



TRAUMATIC MOTHERHOOD AND SEX TRAFFICKING; A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF TRASI'S 'THE COLOR OF OUR SKY'

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Abstract

This study examines the interconnected nature of traumatic motherhood, disempowerment, and sex trafficking through the textual analysis of Amita Trasi's critically acclaimed novel 'The Color of Our Sky'. The research intends to investigate the lived experiences of trafficked women and their experiences of compounded trauma when their identity of motherhood is confronted with coercion, loss, trauma and systemic exploitation. Drawing on Judith Herman's trauma theory, the study highlights how disempowerment of trafficked women as mothers constitute the core of traumatic experiences, most particularly when they are unable to safeguard or nurture their children according to their will. Alongside Herman, Adrienne Rich's theoretical distinction between motherhood as institution and motherhood as lived experience provides a triangulation in critical framework to investigate how patriarchal and exploitative systems weaponize women's reproductive role to further subjugate them. Through close reading of the text, the analysis foregrounds how the novel depicts motherhood not only as a source of suffering under trafficking but also as a tenuous pathway to resistance and survival. The study argues that trafficked women's maternal experiences represent traumatic motherhood, where grief, pain, and loss are compounded by structural violence. By integrating trauma and feminist theories, this research contributes to the broader discussions on gender, trauma, motherhood and literature's role in illuminating the silenced experiences. Ultimately, the paper underscores that motherhood in the context of sex trafficking is both a site of systemic oppression and continuous resistance against trauma.

Keywords: traumatic motherhood, sex trafficking, disempowerment, Judith Herman, Adrienne Rich, *The Color of Our Sky*

1 Introduction

*"To be a mother is to forever walk with your heart outside your body,
and sometimes that heart is dragged through fire"*

—Elizabeth Stone

Motherhood, idealized as a site of nurturing, protection, and continuity, oftentimes assume a profoundly different meaning when located within the brutal realities of sex trafficking. In the contexts of coercion and exploitation, women's reproductive identities are not only disrupted but also further weaponized as the instruments of control. The institution of sex trafficking exposes women to compounded forms of violence i.e. physical, sexual, emotional, as well as economic—that reverberate into their roles as mothers (Zimmerman et al., 2011). Within this nexus, most of their challenges related to motherhood are marked by trauma, disempowerment, and grief, as trafficked women often face circumstances such as forced abortions, forced pregnancies, separation from children, and the impossibility to provide safety and care under the oppressive conditions (Oram et al., 2016).

The psychological aspects of motherhood in the trafficking survivors reflect what Judith Herman (1992) describes as "the core experiences of trauma: disempowerment and disconnection." Trafficked women as mothers are denied the autonomy to protect their



children, not only are their reproductive rights frequently violated, but the very act of mothering also becomes intertwined with memories of violence and trauma (Choi et al., 2015). Adrienne Rich's (1976) critically presented the distinction between motherhood as an institution that is regulated and controlled by patriarchal systems—and motherhood as an experience which represents the intimate, lived bond with children, offers a very useful framework for the understanding of trafficked mothers experience of severing the two dimensions. Within trafficking, the institution of motherhood is often reduced to reproductive exploitation, whereas the experience of motherhood is marked by traumatic rupture.

The challenges are multiplied as trafficked women often endure compounded trauma alongside traumatic grief that arises from the loss of children through forced separation, in the form of forced abortions, or a general inability to parent due to systemic constraints (Robinson, 2016). This form of traumatic motherhood disrupts the natural trajectory of maternal attachment and care, leaving the survivors quite vulnerable to any long-term psychological effects i.e. depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and identity fragmentation (Hossain et al., 2010). Hence their role as a mother, for trafficked women often becomes a painful reminder of systemic violence, instead of providing resilience. Although in some cases, the maternal longing also catalyses survival strategies and motivates resistance (Baldwin & Power, 2020). The socio-cultural dimension of trafficking intensifies these challenges. In South Asian contexts such as India, where Amita Trasi's *The Color of Our Sky* is situated, the intersection of gender, caste, and poverty magnifies women's vulnerability to trafficking and limits their maternal agency (Roy, 2021). Mothers who attempt to reclaim their children from trafficking or resist exploitative systems often confront stigma, blame, and ostracization from communities (Brown, 2022). Thus, motherhood in trafficking is not merely an individual psychological struggle but also a socio-political condition shaped by structural violence.

