

Passant Aly Mohamed Aly

Different Responses of Indian People and COVID-19 Trauma in a Selection of Indian Poetry Written in English

MA Candidate Research

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Abstract

This article reflects different responses of the Indian people during COVID-19 trauma in *COVID-19 Pandemic Poems*. The analysis runs in accordance with trauma theory. The researcher's methodology is analyzing *COVID-19 Pandemic Poems* using trauma theory. The paper highlights COVID-19 as seen from three different points of view throughout *COVID-19 Pandemic Poems*. Some traumatized people regard the pandemic as a villain which is responsible for killing people. They have the feeling of survivor's guilt. Some Indians feel helpless and powerless. They suffer in silence. Others regard COVID-19 as a tool of unity and awareness, in fighting the disease. Moreover, some have a neutral view that COVID-19 is a double-edged weapon. For those, the pandemic has good as well as bad consequences. The three different views show the importance of poetry as a medium of communication. Poetry usually motivates the reader to feel empathy, therefore it leads to the unity of humankind. So, literature is a mirror of society and its problems. Through art, the traumatized may explore his nature. He \She may explore the outer traumatic world. The traumatized gains knowledge about the suffering of the victimized and how far this suffering is evident in real life. Thus, literature is a way of spreading awareness about different problems that can be found in real life. There is a strong association between literature and psychology since both deal with human interactions, feelings, thoughts, desires, miseries, fears, and motives.

Keywords: *Trauma, COVID-19, COVID-19 pandemic poems, unity, responses, Survivor's guilt.*

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Introduction

This research focuses on how COVID-19 trauma affects Indian people in a selection of Indian poetry. The researcher chooses *COVID-19 Pandemic Two Volumes* and exposes the voices of different Indian poets such as Alosious, Vanitha, Chandra Das, T. Marx, and Natasya. Within the trauma theoretical framework, Alosious, Vanitha, Chandra Das, T. Marx, and Natasya 's poems are as Locked down.... Happiness? Lockdown amid COVID-19, Corona Speaking, We Were Born during Terrible Times and a Hope Behind Distance Depression will be analyzed.

The objectives of the Research

The objectives of this research are to reflect how COVID-19 trauma affected Indian people and to give voice to the voiceless traumatic Indian people. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher analyzed a selection of Indian poetry based on trauma theory as a theoretical framework. The reason is that trauma theory is the most applicable theory in the selected poems. The researcher focuses on Freud's, Herman's, and other critics' Concepts of trauma theory.

COVID-19 Trauma

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus. 'CO' stands for corona, 'VI' for the virus, and 'D' for disease. On 31 December 2019, Chinese authorities reported to the World Health Organization a cluster of mysterious viral pneumonia cases that appeared in the city of Wuhan, Hubei Province. In early March 2020, COVID-19 was declared as a pandemic. There was a warning to nations around the world to adopt strict preventative measures to halt its spread (Silvest and Canapathy 1).

The pandemic has spread from Wuhan, China to the United States, Russia, Brazil, the United Kingdom, India, and Spain, which rank presently as the most affected countries. The outbreak of the virus has sickened people. At least 333,000 people have died (Gross 2). COVID-19 trauma affects people negatively. People begin to suffer from stress and fear because they expect to die at any time. “Recent studies have demonstrated that COVID-19 patients are at increased risks of developing mental health issues such as stress, insomnia, depression, and anxiety” (Asim 5). People cannot sleep and they become pessimistic during COVID-19. People stop going to their work. In March 2020, U.S. states posted “shelter-in-place”. States ordered people to stay at home to minimize the transmission of the disease (Vakoch and Pollock 46). Although lockdown helps nations to limit the virus, it increases self-isolation among individuals during COVID-19.

The psychological effects of Coronavirus vary from one individual to another. COVID-19 has a traumatic impact on people on different levels. Nevertheless, trauma is an overwhelming, shocking experience with acute manifestations and stress. COVID-19 has various traumatic effects on patients and the people close to them. Traumatized people may experience traumatic events, disasters, diseases, or pandemics which may lead to psychiatric disorders. COVID-19 has a crucial role in spreading variable psychological reactions and the appearance of emotional distress and social disorder during and after the outbreak.

