

**CARTOGRAPHIES OF LOSS: REIMAGINING POSTCOLONIAL TRAUMA IN
JAMIL AHMAD'S *THE WANDERING FALCON*****Naheed Anjum^{1,*}, Shazia Rose²**¹ Department of English, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan.² Department of English (UGS) National University of Modern Languages (NUML),
Islamabad, Pakistan.*corresponding author: naheedanjum000@gmail.com**Abstract**

Trauma and its influence on our daily responses have long been studied in relation to the psychoanalytic discourse provided by Lacan and Freud. This complex discourse largely defines trauma as a singular, catastrophic and sudden event (accident, war, loss) that disrupts the daily course of an individual's life. However, this event-based western model of trauma fails to address the postcolonial experiences of trauma, where trauma is an on-going, structural and persistent reality. Postcolonial citizens, as a result of colonization for ages, have been subjected to structural inequalities, oppression, racism and systemic discrimination, and therefore, have not experienced trauma as a singular, historical event rather as a form of continuous and life-long struggles. Consequently, these experiences of trauma based on the cultural realities and lived experiences of postcolonial individuals are not addressed in the previous discourse and thereby remain 'unclaimed' within the traditional framework of trauma theory. This work aims to address this gap by re-imagining the concept of trauma within the postcolonial context by analyzing the lives of tribal people of Baluchistan, Pakistan. This paper examines Jamil Ahmad's work *The Wandering Falcon* through the lens of Jennifer Yusin's "Postcolonial Trauma" to reveal the complexities of people residing in tribal regions and the ways in which their lives are constantly affected by the horrible strands of colonialism, oppression, racism, and discrimination, that are not singular event of their past but an on-going, persistent and structural forms of trauma in their daily lives. By using textual analysis as a research method, the selected text depicts how colonial legacies results in an on-going trauma for tribal people, that alters the concept of trauma for them. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the discourse on postcolonial communities by giving voice to the unclaimed struggles and losses suffered by tribal people. By centering their unclaimed traumatic experiences, this study brings visibility to tribal people, whose struggles and resilience remain largely invisible in mainstream culture and history.

Keywords: Postcolonial Trauma, Colonialism, Subjectivity, Trauma Narratives, Tribal.**1. Introduction**

Trauma plays a crucial role in shaping our lives and perspectives. Any form of trauma can strongly disturb the daily course of an individual's life, their future responses, expectations and fears. For a long period of time, the field of trauma theory has developed extensively within the western discourse, primarily centered around the works of Lacan and Freud. This historically dominant discourse of trauma theory was specifically designed to address the psychological consequences of World War II and the Holocaust, focusing particularly on trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder. They provided examples by considering the case studies centred to the Western political, social and cultural realms. For this reason, western critics who defined trauma remain limited in their ability to address the notion of trauma beyond their subjective experiences of pain and suffering. This resulted in overlooking the trauma and its impacts in non-western world. Significantly, postcolonial critics assert that the definition of trauma is a western artefact, deeply rooted in the subjective pain and sufferings of genocide and modern warfare and largely overlooking the trauma of colonization and geopolitical violence experienced by non-western individuals. This definition of trauma that is claimed to be addressing the universal experiences of trauma overlooks the sufferings of postcolonial subjects who experienced colonialism, discrimination, systematic inequalities and oppression throughout their lives. Consequently, these experiences remain 'unclaimed' within the historically dominant discourse of trauma theory. This paper aims to address this gap by carrying out a textual analysis of Jamil Ahmad's *The Wandering Falcon*, in order to reimagine

the concept of trauma by analyzing the lives of postcolonial citizens, their subjective pain and suffering, thereby challenging the historically dominant Western discourse of trauma theory.

In this regard, Yusin's concept of postcolonial trauma helps to understand the relation between trauma and the postcolonial world. Her concept of postcolonial trauma draws on the idea that western dominant discourse has overlooked the contextual understanding of trauma theory. In postcolonial world, trauma resulting from colonialism and oppression, strongly impacts the mental and physical well-being of individuals. She argues that trauma in the postcolonial world plays a major role in shaping the lives and perspective of the individuals, as for them, it is not a singular incident in the past but a continuous way of life. The constant exposure to traumatic events in colonial and postcolonial phases have altered their way of life where they are constantly struggle to either adhere a traditional way of life or modern ideas of state and law.