Literature as a representative of society, provides a powerful space to represent and interrogate these realities of trafficked mothers. Novels such as Trasi's *The Color of Our Sky* depict trafficked women with their maternal longing, and resilience. Such narratives further highlight how motherhood, even in the traumatic contexts, has an ability to serve as a site of hope and identity reconstruction, aligning with theories of post-traumatic growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). The maternal bond, though fractured, sometimes act as a source of resistance against complete psychological collapse, suggesting pathways toward possibilities.

This study illustrates the challenges of motherhood in sex trafficking keeping in view Herman's trauma theory and Rich's feminist critique of motherhood. It argues that trafficked mothers occupy a weak position where maternal identity is simultaneously a site of violence and violation as well as hope. By analysing these complexities through literary representation, the paper aims to foreground the silenced narratives of trafficked women as mothers for the deeper understanding of traumatic motherhood as both an individual and collective reality.

2 Literature Review

Scholars across the fields of public health, psychology, as well as literary studies analyze sex trafficking through the dual lens of psychological trauma and the politics of motherhood. Judith Herman's framework positions trauma as "an affliction of the powerless," producing disempowerment, dissociation, and disrupted memory, the conditions that shape the caregiving experience and the capacity to narrate one's life (Herman, 1992/2015). Adrienne Rich presented her idea of the difference between motherhood as lived experience and as a patriarchal institution which clarifies women's maternal identities are organized, monitored,



controlled and sometimes weaponized in systems of sexual control (Rich, 1976). When brought together, these frameworks expose how trafficked mothers face both the neuropsychological harm as well as institutional constraints making it complicated for them to survive.

Empirical studies often document the depth of trauma among women with trafficking histories. Hossain et al. (2010) found high rates of depression, anxiety, and PTSD among trafficked women, while Oram et al. (2012) also showed through a systematic review, that violence exposure and coercion are tightly connected to the severely ill mental health. Zimmerman, Hossain, and Watts (2011) further proposed a socioecological model that links the recruitment, transport, and exploitation to various health harms, including both the reproductive and perinatal stressors. In South Asia, Tsutsumi et al. (2008) quantified the psychological issues such as PTSD, anxiety, and depression among Nepali sex trafficking survivors, with worse mental-health profiles among those trafficked into sexual exploitation, underscoring how institutionalized sexual coercion intensifies the psychological injury (cf. Rich, 1976).

Specific research on the topic of Motherhood-shows how trauma alters the process of caregiving, reflective functioning, and infant outcomes. Schechter et al. (2005) reported that maternal violence-related PTSD distorts the mental health of their children by reducing reflective functioning, while later it linked the maternal PTSD and neural issues to children's symptoms of PTSD (Schechter et al., 2017). Perinatal studies often identify the measurable obstetric risks: prenatal PTSD is associated with lower birthweight and shorter gestation (Seng et al., 2011) and elevated risks for the preterm birth in meta-analytic evidence (Sanjuan et al., 2021). Reviews also show that prenatal PTSD significantly increase the likelihood of poor prenatal care and health-risk behaviours (Morland et al., 2007), compounding vulnerability for trafficked mothers who already face structural barriers to services (Hossain et al., 2010; Oram et al., 2012).

Within Trauma narratives the fragmented temporality, and silence are central to how maternal subjectivity is quite repeatedly represented in literature. Caruth (1996) theorizes trauma as an experience for a specific community, a group of people that returns belatedly, while Whitehead (2004) mentions in his work that contemporary fiction uses nonlinear form of organization for encoding the traumatic memory. Other than Whitehead, Vickroy (2002) also talks about traumatic fiction i.e. such texts bring into attention the affective life over plot completion, a strategy that is aligned with Herman's emphasis on testimony and meaning making as preconditions for regained agency (Herman, 1992/2015). Luckhurst (2008) adds that the narratives often stage the resistance by converting aesthetic form into ethical attention. These insights help read stories of trafficked mothers as narratives of struggle to secure voice within the constraining institutions (Rich, 1976), where naming, remembering, and mothering are all politically upsetting.

