

Daughter of the East: A Sisyphean Attempt of Benazir Bhutto in Politicizing Individual Distress for Collective Trauma

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Abstract

The paper explores the efforts of Benazir Bhutto in politicizing her individual distress for cultural trauma in her autobiography The Daughter of the East. It mainly examines how her multiple efforts of transferring personal trauma into social trauma turn out to be Sisyphean attempts. Generally, a never-ending futile endeavour that never gets completed is understood as the Sisyphean attempt. Hence, the paper illustrates the same endless and futile side of Bhutto's exertions in developing cultural trauma through her life writing. Actually, her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the former Pakistani Prime Minister, was assassinated by the military regime in 1979. On the foundation of the assassination, she became Prime Minister of Pakistan twice. Moreover, that tragic event also provided the major content for the writing of this autobiography. In this context, in this qualitative study of the autobiography, the major insights on the social process of cultural trauma as initiated by Jeffrey C. Alexander are used as the theoretical framework to evaluate the relevant textual evidence. Moreover, the

concepts of Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson concerning the culture of writing autobiographies are also borrowed to support the argument. Ultimately, the textual analysis mainly signals that censored media, extreme judiciary and forceful martial law including the government-endorsed faith of Pakistan seem to hinder the social process of cultural trauma.

Keywords: *Autobiography, assassination, cultural trauma, Sisyphean attempt, the social process*

Introduction

Benazir Bhutto was the first woman to lead a Muslim nation as she continued the politics of her dynasty in Pakistan. Her autobiography *Daughter of the East* (2008) recounts the political sufferings and experiences of her family. Though an autobiography, the text sounds like a biography of her

father as she explains much about her father's contribution and assassination. Her father, former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was overthrown first and assassinated in 1979 as a 'controversial' death sentence had been declared by Lahore High Court and the Pakistani supreme court further endorsed that. Dominantly describing these events as the memory of trauma, the autobiography was originally published in 1988 and a new edition also appeared later in 2007 with some updates. The new updated version is used for analysis in this paper.

Moreover, that assassination before the dawn of 4th April 1979 became new dawn for Benazir Bhutto's politics and she became the first woman to rule an Islamic state as a successor of him. She served as the Prime Minister twice in Pakistan. Ultimately, she was also assassinated by a juvenile suicide bomber in 2007 in Rawalpindi.

Focusing on the accounts of the tragic assassination of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in this autobiography, the paper examines how Bhutto tries to convert her individual sufferings into a collective one in form of cultural trauma. In the words of Alexander (2013), "Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (p. 6). It is developed through a process. It starts from an event individually and later gets into collective shape.

While sharing her individual trauma in this autobiography, she seems to expand it to the collective trauma of Pakistan. In this course, her multiple efforts become futile as the social process of cultural trauma fails to be fulfilled. That is considered a Sisyphean attempt in this paper. In the Myth of Sisyphus, "The gods had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its weight. They had thought with some reason that there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor" (Camus, 2013, p. 72). Without relating the repetitive efforts of Bhutto in the text to develop cultural trauma to the existential philosophy of the Sisyphean myth, the paper only illustrates the futile side of the hard work using the mythical analogy.

The twentieth century is the age of decolonization. Among multiple factors, nationalism is one of the major factors contributing to decolonization. Alexander (2013) points out such angry nationalists, intellectuals and media advocates who have claimed that agents of some antagonistic cultural and political groups have traumatized them. Bhutto's suffering is not related to decolonization but it is certainly connected to post-colonial politics and the fight for democracy. She also tries to connect the people with her suffering relating to the dream and democracy. When individual suffering successfully creates community then "collective actors "decide" to represent social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they came from, and where they want to go" (Alexander, 2013, p. 15). In this light, the paper examines the process of developing cultural trauma mainly using the insights of Alexander concerning the social process of cultural trauma.