At the heart of *The Wandering Falcon* lies the trauma of tribal communities caused by colonialism, oppression and discrimination. This research represents this constant battle and struggle of individual characters foregrounding in the context of tribal communities. This study is significant as it contributes in giving voice to individuals residing in the tribal regions of Pakistan, whose traumatic experiences and struggles have previously been overlooked by the traditional frameworks of trauma studies centered around western discourse.

Pakistani novelist, story writer and civil servant, Jamil Ahmad, was posted in Balochistan as part of his service, and got an opportunity to closely observe tribal culture, tradition and lifestyle. While working in the remote area of Balochistan for many years, he gained profound understanding and deep discernment of the tribal way of life. His famous work, *The Wandering Falcon* is set in the remote area at the border of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran. This novel is the representation of his understanding of tribal people both as an insider and outsider to their lives.

The novel is based on nine different short interconnected stories about tribal people beginning from the story of Gul Bibi and her lover who married against the tribal law and escaped from the area. The couple later become parents to Tor Baz, their only son, who was only five when they were killed by their enemies. Toz Baz is the wandering falcon, who wanders across the deserts of Balochistan and meets different people during his journey. Through the narratives of tribal nomadic people, Jamil Ahmad depicts the challenges they encounter in their daily lives as a consequence of colonialism, structural inequalities and discrimination. The novel also highlights the resilience of the tribal people during challenging times, the ways in which they encounter difficulties and manage to bravely move forward in their lives. Despite their life-long struggles and constant resilience in the face of hardships and oppression; their traumas, struggles, and efforts remain almost invisible in the mainstream culture and media. This research is an attempt to fill this gap by giving voice to the unclaimed traumatic experiences of tribal people that have been previously overlooked in the historically dominant discourse of trauma studies.

1.1 Research Objectives

- To re-imagine the notion of trauma within the framework of postcolonial context.
- To understand and acknowledge the unclaimed traumatic experiences of tribal people previously overlooked in the dominant Western discourse of trauma theory.

1.2 Research Questions

1. In what ways does postcolonial context help to re-imagine the notion of trauma, challenging the popular Western discourse of trauma theory?
2. How is life in tribal areas constantly affected by the horrible strands of colonialism and structural inequalities as depicted in the selected texts?

3. How re-imagining trauma helps to understand and acknowledge the unclaimed traumatic experiences of Tor Baz and his parents?

1.3 Thesis Statement

This work challenges the popular western notion of trauma in order to highlight how trauma is not a singular event of the past but a way of life in the non-western world due to colonialism and structural inequalities. By analyzing Jamil Ahmad's *The Wandering Falcon*, this work re-imagines the notion of postcolonial trauma by giving voice to the unclaimed traumatic experiences of tribal people of Pakistan.

2. Theoretical Framework

Jennifer Yusin, in her book chapter titled "Postcolonial Trauma" (2018), argues that trauma studies have been predominantly explored within the framework of Western experiences of pain and suffering. Yusin dismantles the popular Western discourse of trauma and presents an alternative perspective by asserting that trauma is not a temporary experience but a continuous way of life shaped by the legacies of colonialism. She asserts that trauma in the postcolonial world did not end with decolonization; instead, it persists in the form of structural inequalities and oppression. These inequalities and oppression is deeply rooted in the social, political and cultural fabric of postcolonial societies. She further points out the insufficiency of the western trauma theory in addressing the postcolonial trauma,

"The intellectual landscape that these postcolonial approaches to trauma as a conceptual category sketch out is one that identifies the inadequacy and inaccuracy of classic psychoanalytic conceptions of trauma and of post-structuralism to characterize today's ever-changing forms of violence and responses to the experiences of cruelty and suffering" (Yusin, 2018 p. 247).

