

A Phenomenal Phenomenon of Post-Colonial Trauma: The Appearance of the Past in the Present through *Hayavadana*

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ABSTRACT: *This study claims that without having a proper understanding about colonization—a traumatic event in the history, the whole talk of developing independent and alter narrative seems to have no sense at all. In this context, the present study contends that the trauma of colonialism, for it has not been properly understood, continues to remain part of the collective consciousness of the South Asian people. A possibility for the emergence of a different truth resides in the present time wherein past is accessible in the shape of “phenomenon” only. From the phenomenological perspective, as propounded by Edmund Husserl, and the standpoints of contemporary trauma theory presented by Cathy Carruth, this paper aims at establishing that meaning emerges only when trauma of any traumatic event reappears itself. Trauma, when it appears in the South Asian Drama, like the plays of Girish Karnad, becomes a vehicle of differential truth about the objective event i.e. colonialism. Since Karnad is a post-colonial writer, the trauma of colonialism as a part of collective consciousness makes him write plays like Hayavadana in which all the characters are taken from Indian myths, and all of them are shown suffering due to some kind of traumatic event in their past. This study concludes that these mythical characters of this play are very significant in developing the understanding about the sense of incompleteness that colonization has imparted in the minds of the people of South Asia.*

Keywords: trauma, phenomenology, colonialism, South Asia, past, present.

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Introduction:

The South Asian Drama is an appropriate mode to develop an understanding of colonization—a traumatic event in the history of South Asia. This study claims that without having a proper understanding of this objective event in the past, the whole talk of developing independent and alter narrative seems to have no sense at all. In case we do not succeed to see past differently and discover the truth which only appears “belatedly” (Caruth 9), there are remote chances of coming out of the trauma of colonialism. The trauma of colonialism, for it has not been properly understood, continues to remain part of the collective consciousnesses of the South Asian people. By encountering the trauma of colonialism in literature, a meaning or truth can be arrived at about the traumatic event which caused a huge damage to the people of this region. Understanding does not suggest the mere knowledge of the psychological, cultural and economic damage that colonial powers have done to us. It is mere information that a public-history provides us whereas understanding is far more complex a phenomenon because it remains unspeakable and hidden until it gets explored through literature. The understanding is possible in a relative relationship of the past/then with the present/now. A possibility for the emergence of a different truth resides in the present time wherein past is accessible in the shape of “phenomenon” only. Through literature, the traumatic event like colonization can be understood and a differential truth can be reached at. Differential truth about colonialism implies that it can be located in relative and differential relations between past and present. Trauma, when it appears in the South Asian Drama, like Girish Karnad’s (born 19 May 1938) play *Hayavadana*, becomes a vehicle of differential truth about the objective event i.e. colonialism.

This research paper claims that the South Asian Drama reflects on the traumatic event in objective history to reveal those truths which may develop an understanding that can help people of South Asia to come out of the trauma of colonialism. The purpose of this study is to establish that it is not possible to leave the traumatic event in South Asian history unexplored until a comprehensive understanding is gained about the subject. A Dramatist writing in the post-colonial context is committed to writing about these themes because the subjectivity of South Asians is traumatized due to the colonial past. The primary task of literature being produced in the post-colonial context is to engage with and reflect on the past to develop an understanding of the traumatic event, revealing the hidden or unknown dimensions which have been unspeakable otherwise. The dramatist I have chosen for my study does not simply highlight or

represent the consequences of the traumatic event rather his text seems to engage with the trauma of colonization. The trauma of colonization, that is being engaged through the primary text for this study, is actually a phenomenon of past, not the past itself. While living in present, characters in this play are in constant interaction with past which exists as a phenomenon.

Scope, objective and research questions:

Since the primary aim of this study is to see how trauma of colonialism exists in the present post-colonial world in the shape of a phenomenon and how a differential relationship between past and present established through dramas helps us in understanding the traumatic event of history, it tries to answer those questions that are important from the perspective of phenomenology, trauma theory and poststructuralist view of differential relations. This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How colonialism as traumatic event of objective history gets revealed through drama?
2. How can trauma of colonialism be witnessed as a phenomenon in Girish Karnad's play, *Hayavadana*?
3. How does the objective past exist in the shape of trauma in subjective memory/ consciousness of human beings living in the post-colonial world?
4. How does a differential relationship between the phenomenon of traumatic past (i.e. colonialism) with the present (post-colonial world) emerge through drama/literature?
5. In what sense is this relationship meaningful and what is the role of drama in making it meaningful?