The paper argues that her constant effort for creating a community for cultural trauma is converted into the Sisyphean attempts because of the unfulfillment of the environmental factors which were inevitable in the process of developing cultural trauma. The concepts of Alexander regarding the social process of cultural trauma mainly serve as a theoretical framework for the textual analysis of the evidence. There occurs cultural trauma "when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking

their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (Alexander, 2013, p. 6). When any writing can adequately evoke such feelings within the audience, group consciousness in the form of cultural trauma inevitably develops there. However, it is not possible in the case of the autobiography of Benazir Bhutto. Hence, unfaithful media, pressurized courts, the religion of the state and martial law of that time seem to hamper the social process of cultural trauma in the autobiography.

Review of Literature

The previous studies on Benazir Bhutto’s autobiographical work, *Daughter of the East*, have covered diverse perspectives like suffering from Electra complex, working with willfulness, advocating for female voice, giving agency and exposing otherness, including deceiving people about giving agency too. In every position, she sounds dependent on others, especially in the image of her father.

Fundamentally, an autobiography concentrates on the own discourses of the author. However, Tariq (2019) reads Benazir Bhutto’s autobiography *Daughter of the East* as the discussion of discourses on her father Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. Tariq in the narratological analysis claims, “Benazir was so deeply in love with her father that she was unable to focus on her own life in her autobiography. She was obsessed with her love for her father and revered him as a saint. Benazir even developed a sense of competition with her siblings for the love of her father” (p. 89). Tariq uses psychological theory to prove the claim, especially by applying the Freudian Electra complex. It can be covertly communicated in a form of a daughter’s constant affiliation to a father. Her “obsessive love for father”, “hostile feelings for mother”, “unpreparedness for marriage” and “competition with siblings” are considered textual evidence to justify the suffering of Electra complex (Tariq, 2019, pp. 95-101). It is impliedly admitted by Benazir’s younger sister Sanam Bhutto in an interview with Haeri (2020) where she shared that Bhutto siblings “had ‘some hierarchy’ tied to age from ‘elder to younger’” (p. 144). Haeri (2020) further emphasized that Benazir's father-daughter bond had grown stronger both mentally and socially by the time she got her degree at Radcliffe. There is no doubt that these syndromes indicate an Electra relationship but readers should not also forget that Benazir was an heir to her father’s politics. The dynasty politics might be limiting her to the periphery in her autobiography.

Power and ideology are dominantly passed down in dynasty politics. Moody and Post (2014) observe the further extension of the father’s personality in his daughter, “Not only was Benazir’s identity shaped by Zulfiqar, but Benazir in significant ways became an extension of her father, going on to promote the ideals of democracy that he advocated, although his ideas and his controlling actions were often at variance” (p. 63). Tariq’s idea concerning her suffering from Electra complex seems normal as her personality is shaped by her father’s characteristics. All these indicate her desire for her father. It was the desire of her father to be ultimately buried in a native and family grave. It was destiny and “perhaps it was a feeling of invulnerability that brought Benazir back to Pakistan only to be killed two months after her return” (Moody & Post, 2014, p. 67). Again, she is in the path of her father that she challenges each threat and endures every torture for freedom and stability as conviction as set by her father.

That is parallel to the overconfidence of Indira Gandhi in India concerning her own security. Moody and Post (2014) assume:

Indira ignored the warnings of her government and sons and kept her Sikh bodyguards close

to her – despite the knowledge that attacks were being planned against her after she ordered an attack on the Sikh’s holiest shrine, the Golden Temple. Both of these women ignored the pleas of those around them for safety and chose paths that ultimately ended their lives. (p. 67)

Bhutto was in a position to demand security at that time but Gandhi was in status to manage that but both fail to evaluate the situation. They had mastery to collect empathy linking themselves to lineage but failed to be strategic about their security.