Yusin asserts that the historically dominant discourse of trauma studies has primarily focused on trauma as a singular catastrophic event of the past such as World War-II or the Holocaust and has claimed it to be a universalized traumatic experience. However, this focus has resulted in overlooking the relationship between trauma and post-colonialism, consequently neglecting the experiences of pain and sufferings in the postcolonial context.

She further suggests that trauma is not an individual event as Western theory asserts, but a collective experience that affects the entire communities and generations. Furthermore, the trauma of colonization disrupts everyday lives of individuals in non-Western world, as it places the communities between traditional and modern worlds, as well as between past and present. This results in the creation of a fragmented sense of identity and belonging. Therefore, the lives and perspectives of individuals continue to be shaped by the legacy of colonization.

Yusin's notion of postcolonial trauma helps in understanding the complexity of the relationship between trauma and the postcolonial context. Analyzing *The Wandering Falcon* under the lens of postcolonial trauma helps explore and understand the unclaimed experiences of tribal people that were not included in defining the concept of trauma in the past. In this regard, Yusin's theory of postcolonial trauma helps to analyze the life of Tor Baz and other individuals in the selected novel to explore and understand the traumatic experiences of tribal people that are on-going and persistent, impacting the entire lives of tribal people.

3. Research Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature and uses textual analysis as a research method. Textual analysis is an essential technique for analyzing literary texts, allowing for their exploration and interpretation from multiple dimensions. The selected text will be analyzed under the lens of postcolonial trauma theory.

4. Analysis

Jamil Ahmad's picaresque novel is based on a collection of nine interconnected stories, set in the remote tribal area at the border of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. *The Wandering Falcon* begins with Gul Bibi falling in love with a man and fleeing their residential tribe as they are threatened with death for marrying against tribal law. Later, they are found by tribal people and killed, and only their son, Tor Baz survives this assault. As an orphan, he wanders across the desert and observes the struggle of other tribal communities. The rest of the eight stories are also situated in the context of tribal culture and traditions, with Tor Baz as an observer in some stories and as an active participant in others. In each story, the tribal people are shown struggling with the challenges of colonization, racism, oppression and harsh environmental conditions.

The harshness of the landscape in the remote tribal area coupled with lack of food, shelter and other basic resources representing the structural inequalities and oppression these people face throughout their lives. It depicts how trauma isn't a single catastrophic event as defined in the western discourse, rather it's in the form of structural inequalities and oppression that disrupts the normal course of life of tribal people as depicted in the first chapter. In the first chapter titled *The Sins Of The Mother*, we see the lack of basic necessities of life as the narrator observes,

"No habitation for miles around, and no vegetation except for a few wasted and barren date trees leaning crazily against one another, and no water other than a trickle among some salt-encrusted boulders, which also dries out occasionally, manifesting a degree of hostility"(Ahmad, 2011 p. 10).

In the third chapter *The Death of Camels*, the effect of postcolonial trauma becomes very evident with the example of powindas tribes. With the dismantling of the British Empire in 1958, "[r]estrictions are imposed on the free movement of the Powindas "the foot people"(Ahmad 31). The new government policies, constant surveillance and restriction in border crossing at the Pak-Afghan border negatively impacted the tribal people, as they are met with new challenges posed to their centuries-old way of nomadic living. It is very evident from the tribal chief, Karim Khan's argument with the Pakistani government official at the border:

"How is it possible for us to be treated as belonging to Afghanistan? We stay for a few months there and for a few months in Pakistan. The rest of the time we spend moving. We are Powindas and belong to all countries, or to none,"(Ahmad, 2011 p. 41).

Similarly, another prime example of the postcolonial trauma is also evident in the same chapter, where the tribal powindas people residing in these remote areas face a constant conflict between their traditional nomadic way of life and the settled life. During their seasonal march the tribal chief and his son try to negotiate with the local officers, however, they completely fail since the modern legal structure does not allow their tribe to maintain their nomadic practices. Soon they realized,

"The new system would certainly mean the death of a centuries-old way of life" (Ahmad, 2011 p. 41).