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Life had not been the same. Nations struggled to decide when and how to end COVID-19-inspired lockdowns, with sharply divergent views between those arguing for a resumption of economic activity and those arguing for continuing the lockdown. Coronavirus has proven to be the worst crisis of its kind since the Spanish Flu of 1918. Uncanny images, circulating in the news, depict abandoned urban centers, such as New York's famous yet now empty Times Square. Tired, withdrawn eyes peer from behind light blue surgical masks in an endless procession of media stories. Migrant workers retreat on foot and through any other means available to them to escape unemployment in cities and return to the safety of villages. "Families gather by video call to say goodbye to terminally ill loved ones in hospital beds. The global outbreak of COVID-19 set new challenges and threats for every human being" (Silvest and Canapathy 2).

These challenges and threats define trauma theory as a basic keyword in literature. COVID-19 is considered a disruptor because it can affect our psychological health, bodies, and relationships. It is similar to deep existential crises that may lead to a serious mental disorder and loss of life's meaning and satisfaction. The number of victims continues to increase during COVID-19. It is necessary to be together to achieve a sense of peace. The virus becomes a lesson for humanity.

The Rationale behind Selection of Trauma Theory

Trauma theory is the most applicable theory in the selected poems. It voices the traumatic stories of those who are marginalized, oppressed, and silenced (Herman 5). Herman shows the importance of applying literary trauma theory to poetry. Poetry allows traumatized Indian people to heal and survive. Pandemic poetry takes images, feelings, rhythms, sounds, and the physical sensations of the body as evidence of the trauma. The difference about poetry is that it expresses the narrative partially in fragments. The nature of trauma is presented in broken poetic devices, lines, and rhythms.

Any Trauma can be understood if people write about them in poetic form. Through writing, the process of dealing with trauma will become clearer. Emotions and feelings that are complex can be described through poetry writing. Poetry writing can also lead to psychological healing.

Pandemic Poetry and COVID-19 Pandemic Poems (2020)

COVID-19 Pandemic Poems is a timely initiative of Cape Comorin Publisher. Featuring poets from India, Indonesia, Australia, the United States, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and elsewhere, the anthology represents a significant literary response to the global contagion. These poems show the great separation between us. In my proposal, the study will concentrate on selected contemporary Indian poems. These poems prove that particularly in an age of social media and online publishing, poetry allows us to reach out and reaffirm our common humanness.

Pandemic poetry plays an important role in releasing negative thoughts and emotions. In *Covid-19 Pandemic Poems Volumes I and III*, Indian poets show trauma on different levels, psychological, social, and rhetorical; they also find a kind of reconciliation and treatment. This process of reconciliation is a fundamental way of traumatic healing. Pandemic poetry helps people learn how to identify, understand, and change negative destructive, or disturbing thought patterns that influence behavior.

The COVID-19 Pandemic reflects how specific language can be used to establish collective identities. Lexicon of COVID-19 terminology as “self-isolation”, “blur identity” and “social distancing” appeared. COVID-19 enacts a unifying concept of the self and community. It reflects the concept of collective identity through the act of sharing stylistic vocabulary of COVID-19 terminology.

Although COVID-19 has led to the postponement, and even the cancellation of many cultural activities, this pandemic pushes people to creativity. Narratives that carry COVID-19 terminology appear in response to the pandemic.

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COVID-19 Pandemic Poems are literary poetic works that deal with COVID-19 trauma. The researcher chose COVID-19 Pandemic Poems in particular because the poems cope with different responses. These different responses in literature especially poetry can depict feelings and urge traumatized people to survive.

COVID-19 Pandemic Poems are considered a way for psychological or spiritual healing during the pandemic. It is a solace to remind traumatized people that the catastrophe cannot destroy their spirit. Corona has turned joy into anxiety. If this is God's warning, then we should ask Allah for help.

The Rationale behind Choosing India in Particular

Although China is the most affected by COVID-19 trauma, the researcher chooses India because the Indians are the ones who begin to write poetry about COVID-19 trauma. Another reason is that India is one of the most populated countries that is affected by COVID-19.

COVID-19 Pandemic Poets

T.Marx was born in 1963, he is a professor at the Department of English at Pondicherry University in India. He wrote poems as *We Were Born During Terrible Times*. He talked about *The Theatre of Absurd and the Film of Tea*. He wrote many notable papers such as *Minority as Disability* and *Articulations of Anger: A Comparative Study of Periyars Why Were Women Enslaved? and Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex*.