Trauma theory holds a great importance in the context of post-colonial drama because playwrights writing in this context don't just represent some objective event of the past; they have a constant interaction with the traumatic past that exists as a phenomenon in the post-colonial world. Cathy Caruth's perspective also maintains that literature opens up an opportunity to interact with the traumatic experience of the past because it teaches the reader to listen to the unspeakable or what can be said indirectly. The objective of this study is to answer all the above-mentioned questions from the perspective of trauma theory. The scope

of this study is to add to the existing scholarship that drama produced in the post-colonial world can be studied from the perspective of trauma and a meaning or truth that emerges out of the differential relationship of the past with the present is very significant in a sense that it helps in avoiding any traumatic experience in future.

Research Methodology:

This study uses Close Textual Analysis as research method. Since the study aims at exploring drama as a mode to engage with the past to arrive at a new meaning about colonialism as a traumatic event in the history of South Asia, Close Textual Analysis appears to be an appropriate method because it helps us understand the different techniques used in a work. Since this study intends to analyze the selected play in terms of the new dimension that gets revealed through theater, close textual analysis helps us understand those aspects of literary work through which trauma appears as a part of the present world. By using this method, it will be seen how by using different theatrical techniques dramatists establish differential relationship of past with the present to arrive at a new meaning about the traumatic event in history.

Theoretical Framework:

Cathy Caruth's works are considered to be indispensable points of reference for all the works done regarding trauma. In her essay "Trauma: Explorations in Memory", she claims that trauma is not something that can be located in the traumatic event because it is experienced belatedly. What, according to Cathy Caruth, makes trauma really powerful is that a person to whom it happens fails to understand the objective traumatic event. It is later that an event reappears with a much larger impact. According to her, "the impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located, in its insistent appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time" (9). A traumatic event, therefore, is very strange in its nature because of its belatedness and trauma should be understood as an absence.

Although living through trauma makes people suffer from historical isolation, surviving trauma can expose them to new possibilities to reflect upon history and politics. Through this repetition of trauma, people get exposed to reflections on past and understanding about the traumatic event increases. In this way, it becomes possible to relate to others who

have similar traumatic pasts. It ultimately leads to a more profound and clear meaning or knowledge about the traumatic event. Caruth writes:

The meaning of the trauma's address beyond itself concerns, indeed, not only individual isolation but a wider historical isolation that, in our time, is communicated on the level of our cultures. . . . A speaking and a listening from the site of trauma— does not rely, I would suggest, on what we simply know of each other, but on what we don't yet know of our own traumatic pasts.
(11)

In *Unclaimed Experiences: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996), she maintains that trauma can offer us access to history. Caruth understands history as being traumatic, and trauma as an experience which does not get expressed in that very moment when the event occurs. In her view, while analyzing a text containing a reference to traumatic history, a psychoanalytical approach along with the post-structuralist and deconstructive view regarding inaccessibility and indeterminacy can grant us access to traumatic events and experiences. In this way, a better understanding of the traumatic past becomes possible. In this book, Caruth turns to literature and claims that a text enables us to understand what otherwise remained unknown and unspeakable. Meaning that emerges through literature, according to Caruth, is something that can bring us closer to others who have gone through similar traumatic experiences.

Following these concepts of Trauma Theory, this study considers colonialism a traumatic event in the history of South Asia. The trauma of colonialism exists in the shape of cultural/national trauma. In the post-colonial world, the playwrights produce their works through which the unpremeditated trauma gets exposed in the shape of characters as ghosts and truth emerges that was yet inaccessible.

Trauma and the understanding of trauma are phenomenological in nature. Trauma, basically, is a phenomenon which exists neither in the past nor in the present but in the negative relationship between the two. It emerges through the interaction of the subjective trauma of the present with the objective traumatic event. In order to comprehend the phenomenological nature of trauma, it is important to understand phenomenology as a "science of consciousness" (Husserl 16). Consciousness, from a phenomenological perspective, is constituted by the relationship between mind and the world. It is the relationship that holds significance because

neither the mind nor the objective world is privileged. Phenomenology proposes that the mind cannot comprehend the real objective world in totality because it is always only the appearances that the mind has access to. Husserl, therefore, bracketed the external world so that the true experience of being or consciousness may be focused on.