Differently, Jangbar (2022) uses Sara Ahmed’s concept of ‘willfulness’ to evaluate Benazir’s identity, inspiration and leadership as discussed in her and finds the narrative “which was meant to break her body and spirit, but she survived and her resolve grew stronger” (p. 2). The study rationalizes a transformation of the submissive Muslim women community into willful women positing Benazir as a role model. She endured suffering to break stereotypes associated with women giving agencies, especially to Muslim women willfully. Concerning more on the emotion of the Bhutto, Jangbar (2022) anticipates that “it is difficult to fathom the depth of her willfulness and courage, but I long for some of it to pass to me. Her story is also sad because she suffered so much and died an untimely, violent death” (p. 12). Bhutto could simply avoid these just by living sophisticated life in exile but she returned home with a commitment to fulfilling the dream of her father. Moody and Post have rightly pointed out that her untimely death was also guided by ‘willfulness’ to be buried in a homely grave.

Moreover, Hillary Rodham Clinton also perceives the autobiography of Bhutto as “a riveting story of how determination, hard work, and political smarts enabled her rise to power in a society where many women lived in strict isolation, called *purdah*” (as cited in Mehta, 2015, p. 86). The feminist reading of Clinton could be understood as the response to those Islamism extremists who never tolerate a female on the frontline.

Similarly, Abbas and Shahzad (2021) have applied the concept of ‘the personal is political’ developed by a second-wave feminist Julia Kristeva to illustrate her contribution to feminism. They argued that Benazir was unable to pursue a career of her choosing and she had accepted her father’s decision of a political career realizing the perilous nature of politics, yet she chose to take risks that her father did, which ultimately directed her to untimely death. Though someone other was organizing her consent about choosing a career in politics, it is a contribution of her politics that “eliminated the gender stereotypes associated with daughter” (p. 21) giving agencies to females. She was the first Muslim woman to be democratically chosen as the Prime minister and became a global inspiration for women’s empowerment. Yaqin (2013) has also come across several women’s autobiographical projects from Pakistan including Benazir’s *Daughter of the East* and finds it questioning the gender stereotypes and challenging the grand narrative of nationalist rhetoric that frequently connects itself to an orthodox Islamic depiction of women. It gives voice and agency to women. It can be considered as the Muslim women’s nation of life writing.

Thapa (2019) underrates Benazir’s autobiography as an account of the agency as she presented her lifelong effort against Pakistan’s military regime to bring democracy to the country and considers these as an illusion and claims “Benazir’s decisions and actions were not independent and freely chosen, rather guided by the external forces: her family, religion, society, culture and tradition, politics and the military regime” (p. 1). Thapa (2019) borrows Louis Althusser’s idea of the lack of free will as caused by ideological state apparatuses and the repressive state apparatuses to conclude that Benazir

could never practice her free will. The conclusion of Thapa contradicts the earlier argument of Jangbar where the 'willfulness' of Benazir was celebrated as the source of agency. As per discussion, what was perceived as the 'will' was not the free, individual and independent but the 'will' was guided by other external factors. Dharamdasani has highlighted three major external factors to be managed in Pakistani politics and argued, "she had to deal with the three A's: army, America, and Allah- in the last instance, particularly, the Mullahs, who claim to speak for Allah" (as cited in Loveridge-Sanbonmatsu, 1993, p. 295). She could not get success as assumed and dreamed because neither she could perform independently nor she maintained balance among these three factors of unstable Pakistani politics.

Moreover, Abbas and Shahzad (2021) consider the autobiography of Benazir as "autogynography" (p. 12). It is assumed to be written by women about themselves. But by analyzing Benazir Bhutto's autobiography, Tariq (2019) has concluded that her writing failed to adequately convey who Benazir Bhutto was, instead of elaborating on who her father was. The question of her independence was undoubtedly highlighted when she was unable to enjoy freedom while writing her autobiography.