V.Vanitha Jeyakumari was born in 1977. She is an assistant professor at KG College of Arts and Science in India. She wrote poems as *Lockdown Amid COVID-19*. She is interested in the afterlife and the theme of death. She wrote *Acceptance of Death the Last Enemy by Emily Dickinson in her Poem 'Because I could not Stop for Death'*. Jeyakumari also wrote about the power of women in an article called *Successful Women Sacrifice Anything for the Sake of Their Families as Depicted in 'The Thousand Faces of Night'*.

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Amar Kumar Chandra Das was born in 1971. He is a professor at the Department of Physiology at the University of Calcutta. He was exposed to COVID-19 patient's cases. As a consequence, He wrote a poem called *Corona Speaking*. He also wrote many papers as Studies on Anti-Thyroidal Biomolecule in Bamboo-Shoots in North –East.

Rosy Lidia Alosious was born in 1975. She is a professor at the Department of English of Holy Cross College in India. She wrote a collection of poems called *Rays of Reverie*. She is interested in themes as the unconditional love of father and mother, the prominence of women and the discovery of real self.

Natasya Ayu Salsabilla was born in 1986. She studied at the department of English language in Universitas Negeri Semarang. She wrote a poem called A Hope behind Distance Depression. She wrote an anthology book about someone's journey in dealing with an unpredictable life called Journey. She also wrote *Social Exclusion in R.J Palacio's Wonder Novel: A Deconstruction Analysis*.

The Rationale Behind Selection of the Poets and COVID-19 Pandemic Poems

The researcher uses selected Indian poets and poems for certain reasons. First, Indian poets present the symptoms and the cure of COVID-19 trauma. Second, these poets reflect on COVID-19 trauma and three different responses to this trauma. The first response regards COVID-19 as a tool of unity and awareness. The second response confirms the idea that this virus will lead to a dystopian society, a sense of alienation, and an imminent end. Due to this apocalyptic vision, the third response arises where it concentrates on the trial to survive during COVID-19 trauma. So, the Indian poetry here is an act of rebellion and healing. Poets rebel against COVID-19 trauma and try to find solutions to this trauma. At the end of the study, the reader will conclude different lessons from COVID-19 trauma.

Methodology of the Study

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Diverse Indian Poems from the *COVID-19 Pandemic Poems* will be analyzed for this study using trauma theory. The rationale behind the selection of the poems and the theory is mentioned in the Introduction. The poems reflect the themes of unity, awareness, and religion as well as the theme of psychological disturbance. This thesis serves as the primary analysis source for *COVID-19 Pandemic Poems* using trauma theory.

Research Questions

In the study, certain research questions are posed. What are the different responses of the traumatized Indian people during COVID-19 trauma? Does COVID-19 trauma lead to a positive sense of unity and awareness in these selected Indian poems? How do these selected Indian poems give voice to people to express their emotions?

Answering Research Questions

To answer these research questions, the researcher cites a range of different responses during COVID-19 trauma. One of these responses is that COVID-19 trauma leads to a positive sense of unity and awareness in these selected Indian poems. The poems give voice to people to express their emotions through analyzing poetry. So these selected Indian poems are considered acts of rebellion, healing, and resistance.

The first response of Indian people: COVID-19 as a Villain in COVID-19 Pandemic Poems:

In a book called *COVID-19 in the Global South*, Padraig Carmody said “The social aspects of infection, control and prevention severely stressed collective responses ... an increase in social isolation and loneliness has also been a marked feature of the impact of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions” (Carmody 3). These responses appear in the *COVID-19 Pandemic Poem*. In a poem called “Locked Down Happiness?”, Rosy Alosious said Let’s First review

What’s locked....
Is it happiness or monotonous?

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Life cycle? (Alosious 12)

When the reader looks at the title, he/she finds out that clearly, the persona is not happy during the lockdown. He/she is affected by post-traumatic stress syndrome. Due to COVID-19 quarantine protocols and lockdown measures, there is a decline in mental health because of isolation. In an article called Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and the Risk of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Asim said:

The longer the isolation occurs,
the higher someone's risk of developing a more severe mental illness.