The literal meaning of phenomenon is “as something appears” (Habib 708) to mind or subject. Husserl defines the whole concept of the phenomenon in his lecture titled as “Pure Phenomenology: its Method and its Field of Investigation”. He highlights division of object and subject by establishing that object in itself has no existence for the subject if there is no phenomenon of that object. He claims, “Objects would be nothing at all for the cognizing subject if they did not ‘appear’ to him, if he had of them no ‘phenomenon.’ Here, therefore, ‘phenomenon’ signifies a certain content that intrinsically inhabits the intuitive consciousness”. (Husserl 11) Since this study focuses on the post-colonial dramatists, the very word, “post-colonial”, alludes to the division between the past and the present. Colonialism is an objective event in history whereas the post-colonialism represents the present where resides the generating consciousness. Following the perspective of phenomenology, the objective traumatic event is nothing in itself if it does not have any phenomenon. The consciousness of the present post-colonial world interacts with the phenomena of the objective event i.e. colonialism.

Moreover, he also claims that an object has no independent existence because the very existence of the object becomes possible through the generating consciousness. Without the operation of the consciousness, there can be no objectivity. The very object comes into being when the acts of consciousness objectify the object or phenomenon. The task of phenomenology is not to investigate the world of objects but to know how this world comes into being through the experience of consciousness. This phenomenological explanation is significant in that it is related to trauma because trauma exists only in the form of the phenomenon. The traumatic event comes into being when generating consciousness of the present world encounters the phenomenon of that event. The trauma of colonialism, in this study, is similar to this phenomenon which gets incorporated in the dramas produced in South Asia and a truth about the traumatic event gets generated.

Our focus now is not objects but objects as a phenomenon as they appear to our consciousness along with the structures of consciousness that make these modes of appearance possible. In phenomenology, consciousness

“is taken purely as it intrinsically is with its own intrinsic constituents, and no being that transcends consciousness is composited” (15). The phenomenological study or analysis demands that everything that belongs to the natural or corporeal world must be put in brackets. This “phenomenological reduction” (16) entails suspending or “putting out of action” (17) the whole corporeal world or the “material Nature.” It also eschews every kind of “psychological experience,” (17) all experiences that are part of the conscious. So, the whole “objective world” (17) is put in brackets all that is left is imminent and intrinsic to consciousness. From this perspective, this study examines trauma of colonialism as an intrinsic part of the individual and collective consciousness of the South Asian people. In analyzing pure consciousness, I examine not only what is imminent or intrinsic to consciousness but the entire realm of “external” phenomena, as they appear to and constructed by consciousness. By applying the method of phenomenological reduction, we eschew every detail of the natural understanding and interpretation of colonialism. Our consciousness brackets everything off and the only thing that remains intrinsically part of the generating consciousness is the trauma of that traumatic event. The phenomenon of traumatic event lives with us today. Our consciousness, today, intends that “external” traumatic event and creates the phenomenon of that objective event. This phenomenon is imminent to the operations of our consciousness.

As far as Husserl’s model of intersubjectivity is concerned, the phenomenon is shared not by oneself but by others too. Experience of the objective world is not just related to one person; it is a shared experience among all subjects. Phenomenon plays a role of a bridge between self and the other. But the essences or meaning or truth that we arrive at through this model of intersubjectivity is not something universal. Truth is fluid. Following this phenomenological paradigm, trauma also appears to be an experience shared not by an individual but by all the members of a society/nation affected by a traumatic event.

In the light of phenomenological perspective, colonialism is an objective traumatic event of history. We have not experienced objective event itself; rather, our experience is the experience of the phenomenon of that objective event. We know the traumatic event as it appears to our mind. Our consciousness is familiar with the phenomenon of that objective event in history. It appears to our mind as our consciousness intends it. People of South Asia have not experienced colonialism as people who were actually colonized. We are just aware of the aftermath of

colonialism. Our understanding, therefore, is the understanding of the phenomenon that may lead us to know the truth behind it. There is no such event if it is not intended by the very act of our consciousness. The understanding of the traumatic event, in other words, is based on the generating consciousness.

