

This project focuses on Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone* (2007), a memoir of a boy soldier. Ishmael Beah, a 12 years old boy was separated from his family because of the civil war. He struggled hard for survival. He lost his family and friends in the war. He witnessed many terrible scenes during his escape. He ran stepping many dead bodies through the fresh blood in the soil. Besides these, there are other instances of inhumanity and cruelty performed by RUF; killing innocent citizens and destroying their village. This ultimately results in the psychological disorder in Beah. His mind cannot distinguish between what reality is and what is not. He gets haunted by the war memories; dead bodies and troubled times. The research will present how the terrible situation haunted the mind of Ishmael Beah and how he gets recovered.

### **Problem**

### **Theoretical Framework**

Specifically, the psychoanalytic criticism assists the researcher. It believes in the psychological cause of any event. The mind of the character is in one or another way guided by some irrationality which creates trauma. The protagonist in the novel is the victim of such psychological trauma. The character in the novel cannot operate with his minds properly. The event, accident and activities of the characters compel to act accordingly. The psychological drives of the major character in the novel is found traumatized due to the war, accident and holocaust.

### **Research Question/ Problem**

In Beah's novel *A Long Way Gone*, the major character in different circumstances suffer from some kind of psychological problems. The major character of the novel, Beah suffers because of the holocaust of war, war trauma and brutal killing memories. Beah suffers from different kind of psychological trauma which

obstructs him in remembering his true identity too. In this situation how can he live a free and happy life? How can he survive when his freedom is at stake?

### **Hypothesis**

The protagonist in the novel *A Long Way Gone* suffers due to the holocaust and war trauma. Ishmael Beah's psychological drive does not function properly due to the fear of getting killed. The innocence nature of Beah makes him frightened due to the war, killing of innocent lives and his personal experience of escaping from that trauma.

### **Review of the Literature**

Ishmael Beah's novel *A Long Way Gone* has received diverse criticisms from the prominent literary figures since its publication. These literary figures' criticisms explore the issue of war trauma, existential crisis, racial segregation, etc. It is about the terrible and horrific situation of the children and all others during the civil war in Sierra Leone in 1993. Anyway this is a rare and mesmerizing account, told with real literary force and heartbreaking honesty. Some of the dimensions of criticism have been reviewed herewith in order to assist the present research.

Irina Kyulanova, one of the prominent literary critic and writer finds Beah's novel similar to that of Bernard Ashley's novel for young adults *Little Soldier*. He also explores that *A Long Way Gone* represents the then reality of the Sierra Leon. He asserts: "Both *A Long Way Gone* and *Little Soldier* represent and test a common social assumption: that war can serve as a rite of passage to maturity and can accelerate the transition from childhood to adulthood" (28-29). Her Kyulanova's criticism explores that war makes child, a man. But it is also controversial that people; especially child are deprived of their basic rights and obliged to serve for the militia. The war that crushed Sierra Leon not only cripples the country but also the innocent

child. The proof of this war results in Beah as he gets victimized and psychologically disordered. The criticism of Kyulanova will be utilized in order to show how innocent people are obliged to take strong liabilities.

In the same manner, Jopi Nyman, one of the prominent literary voice compares Beah's novel with Ashley's *Little Sister* and Keitetsi's *Child Soldier*. Nyman focuses on the survival of the protagonist. He even notices how child are used in war. By the way of relocation, he offers true remedy to such problem. He writes:

Recent years have shown an increasing number of representations of African child soldiers in fiction and in life writing, as can be seen in such texts as Bernard Ashley's fictional *Little Sister* (1999), China Keitetsi's *Child Soldier* (2004), and Ishmael Beah's controversial *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* (2007). Such narratives tend to emphasize the survival of their protagonists by re-locating them in new social and cultural setting far away from their homes embedded in violent conflicts and ethnic hatred. In so doing these texts are also narratives of exorcism and purification that seek to remold and educate the traumatized child in order to relocate it in new worlds. As one of the most prominent examples in this tradition, Ishmael Beah's memoir places its narrator in discourses of violence, trauma and globalization in order to construct a subject ready to enter Western modernity and "America", thus itransnationalizing his identifications. (215)

Here, we notice that Nyman explores the reasons behind psychological trauma of the Beah in the novel. He traces that cultural setting caused the violent conflicts i.e. ethnic hatred. He even offers an alternative to the problem as he says that "America" is the place where transnationalizing the identities of such child and their recovery of

trauma is possible. He believes in the western modernity that can surpass the calamities.