We are also beginning to see individuals who meet
the clinical criteria for PTSD

due to ongoing isolation without any prior history (Asim 5) People cannot live alone for a long time. The lack of communication and support is traumatic, especially when it is accompanied by fear during the pandemic. In a poem called "Confinement", the persona said: "Lockdown \ It will extend further\ my brain said to me we were trapped together in a 15x25 Studio apartment" (Kamali 17). The persona here feels alone. His\ Her solitude makes him\ her feel as being imprisoned due to the spread of the disease. He \ She suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. There is a feeling that the studio where he \she lives is a very narrow mental and physical prison. The pandemic has severely affected the physical and mental health of individuals around the world. Stressors included restricted movement, isolation, and fear of losing loved ones. In a poem called "The Sudden Storm", the persona said: Now lockdown is increasing gradually We feel trapped and in unease.

Feeling like breaking free

Once again wanting normalcy (Srivastava 32)

COVID-19 acts as a Satan who trapped and deceived mankind. The disease deprived humans of the normal life that God blessed them with. The traumatized person missed the feeling of being

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free. The persona wishes to overcome this physical and psychological trauma and return to his normal life.

In a poem called “Corona Speaking,” Chandra Das Compares Corona to a devil as he says “Blame me as devil corona, throw dust on my feet” (Das 1). From the very beginning, the persona appears to suffer from physical trauma as COVID-19 affects their health. Physical trauma was defined by Freud as “a puncturing of skin or breaking bones” (Freud 200). According to Freud, trauma results from an event or series of events that are physically or emotionally harmful. In this poem “Corona Speaking”, it is clear that Indians do not suffer only physically. The physical trauma that’s resulted from COVID-19 leads the Indians to feel guilty. Indians begin to blame themselves. Their feelings of guilt and remorse increase when they helplessly see their family and friends dying. As a consequence, they begin to suffer from psychological trauma.

This psychological trauma leads the Indians to blame themselves as they think that they are the “devil corona” (Das 1). As in the poem “Corona Speaking”, The persona said “I am corona Blame me as devil corona” (Das 1). The persona here blames himself/herself. He / She suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder.

In “We were born during terrible times” poem, T. Marx points out how Indians feel a sense of “solitude “(T. Marx 5) because of the absence of a “Symphony of love” (T. Marx 5). In a poem called “Not Be a Doll, be a Ball”, Sowmya examines how Indians are psychologically suffering because “Land filled with blood ... with the scarlet red” (Sowmya 9). This means that Indians are suffering because many of them are dying because of COVID-19 trauma. As in the “We Were Born during Terrible Times” poem, the persona commented that traumatized Indian people feel “dying while living” (T. Marx 5).

Psychological trauma also leads to internal conflict and a feeling of loneliness. In a poem called “Corona – The Good or Bad or Ugly?”, the persona said: Corona,

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Kept humans in lockdown –
And enjoying the joke on us.
So, Corona –
You are very bad.
Corona,
You are so mean (Debnath 34)

The persona here accused the pandemic of being mean and evil. There is a personification in which Corona is personified as a rude person who locked or trapped traumatized people and then made fun of them.

However, some traumatized people suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder tend to isolate themselves. The reason is that they may feel unsafe in their community. However, isolation can lead to loneliness, depression, and anxiety. In a poem called “Lockdown Amid COVID-19”, the persona said: “the emotionally abused and physically hopeless persons with fake smiles/ shivering in a bed, teary eyes and wet pillows, for whom this lockdown is a hell” (Joshi 40). The persona here stresses that Indians suffered psychologically during COVID-19. They lose hope, their smiles are fake because they are not happy. They feel unsafe and deprived of all happy emotions due to the pandemic. There is a metaphor in which the persona compares the traumatized Indians’ lives during the coronavirus to the cursed creatures’ lives who are tormented in hell. In a poem called “Covid-19”, the persona said: lockdowns,

feel like cities turning into deserts,
humans wrapped in enclosed boxes and lives molded in
the fireballs of panic (Ghoshal 17).

Being locked down or being deprived of physical communication, which is a part of human life, looks like leaving plants without water to be alive. Being isolated at homes, which are usually the past symbols of relaxation and safety became narrow boxes, where traumatized Indians cannot breathe or feel alive.

In a poem called “Life with Coronavirus”, the persona said: “As it’s a countrywide lockdown\ Coronavirus, the big black witch\
Don’t cry in despair” (Hussain 33). The persona personifies

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Corona as a black witch, who makes Indians suffer from solitude. In a poem called “COVID-19”, the persona said:

And the empty stomach that roars.