In order to understand the nature of phenomena, it is important to probe into the whole structure of subjective trauma. Trauma is something that emerges out of what was once repressed. It remains there in the memory or unconscious of human beings and emerges later on in the shape of trauma. This is how it remains intrinsic or immanent to our consciousness. “The experience of the soldier faced with sudden and massive death around him, for example, who suffers this sight in a numbed state, only to relive it later on in repeated nightmares, is a central and recurring image of trauma in our century.” (Unclaimed 12) This image, as mentioned by Cathy Caruth in her article, “Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History”, establishes that trauma is something that happens somewhere in the past, which is experienced belatedly. Having lost his connection with the actual event wherein he saw people dying around him, soldier, later on, tries to remember and reflect upon that event. He cannot go through that event all over again. All he is left with is the psychic phenomenon of the event that happened in the early past. Soldier loses his connection with the past while retaining the trauma of that past with him. This trauma helps him in understanding the traumatic event of the early past. Where trauma is something that suppresses or represses past, it also helps in creating truth about the past events of public history.

This research paper discusses how the trauma of colonialism exists in the present post-colonial world as a phenomenon through the characters of Girish Karnad’s play, *Hayavadana*. Karnad, through his dramas, tries to give this message to his audiences that the once colonized South Asia has its own culture and tradition. By the very act of writing, he becomes part of the resistance that post-colonial writers pose against the cultural hegemony that colonial masters have gained over the South Asian mind. Dr. Tasleem War mentions that Karnad’s motive behind reviving past and myths was to “express meaning for the contemporary life” (6). He also suggests that Karnad opted to use indigenous myth and history in his dramas and revived indigenous dramatic art because cultural and social colonialism had pushed them in the backdrop. From this understanding of Karnad’s works, it appears that he did an extraordinary endeavor to assign meaning to the present

Analysis of the primary text:

At the very beginning of the performance, a mask of the very famous deity, Ganesha, is brought to the stage to be worshiped. Ganesha no doubt is a very revered God in Hindu mythologies but here, in this drama, it carries a symbolic significance. Ganesha has the head of an elephant which makes it distinguished among all other deities. With the body of a man and head of an elephant, the mask of Ganesha symbolizes incompleteness. This play conveys the idea of incompleteness to establish that identity of South Asian people is not complete because of their colonial past. After being colonized for a very long time, now they have an amalgamation of western and indigenous culture. The imperfect body of this deity shows that South Asian people have some traumatic memories in their past which have taken the shape of an imperfect and incomplete subject. By highlighting this imperfection, Karnad aims at encountering the trauma of colonial past. Through such performance, this trauma of the past can be encountered and the understanding that the South Asian people need to complete themselves can be achieved. In *The Theory of Drama* Allardyce Nicoll states, "Drama lies so near to the consciousness of a nation in which it takes its rise; it is capable of addressing itself so widely and so diversely to the people of far distant ages and of varying climes; it is so social in its aims and in its appreciation"(Nicoll 9).

The trauma which gets manifested through literature is a cultural trauma because it is not just a part of the historical memory but a psychological memory of the people. This is why Karnad, being the dramatist of the post-colonial era, has incorporated Indian myths in his plays to highlight complete and perfect subjectivity of India. Garima Gupta in her article "Modernist Strains in the Major Plays of Girish Karnad" has discussed how Karnad has modernized the indigenous history, myth and culture by modifying them in the face of the issues concerning the individual in modern society. She states that:

By having the framework of history and mythology he brushes up the dilemma of an individual in the modern context. In this way, he sustains our history and culture in literature and makes his readers aware of India's grand history and culture. Very artistically he conveys the feeling of contemporary tensions by going back and digging into the past (Gupta 1).

Karnad gives significance to Indian mythologies and cultures to establish that the completeness of self can be achieved only if we go to places

which are less traveled by. Drama is one mode through which trauma, as a vehicle of the meaning of the objective history, can be conveyed to the audience, not just in South Asia but in the whole world. It is not easy for dramatists to visit the less traveled places by going back to the original cultural identity of people of South Asia. As Bhagavata asks Hayavadana to go to the temple of Kali and tells him that it is not an easy track to go by. He would have to ask a lot of people to reach there. Similarly, it is not an easy task to reach the original and perfect Indian subjectivity. As the temple of Kali can grant completeness to Hayavadana, Karnad's stage can bring completeness to the incomplete subjectivity of South Asian people.

