



RESEARCH ARTICLE



FROM PSYCHIC WOUNDS TO PSYCHIC DELIVERANCE: TRAUMA, JOUISSANCE, AND EMOTIONAL HEALING IN RUPI KAUR'S MILK AND HONEY AND HOME BODY

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ABSTRACT



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Contemporary poetry emphasizes human psychological conditions, wounds which were not expressed earlier and only expressed through the modern verses and leads to healing process as well as self-recovery. Kaur's poetry collection *Milk and Honey* (2014) and *Home Body* (2020) occupy an imperative place in this modern era of poetry. This article explores the transformation of human mind from psychic wounds towards psychic deliverance. Two collections combined with theoretical framework including Cathy Caruth's trauma theory, Jacques Lacan's psycho analytic concept of *Jouissance* and Elaine Showalter gynocriticism. The research adopts qualitative textual analysis and close reading centring on fragmentation suppressed and hidden emotive articulation and link between torment and self-discovery. Caruth's theory of trauma portrays deep understanding of collections that how a person repeatedly face trauma as it was not fully experienced at the time of occurring, concept of *Jouissance* and death drive highlights the points that how recurring traumatic conditions or situations in form of nightmare gradually start supporting the human being. Elaine Showalter's idea to change the perspective from male to female, where female can raise her suppressed voice with the help of poetry. Thus, Kaur's poetry giving new life to the suppressed society which was unheard for long period.

Keywords: *Trauma; Jouissance; Gynocriticism; Psychic Deliverance; Reconstruction.*

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary poetry has unleashed the suppressed and hidden emotions and vividly portrays the fragmented experience of trauma which strengthens the human mind. It has become a platform where the experiences which were difficult to present get the space and provide psychic relief to the person who was suffering for a long period. Within this literary context, Rupi Kaur has demonstrated that traumas emotional wounds of people can be expressed through poetry and gradually a person who was trapped due to anxiety and depression can experience a new dawn in his life. Her poetry investigates that person can go through the process where he is depressed and after poetic articulation slowly moves towards the situation where he gets his identity, he knows about self-love and gets aware about self-realization.

Kaur's *MILK and HONEY 2014* and *HOME BODY 2020* are the collections of poetry which is specifically imperative for the deep understanding of the process from psychological pain to emotional healing. First collection *MILK and HONEY* illustrate pain, abandonment, fragmented experiences whereas *Home Body* demonstrates the recovery, healing and inner reconstruction. Thus, each collection represents a complete journey of a person's life.

Main concern of the present research is that how contemporary poetry supports the modern society by articulation of their pains and traumas through verses. Cathy Caruth's trauma theory is specially delineated that how trauma which was totally complicated, unable to understand gradually gets its identity with literary language.

This study explores the deep understanding through Jacques Lacan's concept of *Jouissance*. According to him *Jouissance* does not mean ordinary pleasure but it has deep meaning where a person gets pleasure in pain. This concept is very helpful to understand Kaur's poetry where recurring presentation of emotional attachments and wounds is explored. Speaker often remembers repetitive emotional pains as nightmare's while simultaneously remaining emotionally attached with it does repetition is not only thematic; it is presented as psychological structure by the verses.

The third conceptual framework is Elaine Showalter's gyno-criticism. This theory permits the study to explore women's writing from the view point of female and to examine how women writings got a platform from where the they can get their own identity as a strong woman. In Kaur's poetry the speaking subject build identity.

Established research on Kaur has investigated feminism digital poetry, trauma, healing.



However, present study illustrates that it is essential to study in integrated way where all aspects should be in one single line interpretive framework for better understanding, for example psychological trauma psychoanalytic repetition, female self-definition. The study represents the transformation of emotional scars into more reflective relationship with the self.

This article portrays the principal argument that Kaur's poetry provides psychic deliverance which does not means disappearance of suffering but slowly traumas get the voice by Poetic articulation, repetition becomes recognisable and women get the identity. Therefore, poetry functions as a literary platform for articulation, reflection.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CATHY CARUTH'S TRAUMA THEORY

Present Study is related to trauma and for this Cathy Caruth's Unclaimed Experience; Trauma, narratives and history is essential base for literary trauma studies. Caruth's explains trauma as overwhelming experience which is not experienced fully at the moment of its occurrence. Her work investigates the complicated relationship between understanding the trauma completely or not.

This framework helps us to dive deep into the Kaur's poetry as her verses portrays emotional scars through suppressed fragments

rather than complete story. The poems do not present the emotions chronologically, instead a reader finds; memory, abandonment recurring theme. Therefore, Caruth's story apparently presents the idea that with fragments and requiring emotional wounds slowly reader gets the shape to his emotional scars and starts understanding little bit.

JACQUES LACAN'S JOUISSANCE

For deep understanding of a Kaur's poetry, second theoretical framework is of Lacan's psychoanalysis. In this he introduced the concept of *Jouissance* is specifically helpful as it exceeds the pleasure principle and connected with the desire, repetition frustrations. *Jouissance* concept remains very important as it examines that poetic speaker even after knowing that relationship is harmful, he frequently desires the unavailable or absent person in his life. Even though sufferings are there speaker persistently desire those fragmented and painful memories which is contradictory situations and becomes complex to understand the ordinary pain and joy.