Those quarrelsome ration lines

Maintaining safe distancing lies.

Those abroad moving dreams:

Longing for returning to themes (Bhattacharyya 24)

Lockdown and social isolation are two words that are usually related to COVID-19.

The lockdown also leads to poverty and financial loss, because of not being able to work. Therefore, many employees feel depressed because of the financial insecurity they have experienced. This financial depression and anxiety increase man’s feelings of insecurity and stress. In an article entitled “Minimizing Stress Exposure During Pandemics Similar to COVID-19”, Buheji said: “About 97 million more people are living on less than \$1.90 a day because of the pandemic, increasing the global poverty” (Buheji 2).

In a poem called “Life with Coronavirus”, the persona says:

The poor are worried about their meal.

Coronavirus, the big black witch

Will visit door to door,

Rich will always be rich

Poor will have to keep their roar (Hussain 33)

It is clear that COVID-19 leads to poverty. Some people even are afraid that they may have nothing to eat. This feeling increases their stress, making them unable to cope with the trauma. In a poem called “We were born during terrible times...”, the persona said: Socially distanced lovers inhale the essence of solitude

long for secret kisses and sneaky hugs.

Poor mortals crying like hungry cats and rats (T. Marx 6)

The persona highlights the negative consequences of the lockdown during the pandemic and the Indians’ feelings of loneliness. In a poem called “COVID-19”, the persona said:

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COVID-19 is a single word that changes the
whole world

Off course! No work no income, everything
We earned is loss & u gave a moral story too
Many faced difficulties with needy things! We felt it (Madurai 37).

In another poem called “Pan-Gimmick”, the persona said:
“Poverty alive with a teary-eyed stare!” (Chakraborty 50). COVID-19 trauma leads to poverty trauma, which increases post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms. Herman’s concept of dreams and nightmares in the selected Indian poetry “Nightmares are threatening or frightening dreams that awaken a dreamer Nightmares vary in their frequency, associated with traumatic events, and distress, exist in the traumatized population as well as victimized populations, such as PTSD” (Herman 15)

Dreams reflect what the traumatized people feel while they're awake, so after or during any trauma. The victims usually have nightmares and anxiety dreams. These dreams incorporate similar feelings to those experienced during the trauma. In a poem called “Covid-19 flood”, the persona said:

Brand new term quarantine launched,
Current experience 'lockdown' initiated,
Lockdown became our routine,
Isolation became our thoughts,
Quarantine became one nightmare (Benita 42)

There is a metaphor in which the persona compares the quarantine or lockdown to a nightmare. The traumatized Indian people see this nightmare of being locked down even when they are awake through their thoughts of isolation. Their feeling of pain is continuous during the morning and the night during the COVID-19 pandemic. In an article called “Remembering a Depressive Primary Object: Memory in the Dialogue between Psychoanalysis and Cognitive Science”, Leuzinger said:

Following exposure to a traumatic event

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There is usually re-experiencing that is a particularly unique symptom of the disorder whereby the memory of trauma is triggered by perceptual cues and involuntarily recalled (Leuzinger 10).

This implies that after any trauma, the patients, who suffer from PTSD, may recall the traumatic events involuntarily through nightmares. So a nightmare is one of the posttraumatic stress syndrome symptoms. In a poem called “Not Be a Doll; Be A Ball”, the persona said:

Have you dreamt of a war? Which happens far,
The land filled with blood,
With scarlet red,
But this is something different,

That turned us all into disappointment (Sowmya 12).

The traumatized people’s dreams became nightmares. They are psychologically suffering. They feel disappointed as the land is full of victims of COVID-19. In a poem called “The Sudden Storm”, the persona says:

We feel trapped and uneasy.
Feeling like breaking free
Once again wanting normalcy,

To be fair this was my dream (Srivastava 32).

The persona here dreams of getting rid of the nightmare of being trapped during COVID-19. She wants to feel free and return to normalcy or normal life. The persona confirmed this idea by saying: “Praying to almighty every day\Bring back the normalcy back I say” (Srivastava 32). In a poem called “Covid-19 Flood”, the persona said: Peace became a forgotten term in life. Fear became the new term in life.

Hope is gone, happiness flew away,
The outside world became a dream (Benita 42).