An event in public history becomes a traumatic event if it does not remain restricted in a specific time. It does not happen to those only who actually experience it; rather, the actual victims fail to assimilate with the main event. In this way, it actually occurs 'belatedly'. Cathy Caruth, in her book *Trauma: Exploration in Memory* (1995) writes: "The impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located, in its insistent appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time" (Caruth 9). Colonialism, therefore, becomes a traumatic event because it cannot be located at any particular time.

In the very first scene of the major plot of the play, Devadatta shares with Kapila his warm feeling for Padmini. Kapila after listening to him goes to find Padmini's house so that he could convey his friend's proposal for her. The sign of "two-headed bird" (15) on Padmini's house is a symbol of imperfection and duality, and Padmini's love for both mind and body. These two are the major themes in this play. In the very first interaction of Kapila with Padmini, he understands that Devadatta, who hails from the intellectual realm, could not tackle the extraordinarily sharp minded girl.

Kapila: Devadatta, my friend, I confess to you I'm feeling uneasy. You are a gentle soul. You can't bear a bitter word and an evil thought. But this one is fast as lightening—and as sharp. She is not for the likes of you. What she needs is a man of steel. But what can I do now? (19)

This dialogue shows that Kapila who belongs to a tradition of physical strength and vigor could understand that the intellectual like Devadatta could not be easy with the sharpness of Padmini. Similarly, the political and intellectual strata of South Asia failed to cope with the schemes hatched out by the colonial masters and ultimately fell prey to

colonialism. This study considers colonialism a traumatic event because the trauma of colonialism did not end by the time of partition in 1947. It continued to exist in the post-colonial world.

After the partition of 1947, apparently there was nothing wrong and colonial masters had left the land but the trauma of colonialism continued in the shape of a phenomenon. This phenomenon appears through dramas and it becomes possible for the audience to relate to the characters on stage and relive the trauma of their own past. Hayavadana helps its audience to relate to the trauma of incompleteness in the lives of the characters on stage. S. Somasundari Latha in "Post Colonial Conundrum in Girish Karnad's Hayavadana" states that the modern man suffers from many problems i.e. existential issues, pain, suffering, identity. According to her, in postcolonial societies, such problems create a sense of incompleteness in the people. She traces these problems of postcolonial people in Karnad's well-known play Hayavadana which I have taken as a primary text for my research. She proposes that the major characters in the play suffer from a sense of incompleteness in their lives: "All the three characters – Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini are existential sufferers. Their death emphasized the meaninglessness of life" (Latha 5).

Moreover, the actual victims who were present during colonial period did not encounter the event actually. They just had an experience of being colonized and, consequently, went into historical, political and cultural isolation. The real trauma of colonialism appears later on through literature which takes the responsibility to speak the unspeakable dimensions of the traumatic event. Mere witnessing of the event does not help bring any transformation. Change requires a comprehensive understanding of the traumatic event of the objective or public history. Caruth maintains that the traumatic event is actually experienced and understood belatedly through literary language i.e. literature.

The family of Padmini and Devadatta represents the post-colonial world which has undergone a wide range of changes. As Devadatta failed to maintain the muscular body of Kapila, postcolonial world has not been able to carry on the practices set forth by the colonial masters; consequently, falling prey to double consciousness and identity crisis. Devadatta, because of the objections raised by Padmini regarding his changing body, his decreasing interest in swimming and sports, goes to gymnasium one day which upsets his soft body, and he drops the idea of going to gymnasium again. Padmini's constant desire and Devadatta's consequent attempts to gain his muscular body back show how these

characters are oscillating between their past and present. The confusing state of mind of these characters is what forms the reality of the present condition of family. Similarly, the present reality of post-colonial world is traumatized because of the political, social, economical and identity crisis. The dreams of Padimini who represents South Asian people depict how trauma of the traumatic memory lives in the unconscious of individuals. She claims that it makes no difference in her life if Devedatta's body becomes soft but still she seems to be helpless to forget the muscular body that Kapila possessed.