Differently, Daragheh and Rahiminezhad (2018) have studied the different representations of 'Self' and 'Other' in the source and target versions of Bhutto's autobiography concerning translation by applying both qualitative and quantitative methods. "Otherness is an essential concept in colonized Women's Studies. Pakistan as a colonized country is constructed of binary oppositions-pairs, which give each one the value that the other has not accessed- male/female, Other/Self, marginal/central. Benazir in *Daughter of the East* portrays women's 'Otherness' (Daragheh & Rahiminezhad, 2018, p. 262). That 'Otherness' is mostly intact while observing the target text qualitatively and pervasive addition and omission are observed while investigating the target version quantitatively. Here appears a methodological variation but the issue of 'Otherness' is alive in both Pakistani and Persian culture toward women.

Manor (1989), finds the text superficial and blames the author for defaming her own political and academic legacies and sturdily worries that "it is also hard to credit that this intelligent young woman could emerge from many years of political study at Harvard and Oxford, and extended exposure to her father's political doings, with such a shallow, melodramatic understanding of politics" (p. 757). She fails even in utilizing her academic degrees which she had achieved from prestigious institutions. Such review questions her understanding and capabilities too. Perhaps, Tariq is right to represent her just as a shadow of her father. Manor (1989) in the same line believes, "She offers us an anthem to her father's memory" (p. 757) throughout the autobiography. In this sense, her autobiography becomes a biography of her father.

The age and gender of Benazir including the religion of the state were not in her favour as critics thought she was too young when she became the world's youngest prime minister at the age of 35 and the first woman to run an Islamic country (Loveridge -Sanbonmatsu, 1993, p. 295). The critics might be indicating the need for muscular and experienced leadership to handle the turmoil political situation of Pakistan. The political situation of Pakistan is on one side but it represents dominant male perspectives on women.

The review has indicated that the autobiography is perceived just as a self-writing of a woman leader working under the shadow of her father concentrating on special issues mainly related to women. However, the autobiography can be interpreted as a life-writing of a political leader of a post-

colonial era who had risked his life returning home from exile to liberate the nation, gone through the individual distress and attempted to politicize her personal sufferings transferring into collective trauma.

Methodology

The new version of Benazir Bhutto's autobiography *The Daughter of the East* is purposively selected for in-depth textual analysis in this paper. It was originally published in 1988 in Britain by Hamish and Hamilton. But this edition came with extra chapters and an epilogue by Siegel who had contributed to updating the original version with new chapters from 2007. The text fits best with the trauma theory chosen here for the discussion as both the text and theory are pervasively infused with social, political and emotional issues. Regarding the author, Ziring (1991) asserts:

She did not emerge from the obscurity that surrounds so many other Third World leaders but has been a public personality from the time she was a child. Her development, educational experience, political associations, and character have been of interest to scholars and laymen". (p. 178)