During the pandemic, the dream of being free and the nightmare of being trapped appear throughout COVID-19 Pandemic Poems. The Indians feel sad and hopeless.

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Social isolation during the disease leads to their nightmares of losing freedom. Their life is full of fear. This fear leads to mental illness, which appears in the form of nightmares and awful hopeless dreams.

In a poem called “Karma or Vengeance? Futility”, the persona said: “I have been dreaming every night of roads full of rotting bodies” (Panja 44). The persona here is afraid of death. It appears that he dreamt of COVID-19 killing people to the extent that streets became a place of rotten dead bodies. The persona is psychologically suffering. His brain is full of nightmares concerning the pandemic trauma. In a poem called “COVID Lessons”, the persona says:

He tried to do many things
He thinks the world is at his fingertips
But Corona shattered and smashed his dreams
Pride and power, everything is in vain
Corona created great frustration
Utter pain he finds everywhere
The solution he finds nowhere Corona is
invisible to our naked eyes

Yet troubling the entire humankind (Alex 20).

Before COVID-19, mankind was proud of its power and strength to defeat many diseases. However, the pandemic brings disappointment, pain, and frustration. Corona turns the dream of the ultimate power of man into an impossible dream. So Indians feel weak and mental suffering. They don't find solutions to COVID-19 trauma. In a poem called “No New Vision”, the persona said:

No sweet dreams are in my dreamy sleep
No echoes of hope from the sky nor golden vision at
the horizon.

Only the darkness has zoomed around with despair
and frustration (Bhattacharjee 27).

The persona seems to be hopeless. His sweet dreams turned into nightmares. The traumatized people were deprived of seeing the

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sunlight and walking through the streets. All they see is darkness, despair, disappointment, and frustration due to COVID-19 trauma. In an article called “Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and the Risk of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder”, Asim said: “COVID-19 causes widespread panic and anxiety, depression resulting from the sudden deaths of friends, relatives, and colleagues, and stigmatization and social exclusion of survivors” (Asim 833). This panic and anxiety caused nightmares in the traumatized people’s minds. In a poem called “Corona - An Eye Opener”, the persona says:

Not knowing my life’s destiny; My senses
worked in darkness Since Corona rose in
fullness.

No aim and no dream are the cause (Ahiman 38)

The Indian victims appear to be mentally confused. Some seem to lose faith; they don’t know what life destiny is. They are dying while living. Because of the pandemic, All the traumatized people’s aims and dreams are smashed. Herman’s Concept of

Memory in the Selected Indian Poetry

If an event elicits an emotional reaction in us, then it's
more likely to make it into our memory.

Things that have more emotional significance
get burned into their memory and they may never forget them
(Herman 5).

After any trauma, the victims feel certain emotional disturbances, which are reactions to this traumatic event. These feelings are engraved in traumatized people’s memory. The brain recalls the same emotions the person feels during the trauma again and again in the memory. In a poem called “He departed from us—”, the persona said: He departed from us –

Into another world.... Memories, like a blast of wind,
descended upon my conscious mind His smiling face--
Greeting every patient (Eapen 7).

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This poem was written on a true-life incident about the death of a very dedicated doctor in Chennai. He died after being infected at the hospital, where he had been treating COVID-19 patients. The persona cannot forget the doctor's smile. The trauma of the death of the doctor seems to affect the persona's mental health negatively. His memory began to call negative emotions and scenes, which happened due to COVID-19 trauma.

In a poem called "We Were Born During Terrible Times", T. Marx examines how COVID-19 trauma reminds the personae to remember all traumas he/she faces as "Tsunami ... Warships and missiles" (T. Marx 5). Herman talked about the importance of memory in shaping individuals and cultural identities.

Traumatic memory also plays a central role in the diagnostic criteria of post-traumatic stress syndrome. This syndrome reveals how the traumatized person faces certain symptoms such as thoughts, feelings, or dreams related to traumatic events. This is what happens in the poem "We were born during terrible times". COVID-19 trauma evokes the traumatized person to memorize previous traumas he faced as the tsunami.

However, in "Corona Speaking", the persona does not mention previous traumas. The reason may be that the persona suffers from Episodic amnesia. As the personae cannot access his / her memory due to facing COVID-19 trauma. The use of the ellipsis in the title of "We were born during terrible times..." may also reflect how it was hard for the traumatized personae to memorize and share COVID-19 trauma with us. In Freud, Physical and Psychological Trauma, and the Selected Indian Poetry:

Emotional trauma is a sense of unsafety, fear, or anxiety.