In the same manner, another critic Gabriele Schwab describes how a child soldier in Sierra Leone is assaulted by intrusive memories and thoughts. This indicates that Beah is affected by the war which results in psychological disorder. He exclaims:

In his memoirs of his time as a child soldier in Sierra Leone, *A Long Way Gone*, Ishmael Beah describes being assaulted by intrusive memories and thoughts as if they were hostile alien forces coming from outside: 'I spent most of my time fighting myself mentally in order to avoid thinking about what I had seen or wondering where my life was going, where my family and friends were. . . I became restless and was afraid to sleep for fear that my suppressed thoughts would appear in my dreams'. (2)

Schwab quotes the condition of Beah suffering, hallucinating, afraid and restless. This gives insight in exploring the psychological disorder of the protagonist. The 'wondering' nature of Beah as quoted above suggests that he is in search of something which is unknown to himself. This indicates that Beah is suffering from some kind of loss or disorder. This criticism assists the researcher analyzing and exploring the changing mental state of Beah which is one of the essential assumption needed in order to prove psychological trauma of the character.

In much the same way, Diedre L Badejo explores the autobiographical touch in *A Long Way Gone*. He claims that not only Ishmael but thousands of other child soldiers were obliged to fight in order to survive themselves. He puts forward:

Ishmael has since said that during his time with the government soldiers, starting at the age of 13, he had killed more people that he could count. The child soldiers, including Ishmael, were kept high on marijuana and cocaine to numb them to killing. After three years of this hell, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) rescued Ishmael. While he was at a UNICEF center for child soldiers, he struggled with depression and other mental problems, resulting from all the brutalities he had witnessed and performed. Ishmael had been conditioned to feel that violence and brutality were normal and that people on the other side of the conflict were enemies to be hated and killed. (58)

Badejo opens the secret of the war as he explores how UNICEF rescued Ishmael but he even reveals that those child soldiers were struggling and suffering from depression and other mental problems resulting from the brutal acts during the wartime. Badejo's criticism also assists the researcher in exploring the psychological tension in the major characters.

Although all these critics talked about the different aspects of the novel, none of them explored much about Psychological trauma of the major Character Beah. These studies were not able to explore the core cause behind traumatic condition of the characters. The extensive exploration of the psychological aspect of the novel distinguishes the present study as a critical revolution in the field of research. The psychological trauma of the character, his pathos and mental disorders due to the separation, alienation, identity crisis, war, accidents and social obligations has been largely ignored by most of the critics. So, the present study assumes that Beah's characters are haunted by the psychological trauma. The pang of the major characters

results in psychological trauma. The characters' psychological drives are somehow obstructed in functioning properly which makes them suffer more.

### **Purpose of Study**

The primary purpose of the research is to find out the traumatic memories in *A Long Way Gone*. Through a critical analysis of Ishmael Beah's terrible situation, the study aims at showing how gentle folks, can be capable of great brutalities as well goodness and courage. Besides, I will analyze the issues like inhumanity, brutality as well as cruelty. And how a gentle creation of the nature turns into demon. To crown the words it is the very environment that changes the mind of human being.

### **Limitations / delimitations**

This study makes the significance use of traumatic ideas within the memoir but it will not study the whole trauma. Its study is based on the idea of Walter Isaacson and Melissa Fay Greene. Major objective of the study is to demonstrate issues like cruelty, brutality and effects on child psychology. The research also delimits itself to the exploration of only psychological trauma and other instances and evidences will not be taken into consideration.

### **Methodology**

The research work will basically deal with the text itself. In order to accomplish this research, the various ideas concerning to the psychological trauma, psychological disorder with the help of psychoanalysis will be the throughout provoking tools. Likewise, the hypothesis will be dealt within the support of distinct writers and critics like Geoffrey Hartman, Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth and Soshana Felman, and Elaine Suprenant. Furthermore, library consultation, consultation, valuable suggestion and relevant internet sources and concerned commentators will be the supporting materials.

## **Time Line and Schedule**

### **Organization: Tentative Chapter-Divisions**

Chapter I: Traumatic Concern in Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone*

Chapter II: Exploration of Psychological Trauma in *A Long Way Gone*

Chapter III: Quest for Salvation in *A Long Way Gone*

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By

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