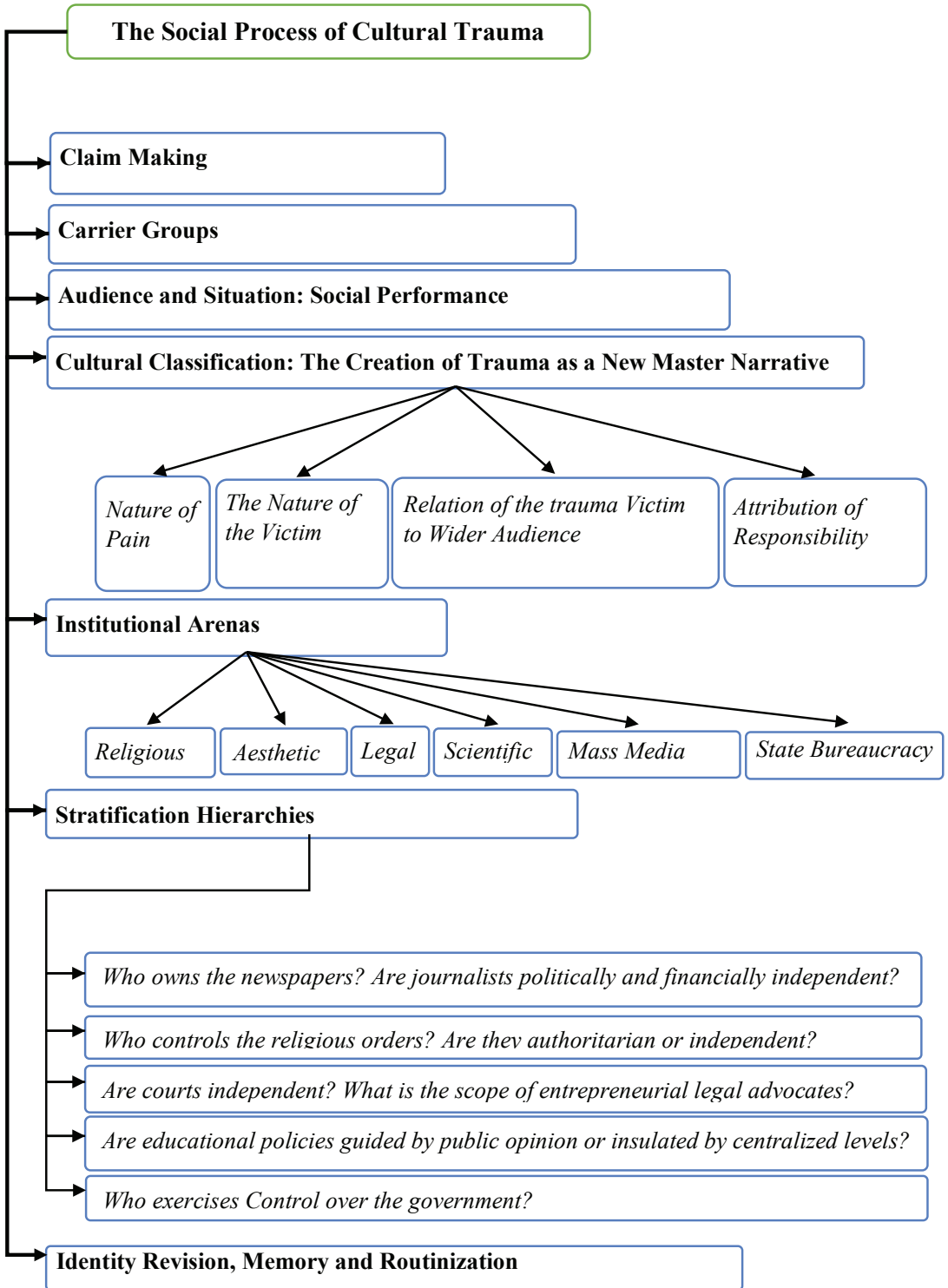
It largely explains the political contributions of her father, former Prime Minister of Pakistan Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, terrible accounts of his assassination by the military regime in 1979, and her aggressive entry into politics after the completion of her study in different foreign universities and the assassination of her father. Bhutto was the first elected woman prime minister in a Muslim nation as an heir of her father's politics.

Benazir Bhutto has the experience of arrestment, imprisonment and exile. Unfortunately, Benazir Bhutto was also assassinated in a suicide bomb attack in 2007 which grows empathy for the text and author. In this regard, this qualitative study mainly exercises the different insights of cultural trauma and the processes of developing it as initiated by Alexander to explain Bhutto's effort in such development as the theoretical framework. Other ideas of Caruth regarding trauma and the concepts of Smith and Watson concerning autobiography are also borrowed to strengthen the argument. The analysis goes beyond content integrating the context and interpreting the sociopolitical culture narrated in the text. Moreover, the conceptual framework of the paper that incorporates the components of the social process of cultural trauma as theorized by Jeffrey C. Alexander in *Trauma: A Social Theory* (2013) is comprehensively shown in this paper in figure 1.