For the powindas their seasonal march is essential for their survival and the survival of their animals which constitute an essential part of their tribal groups. Changing the laws and imposing restrictions results in the death of the animals of the tribe that they need for living, which consequently creates a postcolonial trauma for nomadic people. The general argues that. "Our animals have to move if they are to live. To stop would mean death for them. Our way of life harms nobody. Why do you wish for us to change?" (Ahmad, 2011 p. 41). Their nomadic movement ensures their sustenance. This change brought about in the form of new government

policies results in the death of most of their livestock causing a grave setback to the whole tribe and is a form of post-colonial trauma:

“By the time they reached the border, most of the animals of the three *kirris* were dead” (Ahmad, 2011 p. 45).

Their way of nomadic living is part and parcel of their identity and to bring about a change in that means an overhaul in the overall system of their traditions, living and livelihood. The demands and dictate of the modern states challenges their traditional tribal way of life and leaves them feeling detached and isolated. In this way, their identity and autonomy also linger between tribal values and modern postcolonial governance, creating a form of continuous trauma for them. Therefore, it is evident by this incident that the postcolonial trauma of tribal people is expressed through their detached existence with fragmented identity and no sense of belonging to the traditional or modern way of life. They also experience a constant clash between traditional values and the modern legal system and this conflict permeates in the very fabric of tribal life and creates a postcolonial trauma for them.

Another example of postcolonial trauma is evident in chapter four titled, *The Mullah*, where Mullah Barrerai was the middleman between German and the native tribal people. Germans, for a long period of time, have been offering money and weapons to the tribal people, and also made many other promises with them if the tribe assures their loyalty to German against the British during the second world war. Mullah Barrerai convinced the tribes to form alliances with Germany to fight against the British soldiers posted at the borders. So the local tribes, who were previously loyal to the British soldiers, decided to go against them convinced by the promises Mullah Barrerai, who made these promises with the people on behalf of Germans. These tribes were previously working for the British government and in the last few days they sent their relatives to receive their paychecks from the British officials and fled to nearby areas to join the German by betraying the British. The tribes gathered under one unit and planned to fight against the British; as the British soldier in an encounter later noticed;

“He was surrounded by more than a score of his lieutenants, some of whom had been on our side till very recently. The whole area was full of small encampments where thousands of tribesmen had gathered over the past days, preparing for an attack against our forts” (Ahmad, 2011 p. 57).

While Mullah Barrerai followers were preparing an attack to kill the British soldiers, he sent his messenger to reveal this secret planning to the British soldiers. In order to stop this war, he asked soldiers to bring money or gold with them. On the other hand, he convinced the tribe to accept this offer, and not ally with Germany or trust their promises. Mullah convinced them that they should take the solid cash the British soldiers had brought with them. In return for this money, they were asked to avoid any alliance with Germans, and consequently not harm the soldiers. This will help the government to retain their reputation and also to protect them from any such civil war on the borders between their soldiers and the nearby tribes. Upon the arrival of a British soldier with money as demanded, Mullah Barrerai acted like a total stranger. As his soldier friend noticed, “Barrerai gave no sign of recognition as we met him” (Ahmad, 2011 p. 57). Mullah Barrerai convinced his followers to take the money. However, later at night, he escaped from the area with his soldier friend and the collected money, considering that this act will result in the tribe not trusting Germans or British or even their own tribal chiefs in the war. For this reason, they will neither be able to unite to fight against the soldiers nor form alliances with any of the parties involved in the Second World War because their trust has been broken. Mullah Barrerai’s trick strongly impacted the tribal people by hurting their emotions and making them lose money that was due on their behalf. After the escape, the tribe hated Mullah Barrerai and considered him a dishonest man, so years later when he arrived at the village again with the dead body of a young boy and another boy tied to

the tree, the tribal people resented his presence in their village. In hatred and resentment, the relatives of the dead boy killed him. By that time, he had gone mad and no longer seemed to have any insanity. The people, out of hatred and anger for what Mullah Barrerai did to them in the past, refuse to bury his body and rather cover it in stones. As one of them said to the soldier upon the mention of Mullah Barrerai,

“Mullah Barrerai shall ever remain to all of us a dishonest rogue who cheated us out of our due. He made free with what was not his to give. His whim brought sorrow to a large number of men. His crime is no less if he did it out of friendship for you. So let us talk about him no more” (Ahmad, 2011 p. 59).

