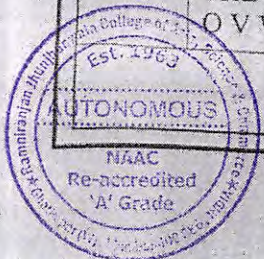


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POST WAR HISTRIONICS: MODELLING MENTAL SPACES IN ADIB KHAN'S HOMECOMING

□ Dr. Neeta Chakravarty*

ABSTRACT

War leads to loss— physical, material and emotional. Of these, emotional loss is the most devastating. As the Vietnam War was a power-struggle fought in the name of communism and anti-communism, both the sides unleashed untold terror and violence on each other with attacks and counter-offensives. Chaos and fear reigned supreme with no scope for peace and calmness. Help from any quarter, including religion, was not forthcoming. In *Homecoming*, Khan records the sufferings of an Australian soldier who has participated in Vietnam war and provides a glimpse of the trauma of war, from an insider's point of view.

Cathy Caruth, in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* explains that one does not experience any traumatic event as it happens. The impact of the trauma is experienced at a later point of time in a place which may be totally at variance from the one where the trauma actually occurs. This paper attempts to use Vickroy's theory of trauma to understand the strategies used by the novelist Adib Khan in *Homecoming* to depict new understandings of the society and the self through interplay of introspection and memory in the aftermath of war. The paper models the minds of war heroes through an interplay of society and trauma ethics. Laurie Vickroy in her critique of trauma narratives further explains that trauma ethics are played out by novelists as personal representations of post war histrionics.

Keywords: Trauma, histrionics, power-struggle, Introspection, Memory

War, in any form, has catastrophic results. These results are manifested in different ways— physical loss, material loss and emotional loss. It is the emotional loss that has been the most difficult to cope with, for it may result in shaping of new identities and social lives. This paper attempts to use Vickroy's theory of trauma to understand the strategies used by the novelist Adib Khan in *Homecoming* to depict the trauma of Vietnam war.

Adib Khan in *Homecoming* uses his protagonist Martin to show the agony of Australian soldiers who participated in the Vietnam War and carried out atrocities on the innocent civilians in Vietnam. He reveals the pangs of conscience and a rejection of the same by the Australian soldiers who indulge in excesses on the Vietnamese and shows how ethical considerations which had then been sidelined later come back to haunt the subjects and change the ways in which they look at the self and

at the society.

Laurie Vickroy in her critique of trauma narratives points out that the ethics of trauma are played out by novelists as personal representations of post war histrionics. She engages with a number of trauma narratives by different novelists to show how the dynamics of social relationships change as the survivor grapples with a web of social and cultural experiences and responds differently to them vis-a-vis the period before the onset of the trauma. She feels that the novelists play a mature role when they study the socio-cultural influences and inspire the perceptions of readers through an accurate and heart rending depiction of individual responses to trauma. She further contends that while the narratives are themselves a bi-product of the growing concern of society regarding the impact of trauma on the psyche of individuals, the novelists portray these complex relationships in a sensitive

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