

TRANSGENERATIONAL TRAUMA AND REFUGEE EXPERIENCE IN PON KULENDRIEN'S *GENERATIONS*

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ABSTRACT:

Pon kulendiren's *Generations* (2016) is a poignant depiction of Tamil refugee experience across several generations of a displaced family. This novel speaks about the Loss of Identity, memory, trauma and cultural discontinuity faced by the Tamil Sri Lankan refugee family. This also interprets the Post colonial diasporic theories that emphasizes how Kulendrian depicts the socio political and psychological effects to exile the younger generations. It also recounts the refugees fight for dignity and survival, the book explores the lingering effects of the conflicts that are passed down through the generations and influences their sense of self and community.

KEYWORDS: Trauma, Civil war, Race, Culture

INTRODUCTION

Forced relocation, shattered identity and chronic trauma are the legacy of the Sri Lankan civil war. These complicated realities have been encapsulated by Tamil writers living

abroad in literature that simultaneously chronicles and analyzes these experiences. An important contributor to the literature of the Tamil diaspora is Pon Kulendiren, a Sri Lankan Tamil Canadian writer. The psychological and sociological effects of displacement and war on a Tamil family across three generations are explored in his book *Generations* (2016). Kulendiren's narrative styles and character development, and intergenerational focus that help to highlight the complexity of refugee identity.

"Transgenerational Trauma" that narrative demonstrates that the trauma of warfare and forced displacement from their homeland because of their economical status. Forced migration extends beyond the generations that directly experienced over the generations. This phenomenon is known as transgenerational trauma. The psychological consequences of separation identity uncertainly the survivor's guilt are passed down to children to grand children of immigrants. These elements are evident in the emotional behavioral in the emotional and behavioral challenges of the younger characters that is culturally ambivalent.

Displacement faced by the refugees they were not accepted in the new country, here the protagonist Velusamy's owner who treated him as a child but the mind of other Sri Lankan women be like, "A servant boy should be treated as a servant" (*Generations* 74). Language separation religious faith and cultural identity are the issues that the protagonist struggled with and the changes made by the character through his struggles and sufferings.

Idea of Trauma is not limited and that gives the traumatic experiences from generation over generations. Cathy Caruth states that "Trauma often resides not only in the event but in its incomprehensibility" (Caruth 4). In this novel the characters suffer a lot in the factors such as displacement, loss of family that also inherits from silence transmitted from the generations to generation.

Marianne Hirsch's concept of 'postmemory' she characterizes postmemory in her *Family Frames* as "Relationship that the generation after bears to the personal, collective and cultural trauma of those who came before" (Hirsch 22). This postmemory is embodied in *Generations* (2016) in which protagonists, who battle identity difficulties stemming from their elders' unspoken trauma.

In *Generations* (2016) Kulendiren presents a Tamil refugee family across multiple generations, where children and grandchildren of war survivors unconsciously inherit trauma of Sri Lankan civil war. Silence is a potent metaphor used by Kulendiren to symbolize trauma that is extremely agonizing to describe. Parents don't talk about their past because they think

it will keep their kids safe. The children experience hidden pain and an intergenerational loss, including the loss of community, language and homeland.

Generations (2016) using the paradigm of postmemory, Pon Kulendiren dramatizes the way which trauma is passed down through generations not only cognitively but also culturally and emotionally. Marianne Hirsch's notion is echoed by the younger generation's identity crisis. Kulendiren explains how pain once silenced and the novel indicates psychological intricacy of exile by showing how trauma is passed down through the generations.

Kulendiren also discuss how racism and cultural loss in host nations lead to the development of new trauma. Characters that are refugees the shame and feel alienated. This also examines how trauma affects identity and memory over time by depicting the psychological upheaval of immigrants and the silent legacy of pain.

In *Generations* (2016) Sri Lanka is not more than a place it is a pain of myth and a memory. According to Stuart Hall, the diasporic identities are always created "through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth" and this duality supports his theory. The character of Velusamy exhibit a longing for home even as they construct new lives overseas. But this need is not sentimental, rather it is plagued by exile trauma and persecution. Hall explains this as "not a single identity, but a production that is always in process".

The characters completely feel at home and also that reflects Said's concept of 'Diaspora and Identity'. Diaspora also means structural marginalization and social isolation. Tamil refugee in Sri Lanka experience cultural invisibility, racism and discrimination in the work space. According to Said's description of the exile is " 'never at home, always on the Margins' they are lawful citizens but social outsiders"(Said173). Language hurdles and trauma exacerbate this marginalization, making them feel even more alienated.

Conclusion

The book highlights how trauma brought by loss displacement and war is not only experienced by one generation to other passed in silence. The novel shows how memories of violence and the separation hurt families long after they leave their country of origin through the experience of younger and older people. This trauma passed to younger generations through stories and silences and the emotional detachment which shapes their identity and

sense of place. *Generations* (2016) depicts the refugee experience as an ongoing struggle across time.

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