Cognitively, trauma challenges the coherence yet does not, in any way, eliminate the possibility of organized remembering. Rubin, Berntsen, and Bohni (2008) proposed a memory-based model of PTSD in which the intrusive recollections coexist with the efforts for narrative integration. Later, their work presented that the autobiographical memory for stress can retain structure even when saturated with the symptoms (Rubin, 2011). Such findings further resonate with the qualitative reports that trauma-exposed women as mothers seek trauma-informed care for the acknowledgement of both fear and agency (Muzik et al., 2013). MacKinnon et al. (2018) demonstrate that the style of maternal attachment moderates' postpartum PTSD symptoms. This further implies the fact that the relational histories as well as "institutional" conditions of motherhood Rich (1976) critiques, shape the possibilities of recovery.



At the level of context, Panter-Brick (2014) argues for interdisciplinary approaches to risk and resilience, culturally grounded, reminding scholars that both trafficking and mothering are embedded within the social ecologies of poverty, migration, and gender, the few of the domains Herman theorizes as the sites of disempowerment and compounded trauma (Herman, 1992/2015). When the research is centred on trafficked mothers, the two frameworks converge: Herman further clarifies on the psychological mechanics of helplessness alongside dissociation; whereas Rich explains how the maternal authority is socially organized and constrained. Taken together, they guide the analysis towards structural accountability (laws, Labor markets, kinship norms) while also explaining the micro-level phenomena (flashbacks, impaired reflective functioning, altered bonding). the use of motherhood as a tool to deprive women from their rights, to make them feel helpless and disempowered to the point of debate causing them to suffer from compounded trauma where they not only suffer physically but emotionally and psychologically as well.

3 Methodology

The method of textual analysis proposed by Alan McKee is used for the understanding and analysis of text in the context of selected theoretical framework. Alan McKee (2003) in his proposed model of textual analysis defines textual analysis as a research method which helps understand how cultural meanings are produced and conveyed and then further interpreted through texts. Unlike quantitative approaches, textual analysis is an interpretive and qualitative method, focusing on how the texts help construct reality and further shape the audiences' perceptions of the world. McKee stressed repetitively, that this method of analysis does not in any way, aim to uncover a single, objective truth within a text but rather helps explore its possible meanings within the specific social and cultural contexts. By treating the texts as representations that embody both ideologies and values. Additionally, it carries certain cultural codes, as researchers using the method of textual analysis can examine how the images, narratives, and symbols further reinforce and challenge the dominant discourses (McKee, 2003; Rose, 2016). This makes textual analysis particularly very useful for the study in the field of media, culture, and literature where meaning is not fixed at all, rather negotiated between the text and the reader.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Judith Herman's trauma theory provides a foundational lens for the understanding of profound psychological disruptions that are faced by sex trafficking victims, also dealing with the hardships of motherhood in the selected work of fiction. Herman (1992/2015) argues that the essence of trauma actually lies in the **disempowerment and disconnection of victims**, as these victims of severe forms of trauma tend to lose their sense of agency and are rendered helpless in circumstances beyond their control. This loss of power is particularly acute when women are unable to protect or nurture their children, a condition that replicates the original trauma of helplessness (Herman, 2015, p. 138). Trauma isolates, silences, and fractures relationships, leaving mothers vulnerable to cycles of fear and grief. For trafficked women, the inability to safeguard their children, coupled with the stigma of their exploitation, deepens this isolation and reinforces a state of compounded trauma. Herman further emphasizes that the process of recovery can only take place in relational contexts where the power is restored and the voice of the victims is finally reclaimed, making maternal role both an experience holding vulnerability as well as huge potential for resistance and resilience.

Adrienne Rich in her work titled '*of Woman Born*' (1976) complements Herman's framework by distinguishing between two different aspects of motherhood i.e. **motherhood as an institution** and **motherhood as a lived experience for women**. While the institutionalized form of motherhood has always been used to control women, according to history. It is because it binds them in dependency, and takes away their autonomy (Rich, 1976, p. 42), the lived experience of motherhood is often seen as a potential source of strength, resistance, and meaning. In the specific context of sex trafficking, motherhood becomes doubly fraught: as trafficked women are often deprived of their autonomy and control over their circumstances, further coerced into reproductive roles under extremely exploitative systems. This further emphasizes on Rich's critique of motherhood as a patriarchal tool of disempowerment. Yet, even within these constraints, the maternal bond can become a focus of resilience and agency, as women resist to gain control of their identity through their children. By integrating Herman's insights on trauma alongside Rich's dual conception of motherhood, this study frames traumatic motherhood within the context of sex trafficking, both a site of systemic disempowerment as well as a fragile yet vital ground for resistance, healing, and resilience.