Lacan's concept of death drive is also deeply connected and relevant to comprehend the Kaur's poetry as it illustrates that requiring memories and flashbacks are painful and it is not necessarily due to conscious choice but this concept is associated with psychoanalytic theory



where it is explained that it is psychic's tendency to experience unresolved traumas.

ELAINE SHOWALTER'S GYNOCRATICISM

Elaine Showalter's approach of gynocriticism offers feminist perspective of the study. This theory provides a sturdy identity to women as it emphasizes the idea that explore literature through the female lens rather than these female narratives should be judged from patriarchal view point, it should understand with the female approach. This approach particular help the understand the Kaur's poetry, especially her collection *Home Body* where idea has exposed of female identity self-worth and self-realization become prominent. Kaur's female speaker tries to move towards defining herself throw her one poetic language rather than describing by any other male figure of society. Thus, Showalter's theories support the idea of imperative transformation of females which give them freedom to express them without others interference.

These three theories support the Kaur's poetry for all sides. Caruth's explanation of traumatic experiences and difficulty in articulation, Lacan's concept explores recurring emotional wounds and deep attachment; and Showalter's investigation of female perspective in male centred societies. Therefore, these theories function in a manner that makes it

impossible to read Kaur's poetry without understanding these theories.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a quality textual analysis methodology on the basis of close reading of two collection of Rupī Kaur's *Milk and Honey* and *Home Body* these collections compose the primary text which are explored through and integrated literary frameworks combining trauma theory and psychoanalysis theory and feminist literary criticism.

The poems are understood through the poetic speaker who represents his psychoanalytic state and emotionally wanted circumstances with the poetic articulation. It is explored that verses can become the voice of hidden and suppressed emotions which are not expressed earlier.

The selected poems are comprehended by three different lenses which makes poetry easy to understand. Caruth's presentation of tormented memories; Lacan's concept of *Jouissance* and death drive and last Elaine Showalter's feminist theory, all are applied together to make a clear outline of Kaur's theme in her verses. The research gradually moves from close-textual observation to theoretical lenses and ultimately it becomes clear that how Kaur's poetry delivered psychic relief to the readers. The term "psychic deliverance" provides deep understanding to the readers



which means self-expression self-work and self-awareness.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

TRAUMA, FRAGMENTATION IN MILK AND HONEY

Principal theme in *Milk and Honey* is abandonment fragmented memories, and emotional neglect verses are not presenting all the above issues persistently but presents in a fragmented form. These fragments can be understood with the trauma theory of Cathy Caruth. In her perception, trauma is difficult to comprehend fully as a person gets everything in shock, in this situation person is not ready to confront these deep emotional wounds which occur suddenly, so psychic recovery becomes crucial to experience the wounds fully. The verses can be comprehended when Caruth's theory, provider a base and trauma get space for recognition. Kaur's uses statement in fragments to represent memories and emotional experiences.

REPETITION, DESIRE AND JOUISSANCE

The poems of *Milk and Honey* also portray the flashback related to deep attachment of relationships that cause emotional pain. One prominent poem "you left and I wanted you still", Illustrates the pain due to departure but also desire for the person who is not there. This contradictory situation can be comprehended by the concept of *Jouissance* given by Lacan.

According to him *Jouissance* is not simple enjoyment but it exceeds the ordinary pleasure and emerge by frustration or desire. Thus, here it is explained that even though person is suffering due to pain of broken relationship but still he desires to be with that person. Ultimately, *Jouissance* is defined as when a person starts getting pleasure from the desired relationship. In simple words, speaker finds enjoyment in sufferings. Speaker experience awareness as well as continued desire.

FROM EMOTIONAL SCARS TO SELF-REALISATION

The journey from *Milk and Honey* towards *Home Body* can be the complete process from emotional wounds towards self-recognition. The later collection exhibits the situation where poetic speaker recognised trauma. *Milk and Honey* explain the abandonment of lover; explains the difficult situation of parents talks about abuser for or the absent one. On the other side *Home Body* as title itself provide comfort so Kaur explains when person gets tormented, he can get a safe place in his own body, no need to find happiness in other relationship real Joy lies inside his own body.

There is a poem "I spent years becoming friends with my body" specifically prominent. In this line metaphor of friendship changes the relationship between self and the speakers on body. The poem provides in death meaning



where it is stated that body is not for judgement or for desire but now it has become friend or companion. This transformation is meaningful because emotional scars affect body, thus speaker believed in being friend with his own body, where psychological comfort can be found. This is the stage where the little word psychic deliverance gets its depth. It is explored that the works move around trauma which panics reader but after recognised the trauma the poetic speaker recovers from the sufferings.