It is often accompanied by other physical symptoms as well,
such as chronic insomnia, nightmares, and other health
issues.

Psychological trauma can often be more harmful and harder to recover from than physical trauma (Herman 88).

Psychological trauma is worse than physical trauma. It affects our emotions, making us feel worried and unsafe. This disturbance

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of emotions translated physically into nightmares and affects the brain harmfully. In a poem called “COVID-19”, the persona said: “feel like cities turning into deserts” (Ghoshal 17). The persona’s real world became like a nightmare, a desert. He is suffering emotionally. His life became sterile. The traumatized Indian people also feel pain. In a poem called “COVID Lessons”. The persona said: “Utter pain he finds everywhere the solution he finds nowhere” (Alex 20). The fear of seeing loved ones turned into dead bodies because of the pandemic.

Social isolation increases the psychological suffering of traumatized Indian people.

In a poem called “I Know”, the persona says:

I know you miss them
But this battle was tough
I know the pain was extreme
But be strong enough
I know you lose hope But keep a little trust
I know this hurts you
But now waiting is a must
I know you need support But have to stay separate
I know you feel guilty (Lad 34).

The persona here missed the dead loved ones. He feels guilty. He suffers from survivor’s guilt. He also missed the support because of a lack of communication, due to the pandemic. The traumatized person feels lonely and separated.

The second response of the Indian people: COVID-19 As a Tool of Unity and Awareness

COVID-19 represents a massive global health crisis. People around the world begin to feel empathy for each other. Within the Indian community, traumatized people don’t only sympathize with each other, but they also tend to support each other in to face of the pandemic. They put hand in hand to overcome the pandemic, by spreading awareness.

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In a poem called "I Had a Dream", the persona said: I
had a dream.
People of India.
Discarded foreign again.
To rebuild their nation.

From the impact of COVID-19 (Ramanathapuram 34).

The Indian people here unified to fight the pandemic. They have a dream to rebuild their nation, India. The sense of unity and positive dreams of construction increases due to COVID-19. In a poem called "Lockdown Amid COVID-19", the persona said: "People no hatred only helping hand" (Jeyakumari 35). For the traumatized Indian people, this is the time for unity, for the Indians to work together in solidarity to stop this virus and its shattering consequences. In a poem called "A Saga of National Lockdown", the persona said:

Self-isolation, I am observing during Lockdown, So, I
defend myself from the deadly virus frown.

Spending family time, and pursuing my hobby,
Gardening, reading, and helping my mommy (Sharma 53).

Despite the bad consequences of the lockdown, it seems as well to have positive consequences. The communication between the members of the same family has increased due to the pandemic. In addition, Some Indians have begun to improve their hobbies such as reading books during COVID-19. They stay longer time at home, spending time with each other. In a poem called "Letter to Corona", the persona said: Dear Corona,
Please stay with us! But don't harm anyone.
Because of you, LOCKDOWN is in the process...
Because of you, we have been staying with our family for more than two months (Davinci 24).

The persona here asks Corona to stay, but without harming anyone. The reason is that the persona realizes that the presence of COVID-19 makes him spend more time with the family. So COVID-19 increases the unity between the members of the same family.

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In a poem called “COVID-19”, the persona said:
A pandemic that taught mankind self-realization
A godsend a virus to heal the sick world
Cleanliness and social distancing were the keys to rehabilitation
Lockdown was the solution to survive
Hope the lesson is learned by man
To work together with Mother Earth (Ramasamy 32).

It seems that COVID-19 teaches traumatized Indian people to hope, cleanliness, and self-realization. In a poem called “Hope, Our Greatest Arsenal”, the persona says:

People around are connecting once again,
We are using our hearts and not only our brains.
Hope we will overcome the situation,
The disorder will go for eternal damnation.
Keep, the light of aspiration burning,
Let us be optimistic and keep grinning (Boral 31).

The traumatized people support each other to fight the trauma. Indians should overcome their psychological suffering through hope. In a poem called “Not Be a Doll; Be A Ball”, the persona said:

For making us face destruction, With a lot of
depression.
Trying with huge might,
To give a tough fight (Sowmya 11).