4 Analysis

'*The Color of our Sky*' by Amita Trasi, is a work of fiction based on the life of the protagonist named Mukta, daughter of a lower caste village prostitute. Her mother lives a life she dares not to share with her young daughter as men visit her to fulfil their sexual desires, Mukta is forced to stay outside the house. As she recollects "*I wasn't allowed to enter the house. I was to sit in the backyard on the cold, concrete slab that would become my bed for the night. I would eat my food there and sleep there*" (Trasi, 2017, p.18) although Mukta informs us of the ritual in a casual tone it is reflected in the next few lines the depth of pain she felt whenever she was forced to leave her own house and spend the whole night alone, outside her own house while her mother was inside with a man. At a tender age of seven she was left out at night as a ritual but every time this happened, she recorded that "*sitting there, watching the moon as lonely as me, I would often notice the ache that crept in my heart*" (Trasi, 2017, p.18). If she felt this heart ache every time, she was left outside for the night one can only imagine the pain of her mother who had to repeat this act of cruelty towards her young daughter every other night. Although she was the one to force her daughter to sit outside, it was not her own choice, it was the only way she could protect her daughter from witnessing inappropriate encounters with drunk, lustful men who raped her mother, violated her every night.

This act of cruelty was her only way of protecting her girl from the nightmare of the life she was forced to live. As when Mukta, being a child filled with curiosity opened the door of house without her mother's permission, witnessed the "crumpled, unmade bed, smell of alcohol" and "*hairy ankles of a man entwined with Amma's*" which brought many questions to her innocent mind. The questions her Amma had no answers to. Mukta's suffering made her amma guilty, every time she asked her to stay outside as when she finally opened the door to her Mukta remembered that "*she swept me in her arms and kissed me, apologizing for the night*" (Trasi, 2017, p.19). Despite feeling the guilt, she did this every time, to save her daughter from the questions that now intrigued her and made her inquire about the men who visited her mother and why.

It was Mukta's grandmother who decided to tell her about the trade they were a part of. A family ritual of becoming village prostitutes. While her mother walked in saying "*why don't you tell her how your life was different and how despite that you pushed your daughter into this trade*" (Trasi, 2017, p.21). As she uses the word push it becomes very clear that it was a

decision forced on her, a generational burden of trauma that was transferred to her by her mother, the one she did not want her daughter to carry at any cost. This is why when the brothel owner from Mumbai comes to their house to see Mukta and check for her beauty her ‘Amma appeared out of nowhere’ and gave her command “*go inside, Mukta, and don’t come outside until I call you*” (Trasi, 2017, p.25). After sending her in she was the one to deal with her perpetrator as she said she expected her daughter to go to Mumbai, to their brothel.

Adrienne Rich in her work titled ‘*of Woman Born*’ (1976) claims that “*Motherhood is earned, not simply endured; it is a process of conscious resistance to the institution which seeks to contain it*” (Trasi, 2017, p. 280). Here in this instance and the ones mentioned earlier it is observed that Mukta’s mother is in an act of conscious resistance where she is trying her best to save her daughter from holding the same future as hers. This is her process of earning her motherhood as she roared in response to the brothel owner, “*I am not sending my daughter anywhere. I will offer you tea and then I would like you to leave*” (Trasi, 2017, p.25). the response was final; her words spoke of a certain authority that she lacked earlier. She was a mother, the kind who fought the world for the sake of the safety of their kids. Later on, when madam called Mukta, in a threatening tone and Mukta complied she was once again intercepted by Amma, who stopped her midway, questioning the brothel owner “*what do you want?*” (Trasi, 2017, p.26). While she herself was powerless for the fate decided for her, she didn’t want to let her daughter go easily.

The resistance was met by violence as the man who came with madam.