This incident reflects that the colonial forces were strongly involved with the native tribes to fight their enemies. They used these people to fight against each other. For this reason, they offered them money and gold. Mullah Barrerai was a hero and a great friend, however, his disloyalty to tribal people as well as to German allies made him a villain. His acts resulted in negatively impacting the tribal communities and they could no longer trust any tribal chief. This division helped British soldiers to regain their control over the region. As a result of this incident, the divide and rule policy was strongly embedded in the tribal communities, resulting in instilling a lasting mistrust among tribes. This way, colonialist policies, and wars involving the tribal communities came at the cost of exploiting them. Moreover, Mullah Barrerai acted as the one taking the white man's burden at the cost of helping the tribal people as well as the British soldiers but his plan impacted the tribal communities and deprived them of their trust and money. The internalized psychological trauma created by the consequences of colonial practices creates internal fractures within the community where half of them are vulnerable to trusting their chiefs, or German and the rest are willing to welcome the new modern laws. Since the community is no longer united and have no faith in their chiefs, they are also strongly vulnerable to trusting the wrong ones who use them at the cost of their own benefits.

The lack of trust on tribal chiefs also symbolizes the lack of trust tribal people of Balochistan have towards the government. For they feel that they are subjected to inequalities and are not given their basic rights. Both the German and British were willing to offer cash and gold to the tribes, as long as they fought against the other. However this resulted in creating a clash among tribal societies. Additionally, the tribal communities lacked the basic necessities of life so pursuing them for any purpose with enough money was the easiest. This is why the tribal chiefs did not wait for the Germans to offer more than British soldiers were offering them for alliance because they needed instant solid money that the British soldiers were offering in that moment.

The colonialism resulted in mass poverty in the tribal community, and for them the lack of basic necessities was not just a matter of survival but it came at the cost of them sacrificing any moral and virtue.

“To both tribes, survival is the ultimate virtue. In neither community is any stigma attached to a hired assassin, a thief, a kidnapper, or an informer” (Ahmad, 2011 p. 60).

The poverty and lack of basic necessities of life is evident throughout the novel. For this reason, most of the tribal people are constantly living their day to day lives in survival mode, which strongly emphasizes that trauma has become a way of life for them.

Another similar example is in chapter eight, *The Betrothal of Shah Zarina*, where we witness that the tribal woman Shah Zarina was married when money was given to another party. Her intention of getting married was based on the idea that this decision will help to improve her quality of life by moving out of this village and into the urban area. However, we later came to know that her husband was abusive and continued to prefer money over her life.

During their journey from a nearby village, they took a bear with them. While passing the nearby villages, she felt,

“Once or twice, the village dogs came together and tried to attack the bear while the villagers looked on, laughing. The first time this happened, she felt cold and lonely, because her husband was desperately trying to defend the bear and she had to protect herself and her dowry” (Ahmad, 2011 p. 105).

Her husband was protecting the bear because in tribal culture, certain animals were trained as travelling performers to entertain audiences in order to earn money. On another occasion,

“She could not understand why the bear had to have a room and they could not. Once she asked her husband. He looked coldly and said, “I can get another wife but not another bear.” She was Bewildered” (Ahmad, 2011 p. 108).

Therefore, tribal people are extremely poor as a result of colonisation and they are constantly fighting to even have the basic necessities of life fulfilled. For this reason, her husband protected and prioritised the bear as his source of earning over his wife Shah Zarina. Moreover, it also points out that tribal women are doubly colonized, first by the western world and then by their own male dominant tribal system. This reflects that they have no freedom, opportunities or any right over their lives. For this reason, their lives are constantly affected by the horrible strands of colonialism in the form of poverty yet their experiences remain unclaimed and invisible in the dominant discourse of trauma studies. We also witness this mass poverty in other parts of the novel, for instance in chapter five, *The Kidnapping*, the narrator states,

“Despite their differences, the two tribes share more than merely their common heritage of poverty and misery” (Ahmad, 2011 p. 60).