Although COVID-19 is a destructive disease, it has traumatized Indian people frustrated. Corona makes Indian people fight strongly to overcome the pandemic. In a poem called “Let’s Decide”, the persona said:

Let the individual think of the other; Self-
control is the key to survival. Let all think as
individuals;
Act as one humanity (Nathan 19).

Passant Aly Mohamed Aly

It seems that the pandemic unifies the Indian people. Traumatized people find solidarity as a key to survival. In a poem called “A Saga of National Lockdown”, the persona said:

Yes, this Coronavirus has made my life spiritless, But

I am enjoying this period and have no stress.

I also realized that the clapping and candlelight,

May give new hope and make humanity unite (Sharma 53). The persona seems to be comfortable during the lockdown. He regards lockdown as a rest from the stress of the world around him. The pandemic motivates people to integrate to face the pandemic.

The third response of the Indian people: COVID-19 As a Double-Edged Weapon:

The view that COVID-19 is a double-edged weapon includes the first and second views, that the researcher discussed. The third response is a neutral response which regards the pandemic as a disease. This disease has awful as well as good consequences. Although coronavirus leads many people to die, it motivates people to help and support each other. In a poem called “COVID-19”, the personae said:

We earned is loss & u gave a moral story too

Many faced difficulties with needy things and Even
many faced death emotionally...

We found a beautiful bond in every family (Madurai 36).

The persona claims that although the pandemic leads to the loss of many people, it gives people a moral lesson. COVID-19 teaches people to reconcile to overcome any difficulties with the pandemic. In a poem called “I Know”, the persona said: I know you're lonely

But need to walk alone

I know you're broken

But the struggle is going on (Lad 34).

It seems that traumatized people feel isolated during the pandemic. However, the persona urges the Indians to struggle. COVID-19 strengthens people and their violations to overcome

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hard times and traumas. In a poem called “Life with Coronavirus”, the persona says:

Don't cry in despair,
We have many things to prepare
United we still stand

Divided, it's too tough to withstand (Hussain 33).

Indians are mourning COVID-19 trauma. The drastic results of the pandemic cause people to suffer emotionally. Then the persona concludes a moral lesson. If people unify, they will overcome the pandemic. Otherwise, the division will bring unpleasant effects, which lead to post-traumatic stress disorder. In a poem called “The Corona Wave”, the persona says:

It came as a wave,
A wave is much needed.
To make us thankful.

About what we already had (Pandit 29).

COVID-19 makes Indians thank god for the blessing of a normal life without diseases.

This wave of the pandemic, the wave of death strengthens faith in god. In a poem called “COVID Lessons”, the persona said:

Corona is invisible to our naked eyes
Yet troubling the entire humankind
It taught us to value our lives It made us care
for all at all times

Let us fight together against it (Alex 20).

COVID-19 causes post-traumatic stress disorder. The traumatized Indians feel trapped and helpless to face the invisible virus. However, coronavirus teaches humans to appreciate their normal lives. In a poem called “Reawakening”, the persona said: COVID-19 is not a threat,

But a reason to establish a better world order,
Towards a brighter future
For entire Humanity (Shukla 52).

Passant Aly Mohamed Aly

The persona tries to calm down traumatized Indians by saying that COVID-19 is not a trouble if Indians reconcile to rebuild their country. Trauma is not considered a disaster if humans react to it well. In a book called “Trauma and Recovery”, the persona said: Traumatic experiences often involve a threat to life or safety, It’s not the objective circumstances that determine whether an event is traumatic, but your subjective emotional experience of the event.

The more frightened and helpless you feel, the more likely you are to be traumatized (Herman 50).

Conclusion

Art especially poetry can provide boost mood and comfort during periods of stress, trauma and grief. The disaster is not a trauma if the victims deal with it in the right way. Any person who faces a traumatic event, feeling helpless and afraid is traumatized. And this is what people of the first response feel in the selected Indian poems. They feel lonely, frustrated, and helpless. They usually suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, bad memories, and nightmares. On the other hand, the decision to face the trauma of COVID-19 strengthened Indians, leading them to the second response of fighting the pandemic in the selected Indian poems. Other Indians suffer from identity crises; they are torn between the two responses. They ask themselves whether the disease is a physical trauma that leads to psychological trauma, Or If the pandemic is a motif and a path for unity and resistance.

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