“*Strode towards amma and hold her hands behind her. Amma struggled and yelled at him. ‘Let me go’ she yelled at him. He was stronger and looked at me as if I were a mere fly to be swatted away. He picked up amma like she was one of my cloth dolls and carried her inside, tied her hands with a rope, and left her bound there*” (Trasi, 2017, p.27).

This encounter further led her to undress Mukta, seeing her naked body only to check for how much money she could make as a prostitute. As Herman points out in her work trauma and recovery that “*When the survivor is unable to protect her child, she relives the essence of the trauma: helplessness.*” (Herman, 2018, p. 138) hence this act of helplessness traumatized both, the mother as well as the daughter as they both understood the bare truth of their lives and the helplessness that came with it. At the immature age of ten, she was exposed to the truth her mother never wanted her to know about her life. As she was unable to protect her daughter, they both got very silent, afraid even “*there was a distant look in our eyes. We were afraid that if our eyes met even for a second the bitter memory of the day would come spilling out*”. It was her guilt for not being able to do a better job as a mother that shamed her. It was her desperation to save her daughter that led her to think of every possible way to get her out of this life... Her purpose of life was to provide a better life for her, the life she could not get but wanted desperately for her daughter.

As Rich points out, “*Motherhood as an institution has ghettoized and degraded female potentialities. Motherhood as experience can be a source of power.*” (Rich, 1976, p. 13). Hence it is not the experience rather the institution of motherhood that puts women in a powerless position where they are forced to look at it as a source of weakness and compromise. Although she was failing as a mother with her inability to protect her daughter from danger, it is to be considered why and how it was her responsibility only to protect Mukta. It is rather the responsibility of the whole community, her father as well to make sure an eight-year-old girl is not forcefully taken and raped. However, it is the community that enables such perpetrators and makes such crimes tolerable while putting all the pressure on mothers to protect their daughters when they themselves are in a vulnerable position. Motherhood is rather a source of



power and Mukta's Amma exhibits that power when she decides to take charge and devises a plan to save her daughter.

"I will call your father. I don't know which part of Bombay he lives in... your grandmother has promised to give me a telephone number where i can call him... I am sure he will understand how desperately I want you to get away from this life. I want it to be different for you. I want it to be better" (Trasi, 2017, p.29).

Amid chaos it is her will power, her strength that she is trying to devise ways through which she could help her daughter have a better future. A future where she does not have to get raped and abused every other day. However, when she goes to Mukta's fathers house she is stopped at the gate by security, mocked for belonging to a lower caste but she stood her ground "*I wont go until i meet sahib.... I will not go. You cannot make me go*" (Trasi, 2017, p.47). the scene finally ends when despite all her efforts she is once again rejected, as Mukta's father refuses to acknowledge them, let alone help them and Mukta meets the fate her mother dreaded as she is taken to Mumbai only to be raped and disgraced when she was supposed to enjoy her childhood.

Once she was brought back, she witnessed that "*It was Amma she was standing there, her hands trembling from sickness, her agony spread on her tired face*" (Trasi, 2017, p.79). the reason for which she was persistent, i.e. to save her daughter from having the same fate as hers was gone. Now that she knows she couldn't save Mukta from getting raped she had no reason to stay hopeful she had lost all hope. As Rich claimed in her work that "*To bear children into a world that will not respect or protect them is an act of grief as well as love.*" (Rich, 1976, p. 268) it was the moment of realization for her that alongside her life, her daughter's life was also destroyed, and she couldn't help but feel powerless and she shouted and screamed in front of the whole village blaming them for her helplessness. "*All your upper casts are responsible for allowing us to rot... you destroyed my daughter too*" (Trasi, 2017, p.79). This hopelessness ultimately killed her; she could not contain her anger any longer and was brutally beaten by the villagers. Mukta's mother did not expect the villagers to listen to her or to help her and her daughter. All she wanted was to share her despair that filled her heart for knowing that this will ultimately be the fate of her daughter, for being born to her.