Textual Analysis and Discussion

Strong claim-making is the foundation stone for the social process of cultural trauma. In the beginning, the claim is initiated by individuals and the private agonies become public in cultural trauma. Alexander (2013) explicates the collective trauma as "some fundamental injury, an exclamation of the terrifying profanation of some sacred value, a narrative about a destructive social process, and a demand for emotional, institutional, and symbolic reparation and reconstitution" (p. 16). In the case of the autobiography, Bhutto (2008) tries to establish Zulfiqar as the honour of Pakistan and symbol of democracy. In the different settings, she claims "The crime against him [Zulfiqar] is a crime against the people" (p. 132) to establish connectivity to people, quotes the slogans "Long live Bhutto, or Long live democracy" (Bhutto, 2008, p. 129) to present him as democracy and emphasizes that her father is "fighting not only for his honour but for the honour of our country" (p. 146) to arouse public faith and trauma.

Figure 1. The conceptual framework for Social Process of Cultural Trauma



The trauma doesn't appear simultaneously with the tragic event. It appears at different times in diverse forms. After the decision of the death penalty for Zulfikar, Bhutto unconsciously expressed at the time of the operation in a hospital in Karachi, "'They're killing my father! They're killing my father!' I heard myself screaming" (Bhutto, 2008, p. 138). It is exactly about the temporality delay in trauma. According to Caruth (1991), "the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (p. 181). Here, her trauma seems to be triggered by the process of operation in the hospital. Similarly, on the day of his execution, suddenly feels her father's noose around her neckline and zooms up in her bed (Bhutto, 2008, p. 11). The hallucinations of the trauma seem to affect intrusively in the case.

After the arrestment of Zulfikar, "PPP [The Pakistan People's Party] workers began to gather in mosques and *mazaars* all over the country to read the Holy Quran and pray for my father's release" (Bhutto, 2008, p. 125). Forming carrier groups, they seem to politicize religion and Quran linking "trauma to theodicy" (Alexander, 2013, p. 20). They appear to do so for the collective trauma. However, that did not support it appropriately. In an Islamic nation, where Islam is also the religion of the government, it fails to draw any attention of the particular groups. Cultural trauma "Religion, nation, race, ethnicity, gender, class - each of these dimensions can be a medium for inflicting social pain" (Alexander, 2013, p. 1). Regarding these factors, mainly religion seems to contribute to slowing down the process of creating collective trauma in the text. The picture of trauma might be different if it happened in a multireligious nation.

The shadow of trauma never leaves the sufferers. Bhutto (2008) reflects on herself from the custody, "I feel as if I am living grave, cut off from all human experience" (p. 112). Regarding it, Caruth meditates on Freud's intuition regarding such traumatic experiences and believes that "the unwitting reenactment of an event that one cannot simply leave behind" (as cited in Alexander, 2013, p. 11). One has to live with it as Bhutto is perpetually submerged in it.

Differently, many people sacrificed for the release of Zulfikar as their flame of trauma intensified. Pervez Yaqub had immolated himself just after the arrestment of Zulfikar in September 1977 and immediately in the coming weeks, "five more men would burn themselves to death to try and save the life of their elected Prime Minister" (Bhutto, 2008, p. 148). They became the carrier groups of the trauma. Even the initially individual suffering transfers to the group as "carrier groups tie their material and ideal interests to particular scripts about who did what to whom, and how society must respond if a collective identity is to be sustained" (Alexander, 2013, pp. 3-4). The carrier groups could not proactively perform as they were subject to military rule in Pakistan. However, it was circulating to certain groups.

In that transitional period between the decision and the execution of the death sentence, Bhutto (2008) is saddened and she shares, "I felt trapped in a never-ending nightmare ... when I looked in the mirror, I didn't recognize myself. My face was red and blotchy from acne caused by stress" (p. 153). Writing is one of the best ways of expressing feelings. Among diverse forms of writing, an autobiography effectively communicates the "agonies of traumatic memory" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 21). She also communicates distress in her self-referential writing.