Padmini: What does it matter that you are going soft again, that you are losing you muscels? I'm not going to be stupid again. Kapila has gone out of my life—forever....[Pause] Kapila? What could he be doing now? Where could he be? Could his body be fair still, and his face dark? [Long pause.] Devadatta changes. Kapila changes. And me? (49)

This dialogue is Padimini's soliloquy through which the actual state of her mind manifests itself. She imagines her life to be in the worst circumstances ever because there has been no change of any kind in her life. Both Kapila and Devedatta have modified themselves but Padimini's condition has not changed; rather, she is facing the worst conditions because of the loss of her identity. The catastrophe of South Asian people is no different from Padimini's because of the presence of the trauma of colonialism. The "wretched dreams" (50) of Padimini are basically representation of the trauma which never leaves her no matter how much she claims to have forgotten Kapila. Similarly, the trauma of colonialism keeps on coming back to South Asian community. The trauma of colonialism, as the dolls comment about the dreams of Padmini, "just tickles and fades away." (50)

Karnad further uses dolls as theatrical device through which Padmini sends Devedetta to the fair for exchanging dolls while she can sneak away to the forest where Kapila resides (Dodyia). In the forest she finds Kapila with his muscular body that makes him reveal her desire for him. Initially, Kapila objects on her coming very far in the forest taking the risk of "pathless paths" (54) but after a while his behavior changes when Padimini tells him that she has asked herself before coming here.

Padmini: I asked the villagers... And the pilgrims. And the hunters. And the tribesmen. When there wasn't anyone any more.

I asked myself. Everyone saw to it that I didn't lose the wrong road. (54)

In this dialogue, it becomes clear that Padmini asks almost all the important pillars of the society to tell her way out to rid herself of the trauma she had of her past memories, but to no avail. After getting no solution from anyone she asked herself, and chose to go back to Kapila who is the actual cause of her trauma. South Asian people, in the same manner, need to encounter the traumatic event. Only then a possibility to do away with the trauma of colonialism can arise. By encountering the traumatic event does not mean to undergo the past traumatic experience all over again. It simply means to encounter the phenomenon of traumatic event through literature which might seem to be pathless and wrong path but there is no better way except literary language to arrive at some meaning about the traumatic event i.e. colonialism. Padmini's initiative to go back to Kapila signifies the importance of facing the past to get rid of the trauma of past traumatic event in the past.

Moreover, another significant argument is that "the traumatic event, although real, took place outside the parameters of 'normal' reality, such as causality, sequence, place and time. The trauma is thus an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after" (Felman 69). According to her, victims of a traumatic event can never come out of this trauma because

trauma survivors live not with memories of the past, but with an event that could not and did not proceed through its completion, has no ending, attained no closure, and therefore, as far as its survivors are concerned, continues into the present and is current in every respect. The survivor, indeed, is not truly in touch either with the core of his traumatic reality or with the fatedness of its reenactments, and thereby remains entrapped in both (69)

Body, which is actually Devadetta's body, remains with Kapila but he could never understand it completely despite the fact that he has molded it and claims to be "Kapila now. Kapila!" (56). But the arrival of Padmini reveals the schism that inevitably exists between his body and head, in other words, in his past and present. This gap highlights the incompleteness in him because he is a mix as Padmini says this through a song,

What a good mix—

No more tricks—

Is this one that

Or that one this? (56)

This song makes Kapila remember his past which he has tried hard to forget but could not completely discard it from his unconscious. Padmini's presence becomes a cause to remember the past that Kapila deems to have forgotten, and that is why he repeatedly asks her the reason to have come again.

Memories later on appear in the shape of phenomenon which cannot be molded or modified. One can change body but memories continue to be the same. In other words, one can distance himself from the past but its memories never leave him. Similarly, although colonialism ended in the public history, the phenomenon of colonial past continues to be the part of the collective memories of the South Asian people. These shared memories become "almost like a common culture" (Caruth 190). In "Notes on Trauma and Community", Kai Erikson argues that trauma can "create social climates and moods" of loss, mistrust, fear, and depression (Erikson 190). The traumatizing issues such as identity crisis, double consciousness, political instability, economic disharmony and social inequality make South Asian subject traumatized because such problems are direct corollary of colonial past. These issues become triggers behind reappearance of the past memories. As in the play, Padmini's act of coming back to Kapila triggers his "faceless memories" (57), and he blames her to have "dug them up with her claws" (57), these crises bring memories of the traumatic past into present. The reappearance of these memories generates a sense of incompleteness both in the mind of Kapila and South Asian community. The sense of incompleteness is what makes South Asian people traumatized because they have lost their identity due to colonialism. The trauma of colonialism continues to be a part of the present post-colonial world because South Asian people, instead of facing the trauma of colonialism or incompleteness of their subject, kept on molding or covering up their past. It is not possible to done away with the memories of the past as far as they are not fully encountered.