Conclusively, most tribal people in the novel live in survival mode, constantly trying to adapt to the harsh cultural, physical and social realities around them. Despite struggling with the horrible realities of colonialism on both personal and collective levels throughout their lives, their trauma, that is life-long, persistent and structural is not addressed in the trauma studies. Their voices remain almost invisible in mainstream culture and media, even in urban areas of the country. As Ahmad suggests in the second chapter of the book, “There was complete and total silence about the Baluch, their cause, their lives, and their deaths”. He further argues,

“These men died a final and total death. They will live in no songs; no memorials will be raised to them” (Ahmad, 2011 p. 30).

In this way, the constant struggles caused by colonialist powers remain invisible within the broader understanding of trauma theory and these unclaimed traumatic experiences are also overlooked by the mainstream media and culture. As a matter of fact, the notion of trauma defined in the western discourse, largely overlooks these lived experiences of individuals in postcolonial world, for whom trauma isn't a singular event of the past but a way of life. These traumatic experiences of tribal people are not a singular event of the past as traditional trauma theory suggests but a larger part of their day to day lives. This impacts not only individual's life but even their coming generations, as evident with the life of Tor Baz.

The selected work presents how trauma, as conceptualized within the Western theoretical framework, isn't a universal experience. Contrary to the Western theoretical framework of trauma theory, postcolonial trauma emerges as an alternative model based on the lived experiences and cultural realities of postcolonial individuals. This alternative model not only challenges the mainstream Eurocentric assumptions of trauma but also attempts to redefine trauma beyond the Western's subjective experiences of pain and suffering centered on World

War II or holocaust. This study re-conceptualizes the postcolonial trauma within the context of tribal people and presents the key differences between both these models.

Despite the constant struggles with on-going postcolonial trauma, the novel also depicts that the tribal people show remarkable resilience in the face of adversities. J. Ahmad portrays how tribal people are strong and courageous even after being in the state of constant struggle. For this reason, it is important to acknowledge their struggle and resilience. Through the lens of postcolonial trauma, this novel depicts postcolonial trauma in ways that were not defined in traditional trauma theory. The traditional trauma theory overlooks the subjective experiences of pain and suffering resulting from the constant exposure to traumatic events in postcolonial context. Therefore, trauma is internalized in the non-western world as a legacy of colonialism and continues to shape our lives, perspectives, fears and future expectations. This suggests that western discourse is insufficient in addressing the subjective experiences of colonization and structural inequalities of people residing in the postcolonial world.

5. Conclusion

The trauma resulted by colonization, racism and structural inequalities coupled with personal loss of families strongly impact lives and perspectives of tribal people in Baluchistan, Pakistan. The traditional trauma theory, limited to the westerner's subjective experiences of pain and suffering has failed to address the postcolonial experiences of trauma and pain. The historically dominant western discourse on the notion of trauma does not acknowledge trauma as a legacy of colonialism ingrained in the cultural realities and lived experiences of tribal people. For this reason, the traditional discourse of trauma theory is not sufficient to address the experiences of pain and suffering of individuals living in the non-western world and thereby the alternative model of trauma is needed to understand the trauma in the postcolonial world.

The findings of this work suggest that analyzing trauma through the experiences of the protagonist and other characters in the novel, offers new insights in understanding postcolonial traumatic experiences and their impacts. The novel depicts that there is no universal definition of trauma as western dominant discourse asserts. By focusing on the subjective experiences of pain and suffering of the postcolonial citizens, this research helps to develop a deeper comprehension of how trauma affects individuals within postcolonial context and shapes their entire lives. By providing key differences between both these models of trauma, this work re-conceptualizes trauma theory within the context of non-western world.

By engaging with these insights, future research can more effectively address the traumatic experiences of individuals in postcolonial contexts, enabling a more inclusive understanding that considers the experiences and cultural realities of the non-Western world as well as marginalized communities.

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