Before the execution, father Bhutto asks the jail superintendent to manage for a shave and take a bath telling, "The world is beautiful and I want to live it clean" (Bhutto, 2008, pp. 8). She

seems to create community showing the ultimate wish of her father as he wants to maintain peace and beauty in society. Just after the court decided on his execution, people started protesting and “80,000 arrested from the Punjab, 30,000 from the Frontier Province, 60,000 from Sinda (Bhutto 2008, p. 133). As a social performance, such meetings and protests are the cultural efforts that are necessary for the development of cultural trauma. Alexander (2013) list outs the contributing efforts depending on “speeches, rituals, marches, meetings, plays, movies, and storytelling of all kinds” (pp. 3-4). These efforts effectively circulate the suffering to the larger community but remain insufficient to save him from the execution. A cousin of Bhutto (2008) reports to her after the execution in detention and she writes, “Hundreds of people, ... factory workers, taxi drivers, street peddlers- were gathering in our garden in Karachi in preparation for the *soyem*, our religious ceremony on the third day following death. Every night for weeks before, women had come to the house by the busload to pray for my father through the night, holding their Holy Qurans over their heads” (Bhutto, 2008, p. 16). This description effectively explains how the contributing factors to cultural trauma collectively work together to reflect collective suffering as a social performance among a national and international audience.

In Larkana, although massive crowds stop trains and shout “Revenge! Revenge!” (Bhutto, 2008, p. 24), she convinces them telling “we must turn our grief to strength to beat Zia at the pools” (p. 24). She was concentrated on the election. Probably she wants to respond to opponents through the ballot rather than the bullet. When one asks, “What group of persons were affected by this traumatizing pain? Were they particular individuals or groups, or “the people” in general?” (Alexander, 2013, p. 18) regarding the nature of the victim, it seems that Bhutto family intends to politicize victimhood diverting sympathy to the result of the election.

No suffering could be converted into a new master narrative of social suffering without the support of media. For this, press freedom is a decisive factor in forming cultural trauma. Freedom of the press might play a catalytic role in developing it. Hamburger highlights the role and place of the media, including how free and independent they are from political and religious influence as the major issues here (p. 40). In this way, the media both construct and interpret the trauma process. Bhutto (2008) explains the condition of press freedom that the newspaper of the Pakistan People’s Party, Musawaat Daily which has a readership of over 100,000 in Lahore alone, has been shut down and its presses seized and if other publications do not comply, they risk being shut down or losing access to government subsidies (p. 27). In this way, the contemporary Pakistani military regime was systematically avoiding the representation of the sufferings of the Bhutto family and the party in mass media.

Bhutto (2008) recalls the days of blackout in the media that avoids the defence of the family as “refutations of the charges never appeared in the newspapers, only the charges themselves. We mimeographed the refutations on our machines and distributed them among the people” (p. 124). The trauma process does not get an opportunity to enter into media. It is expected that “mediated mass communication allows traumas to be expressively dramatized and permits some of the competing interpretations to gain enormous persuasive power over others” (Alexander, 2013, p. 22). In the absence of getting exposure through media, the trauma cannot expand rapidly creating groups.

Similarly, attributing General Zia-ul Haq as an antagonist, Bhutto (2008) also questions the

autonomy of the court, “Zia’s judges had found my father guilty and sentenced him to death” (p. 134). She does not consider them the judges of the courts. She further claims her father’s execution was a “judicial murder” (p. 112) to heighten the public empathy. She particularly indicates that “One of Zia’s top judicial appointees, Maulvi Mushtaq was from Zia’s home area of Jullandar in India, and was an old enemy of my father’s” (Bhutto, 2008, pp. 119-20). The situations try to relate the trauma to a wider audience and show the possible connection between the judiciary and the executive. Zia government accuses and courts establish Zulfiqar as a perpetrator. Court declares the death sentence and it is also executed. However, in this narrativization, Bhutto (2008) tries to establish that the military regime and judiciary themselves as perpetrators in the court of the audience. “In creating a compelling trauma narrative, it is critical to establish the identity of the perpetrator - the ‘antagonist’. Who actually injured the victim? Who caused the trauma?” (Alexander, 2013, p. 19). It might be her strategy to present the pain of the family as the pain of the nation and people and her enemy as the enemy of the nation and democracy. In this way, the tragedy of an individual may be perceived by the larger group as a threat to themselves.