It can be construed that memories are not dependent on the head which represents the consciousness of human beings; rather, memories, once created, travel in the shape of phenomenon which is not dependent on any virtual carrier. These memories or phenomenon of memory are relational in nature. Only when Padmini comes to the body of Kapila “laughed and flowered out in a festival of memories” to which he is an “outcast...” (58). The body has always been with Kapila since the occurrence of traumatic event but the memories of past reappear with the arrival of Padmini. From phenomenological standpoint, the past memories do exist independently; their existence is dependent on the present subjectivity. Similarly, the memories of traumatic colonial past of South Asia appear as phenomenological phenomenon which is neither a product of past nor of present. The colonial trauma in the shape of memories or ghosts travels through the collective unconsciousness of South Asian people. Although academics have always had a strong interest in studying the past, specialists have dealt with such well-known phenomena as oral history, autobiography, and commemorative rituals without ever pasting them together into something called memory. Where we once spoke of folk history or popular history or oral history or public history or even myth we now employ memory as a meta-historical category that subsumes all these various forms (Klein 128).

The appearance of this trauma, as Cathy Caruth maintains, becomes possible through literature. Apart from the therapeutic role of literature, through this reappearance of trauma literature becomes a meaning-making tool. If the trauma of past traumatic event does not reappear through literature, the subjectivity of once colonized community of South Asia would “continue to be incomplete.” Ron Everyman, in his article, *Social Theory and Trauma*, maintains that cultural trauma is different from individual and collective trauma as it refers “to more abstract and mediated notions of collective identity, including religious and national identity” (Everyman 43). Just like individual and collective trauma, cultural trauma also has some traumatic incident in the past but its occurrence hinges on some factors that may not be present. Cultural Trauma is something that is created with a purpose to understand the traumatic incident in the past. In this sense, cultural trauma is a discourse wherein environment is conducive enough to discuss and develop some meaning regarding traumatic past incidents.

Literature is the most appropriate mode to make meaning out of the traumatic past. Where trauma has a tendency of self-destruction, it also

provides space to develop an understanding of the traumatic incident so that it could be avoided in future. Ashish Nandy reflects upon this inefficiency of objective history by saying that “the historical mode may be the dominant mode of constructing the past in most parts of the globe but it is certainly not the most popular mode of doing so” (Nandy 44). In the play, the return of Padmini causes reappearance of the past memories which in a sense play a very significant role in completing Kapila as far as it is possible. Before Padmini’s return, Kapila’s body was not familiar with the actual trauma of the past, his head was not aware of the memories his body carries, and, no matter how much he had tried to be a complete Kapila again, he has been incomplete.

Conclusion

The mythical characters of this play are very significant in developing the understanding about the sense of incompleteness that colonization has imparted in the minds of the people of South Asia. Due to the traumatic memories of the past, present of all the characters in the play seems to be incomplete in a sense that no one is at peace. The theatrical techniques such symbols of two headed birds and dolls, switching of heads and flashbacks have made it easy for the audience to understand how traumatic past never gets off from the present. Specifically for the audience of the South Asia, it is apt to understand the presence of the phenomenon of incompleteness that they face in their lives due to colonization in their public history.

Concluding my thesis at this point makes me realize the scope of my research for future scholarship. My research is just a one step to highlight the significance of theater in ascribing new meaning to our colonial history while engaging with it as a part of present and not just an event in South Asian history. Simultaneously, I have maintained that the quest for meaning of which my research is just one perspective has to be further explored in the future. In my study, I have focused more on a theoretical side of engaging with the past while it can also be explored that to what extent the form of South Asian Theater is viable to access and convey meaning. Moreover, my research is just a beginning to understand our colonial past as one of the realities of our present. This whole phenomenon can be further explored for its efficacy. So far, this research maintains that traumatic past is a part of present that needs to be explored through literary language because it puts past and present together, and makes possible for the audience to construct their own subjectivity. Without consciousness of present, the existence of past is remotely

possible. In Robert Lanza's words, "Reality is not "there" with definite properties waiting to be discovered but actually comes into being depending upon the actions of the observer" (Lanza 8).

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