God? It’s *Al-Sabur*, the Patient! Look at you; you are God. You exist, and do not move. You hear, and do not speak. You see, and cannot be seen! Like God, you are patient, immobile. And I am your messenger! Your prophet! I am your voice! Your gaze! Your hands! I reveal you! *Al-Sabur!*” She draws the green curtain completely aside. And in a single movement turns around, flings her arms wide as if addressing an audience, and cries, “Behold the Revelation, *Al-Sabur!*” (Rahimi, 2008, p. 65).

These symptoms reveal substantially that Rahimi’s protagonist is suffering from dissociative identity disorder that is the result of traumatic experiences she had been through right from her childhood, being a victim of household violence and spending her life in the decades of war and sufferings in Afghanistan. The above discussion substantially establishes that the protagonist is the victim of DID. Now, unlike other novelists, Rahimi has not just depicted

trauma but he has also hinted at the solution of overcoming (or coming out of) trauma. The woman is not stuck in her past for long and is not ‘acting out’ rather she is ‘working through’ her traumatic experiences that enable her, eventually, to come out of her illness and become a confident and fully self-actualized person in the end, where we see not a weak and dependent character but a highly motivated and bold individual who is ready to take risks and decide the future for herself.

“Talking Cure” (Freud & Strachey, 1885/2001: 30), a therapeutic strategy devised by Freud, has been employed by Rahimi for the psychoanalysis of the protagonist and her ultimate recovery. The novel is a monologue of the woman where she reveals her life-long hidden secrets. She tries to unburden herself from the hard experiences of life and tells the secrets of her heart to her ‘patience stone’. Layer after layer, of her personality, is peeled out—like an onion. She uses the talking cure model where her *sang-e-sabour* plays the role of a psychiatrist who listens to her self-revelation patiently and without any interference. Thus, the true personality of the woman comes out and she gets rid of the dissociative identity disorder. Her true self, nonetheless, is not simple, though, as it is the reflection of a complex personality.

Furthermore, there are many confessions in her monologues and the monologues themselves are self-corrected, lengthy, self-responded and psycho-analytically revealing that become vivid and bold with each passing day until they reach an agitated pitch and the protagonist, according to Hosseini, “suddenly finds herself free from all restraints.... What pours out of her is not only a brave and shocking confession, but a savage indictment of war, the brutality of men, and the religious, marital, and cultural norms that continually assault Afghan women...” (*The Patience Stone*, 2008, p. 2). That’s how she overcomes her inner conflict and chaos. She has narrativized, to borrow from LaCapra, her traumatic past and has gotten rid of it in the end. The second important milestone in the healing process is reconnection. She felt alienated from her family and kin, so much so that she could not connect with her husband emotionally or sexually. But when she found an opportunity to reconnect with the orphaned youth, she became happy. She was satisfied emotionally and sexually when her needs of love and security were fulfilled which are very important, in Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (1943). It is after the gratification of these needs that the woman became a self-actualized person and we see a transformation taking place in her character and personality.

The dichotomy between writing history and writing literature has also been resolved by Rahimi by following the suggestion of LaCapra who, rather than seeking a compromise between “writing history” and “writing trauma”, rethinks these terms in order to envision a hybrid historical practice attuned to the affective, literary and experiential dimensions of history, while also remaining mindful of regulative ideals, sociopolitical agency and the claims of reference. Rahimi is primarily concerned in his novel with giving voice to an Afghan woman and her traumatic experiences in the form of testimonials and self-revelation of the character. As far as, the question of agency is concerned, he is trying to present his female protagonist as the representative voice, as an agency, for millions of Afghan women like her and thus reimagines and reshapes the history of Afghanistan in the light of his literary yield.

## 5. Conclusion

The persona of the woman passes through several stages of transformation. In the beginning, the readers encounter her as a weak person with low self-esteem, suffering from serious psychological issues because there are visible signs of her being the victim of DID (dissociative

identity disorder) and PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). However, by giving voice to her trauma and narrativizing it and by reconnecting, she has actually followed the therapeutic steps responsible for the healing of the traumatic past. In the end, we see her as a fully mature and self-actualized individual. By depicting her individual trauma, Rahimi has tried to present her as a proxy for Afghan women like her which is also suggestive of their collective trauma. Thus, the novel stands out as a unique contribution to the body of fictional works on trauma as it, not only depicts and narrativize trauma but also, suggests how to overcome the traumatic past and reinforces the fact that literature could be a tool to "write trauma," or to give voice to a wound that seems to defy representation.

In this regard, retrospection remains the nexus between writing history and expressing the traumatic experiences, albeit the former is a more confident attempt at textual retrieval of the actual happenings of the past and the latter is tilted toward irretrievability of the exposures whose lingering impacts are unmistakable. One is an enthusiastic endeavor for expression of the experiences of the past, whereas the other is intrigued by the elusiveness of the immanent. However, the fictional works that narrate the traumatic experiences, of individuals and nations, resolve the representational impasse. Moreover, LaCapra's suggestion (that literature has remained the privileged domain, or "safe haven" (185) for trauma's rehearsal and performative transmission) has also been observed by the novelist in *The Patience Stone* and this is so because of literature's supple and intricate relation to reference.

However, Rahimi's attempt of presenting his female protagonist as an agency—a proxy—for millions of Afghan women like her is a problematic stance and can be challenged from the perspective of standpoint theory because the experiences of an individual cannot be generalized on such a high scale. Moreover, the findings of the study can to be replicated by carrying out further research in the area, in which the traumatized individual are in focus, especially in the works of other Afghan Anglophone fiction writers such as Khalid Hosseini, Latifa, Nelofer Pazira, Farah Ahmedi, Fawzia Koofi and many more. The characters in these works need to be analyzed for traces of individual and collective trauma, and the resultant psychological issues like PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and DID (dissociative identity disorder). While conducting such analyses, the post-9/11 war on terror scenario of Afghanistan must also be taken into consideration.

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