THE BODY AS A COMPANION OR FRIEND IN HOME BODY

According to Kaur's poetic world, body is the best companion which gives strength and it occupies the central position. As in *Milk and Honey*, pain trauma, emotional scars, are discussed where poetic speakers suffers a lot and gradually a shift transform the whole situation where emotional wounds are not fully recovered but only by recognising them poetic speaker gets relief from all those traumatic conditions where his life was in completely difficult situations. Thus, *Home Body* collection soothes the pain of poetic speaker and somewhere he gets space to understand the traumas.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SURVIVAL

Another important thing discussed in *Home Body* is self-forgiveness through which poetic speaker is now comfortable and have some

relief, where as in *Milk and Honey* pain was the major theme, sufferings are there but in *Home Body* poetic speaker has recognised his emotional wounds and finally with the emergence of self-forgiveness, she starts getting comfortable zone within her own body, where external relationships are no more important only one can find ease in her own world. The line "I am still learning how to forgive myself for things I did while I was surviving" is representing the idea of forgiveness. In *Home Body*, it has become clear that poetic speaker tries to understand how to survive without guilt because we all do mistakes in life but it doesn't mean we should live with the burden of past, poetic speaker gradually trying to be free from guilt and accepting whatever was the past and trying to move forward positively.

GYNOCRITICISM AND FEMALE IDENTITY

Kaur's poetry helps to construct female identity through female narratives. Elaine Showalter's gynocriticism theory encourages the idea of Kaur's poetry as it highlights that female should have their own stories which should be explained through their perspective. Earlier the literature was only presented from male centre themes but gynocriticism provides the voice to the suppressed females, who raise their voice with the help of this particular theory and somewhere they start getting their own identity. In *Home Body* the female subject becomes



author to present her own identity. Thus, poems vividly explain that society is judged through males but this collection gives the platform to female for their study identity where they can build their strong identity.

Finally, gynocritical theory not only providing relief to emotional wounds but also psychic deliverance where speaker mind gets free from all types of burdens which she was carrying for long period. The women who experienced violence, suppression, gaze gradually got the power to define herself in her own words.

A TRANSFORMATION FROM *MILK AND HONEY* TO *HOME BODY*

Reading both collections together provides a clear picture of transformation. As first collection *Milk and Honey* is providing a platform to poetic speaker for explaining the emotional scars or emotional wounds, this part is also very imperative as before healing it is essential to get space where one can recognise her scars, trauma because without identifying the emotional pain it becomes difficult to go through the process of transformation. Therefore, first collection apparently providing details of psychological scars and pain which are experience for long period.

Second collection *Home Body* doesn't erase all the wounds but, in this collection, speakers starts recognising wounds for healing process, speaker earlier was not clear where he trapped

but by giving voice to the trauma, she understands it and slowly moves towards the psychic relief where her mind gets relaxed from all guilts and burdens, now speaker understands the value of self-love, self-realisation self-worth. she understood that real happiness lies in our own body not in external relationship.

POETRY AND CATHARSIS

Kaur's poetry provides narrative to the hidden and suppressed emotions, the emotional scars which were not defined earlier can be easily gets the medium of articulation through poetry and bottle up emotions released gradually. Poetic speaker also gets relaxation as her mind releases some anxiety and tension. A scar that was private now in form of poetry, it is symbolically gets its identity.

Both collections *Milk and Honey* as well as *Home Body* execute the complete journey where poetic speaker encounters the catharsis because one collection talk about abonnement, trauma and anxiety and second collection is about the identification of same emotional scars, which articulated and get space in the poetic world. Therefore, catharsis aids poetry in all the ways as a poetic speaker get her tensions released after writing the hidden emotions on papers and feel free from psychological anxiety.

JOUISSANCE AND SELF-AWARENESS

Kaur's both collections, while reading together provides the deep understanding of the concept



of *Jouissance*. Poems in *Milk and Honey* are connected with painful relations. Poetic speaker repetitively and encounters the painful experiences. Again, and again poetic speaker experiences those complicated feelings and as the speaker moves towards the Home Body, those painful experiences become the self and speaker from the cycle of absence goes towards the inner self where he finds solace or solitude. In this study it is not stated that in a linear way speaker gets self-awareness as poetic speaker moves toward the self-realization but sometimes again, she come back to the abonnement and trauma, slightly she moves forward than experience trauma back. Ultimately speakers start recognising these wounds so healing is not sudden, very slow movement can be seen as speaker tries to experience traumas fully. In this way from first collection to second collection the terms psychic deliverance becomes easy to understand.

CONCLUSION

Kaur's poetry is prominent in this contemporary society where readers can relate both collections as part of their own life her poetry beautifully explains how trauma can be understood, it is not to hide from society as it will become burden and will ruin the life, she shows the medium through which anyone can recognise the trauma and gradually can get

relief from emotional scars which is essential to liver healthy life.

All the theories, Cathy Caruth trauma theory, Lacan's psychoanalytic theory, concept of *Jouissance* and death drive and Showalter's gynocriticism by interdisciplinary study of these theories and primary text, A reader can easily comprehend the anxiety trauma when occur in life and how slowly a reader can release these psychological tensions through the medium of poetry. So, poetry provides relief to the modern society where stress is destroying them.

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