Telling stories can be an effective medium to share a memory of such threats. Victoria in her book *Bhutto: Trial and Execution* describes Zulfiqar’s court ordeal. However, Bhutto (2008) opines that the appropriate title of the book should be *Judicial Murder* (p. 150). It is her effort to convince the audience that the court was not faithful and free. Zulfiqar’s rejoinder, *If I am Assassinated*, to Supreme Court, was published in India in a book form as it was banned to be published in Pakistan at that time (Bhutto, 2008, p. 143) to share his catharsis. In the same way, she has chosen life writing in form of an autobiography to communicate her catharsis.

Bhutto’s family seems pessimistic about different institutions and gets no way out and questions, “what could we do? The regime had control of the courts, the army, the newspapers, the radio and the television” (Bhutto, 2008, p. 144). The situation describes the adverse political environment reflecting suffering to the larger community. Bhutto gets healing through writing an autobiography as “for those sufferings from traumatic or obsessional memories, autobiographical acts can work as a therapeutic intervention, what Suzette A. Henke calls ‘scriptotherapy’” (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 22). There could be a question about the truthfulness of an autobiography “when one is both the narrator and the protagonist of the narrative, as the life stories, the truth of the narrative becomes undecidable” (Smith & Watson, 2001, pp. 12-13). However, the autobiography of a politician could be compared and verified through multiple sources. While sharing the experiences incompletely in autobiographical writings, “narrators selectively engage their lived experience through personal storytelling” (Smith & Watson, 2001, pp. 12-13). The same personal becomes political and public through cultural trauma. Expanding the horizon of the trauma in the Freudian sense, Caruth (1991) also considers the history as the tale of trauma (p. 181). In this regard, telling trauma is also telling the history and the history is to be understood relatively. Hence, Smith and Watson (2001) have rightly pointed out that autobiographic writing is considered a “historically situated practice of self-representation” (pp. 12-13). Here, in the case of this autobiography, the ‘self-representation’ becomes the representation of her trauma.

Different factors of society are involved in the process of generating trauma. As Alexander (2013) indicated, “local, provincial, and national governments deploy significant power over the trauma process” (p. 25). It may hinder or accelerate the process. Describing the scene of the court

premises, Bhutto (2008) shares, “I overheard the deputy director of the Federal Investigation Agency, Abdul Khaliq, briefing a group of witnesses on what they were to say during their testimony” (p. 121) against her father. State authority and martial law occupy a position of dominance over the traumatized parties. It resembles the condition of the Pakistani court and the nature of state bureaucracy. Such factors are directly and inversely proportional to the development of cultural trauma. The fulfilment of the necessary condition positively supports the process of its development. Meanwhile, Bhutto has shared her painful memory in this text but it fails to revise the identity of her family and leads the sufferers to routinization.

Conclusion and Implications

In the text, Bhutto repeatedly tries but perpetually fails to create community and form cultural trauma as is usually expected from the stories of the controversial execution of the immediate former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in Pakistan in 1997. It is observed from the deep analysis of the textual evidence that her efforts to convert her individual trauma into cultural trauma remain futile because of the censorship in media, interference in courts, the religion of the state and enforcement of martial law in contemporary times. In the backdrop of the violence of the Indo-Pak partition riots of 1947, what may happen if a similar episode had happened in India. The cultural trauma process would have been accelerated and multiple communal riots would have broken out. Finally, it could be inferred that freedom of press, independent judiciary, secularism and democracy create a favourable environment for accelerating the social process of cultural trauma. These inferences might be useful to understand the process of politicizing trauma, especially in life writing for healing.

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