As Mukta's mother dies, she is taken to the city, where she spends a few years of her life. However, her fate meets her once again as she is abducted and sold once again to a brothel where life once again becomes a burden. She is beaten, raped and kept in isolation over there until her spirit is broken. Being a woman her journey of motherhood starts as she longs to have a baby, a child who she may call her own, her only chance of having a family as for such women a conventional family is not possible to exist. The readers are informed of her struggles as she shares with one of the customers that "*I was in the hospital during one of my abortions... Madam doesn't allow a lot of us to have children. She hates pregnant women. It's bad for business*" (Trasi, 2017, p.277). The reproductive system of women is also controlled by their perpetrators, along with their bodies as they are forbidden to conceive. However, she points out that

"Despite all the precautions we take at times we just end up pregnant. So, most of us go through abortions. But this time I narrowly escaped with my life as usually they call midwives to perform it, we get a day's rest and back to work" (Trasi, 2017, p.277).

What one may find horrifying in this instance is the causality of the way information is dismantled. As if it is an everyday, routine procedure for them to get rid of their unborn babies as if they meant nothing. One might mistake them for not wanting to become mothers.

However, she goes on to share her inner thoughts, her pain, her ache, a longing to become a mother every time she conceived. The helplessness, to make choices for one's own self, the choice to become a mother or to kill your fetus in the womb becomes trauma, as she pointed out "*Trauma isolates; the victim is left alone with her powerlessness.*" (p. 53). The trauma is compounded as here the victims of sex trafficking face the trauma of sexual abuse and violence, which if leads to a pregnancy is another trauma. The lack of autonomy to keep or abort their pregnancy is yet the highest form of trauma as Mukta records

"For a woman, it's never easy losing a life she could have brought into the world; a life that was crushed even before it had the chance to blossom. Sometimes it was about the little lives I had lost. When I looked at children playing in the brothel grounds I would feel a deep void within me, as if an ache was spreading from my womb and reaching my heart. I missed those little lives that would have had voices, and little hands and feet and bright smiles if they were ever allowed to be born" (Trasi, 2017, p.280).

Here her longing for motherhood, to have a child is revealed as she wished hard to hold her own blood. So when she gets pregnant the next time, she tries very hard to convince madam to allow her to have this baby. She kept pleading and begging for permission although the reaction of madam to this news was recorded as "*Madam stomped into my room, yanked me off the cot and hit me. 'How will you earn money? You can't have this child'*" (Trasi, 2017, 285). While she insisted on keeping this baby she was quite aware of the consequences, the quality of life she would be able to provide to her future child knowing the dread her own life had been, she realized it was less than acceptable for her to even want to have a child as she knew that "*death should have been preferable to the life i was living. But here I was -, wanting to bring another life into this cruel world'*" (Trasi, 2017, p.285). However, this didn't stop her from having a child. While feeling guilty, and selfish at the same time she did end up becoming a mother to a tiny baby girl, who was now at her disposal and the ones who owned her. "*She was so tiny when she was handed to me, her eyes barely open, her mouth constantly open to let out cries from the shock of leaving my safe womb and arriving into this difficult world'*" (Trasi, 2017, p.304)

While she felt excited to become a mother, she didn't realize until her baby was born that she had done something extremely dangerous. Motherhood for trafficked women is not a source of strength rather a double-edged sword where they must see their child suffer in front of their eyes. They already know what will become of their children as they see them grow up in brothels, around pimps and prostitutes, surrounded by men with lust on their minds. While Mukta longed to become a mother, it was only after she held her baby in her arms, she understood the gravity of the decision she made by bringing a fatherless child to the world. Being a mother who was a slave to a brothel herself, Her inner turmoil is described as

"I felt the overwhelming joy when they placed my baby in my arms. But that was also the moment when the shock at what I had done set in. I had brought an innocent life into a world that wouldn't treat her well. I had thought about it, but the dismay of my decision was apparent to me when my child was born" (Trasi, 2017, 305)

Not only did she understand her own fears, but it also reminded her of a childhood memory where a dead baby girl was found on the side of the street near their house. While she and Tara were the ones to find that dead baby, it shocked the whole community for the ruthlessness of a woman for leaving her infant to die on the road. At that time, they didn't understand how it was possible for a mother to abandon such a tiny baby, that was a part of them however she says that "*It was only now that i truly understood the mother who had let her own child die. I understood how she must have decided that it was best for the little girl'*" (Trasi, 2017, p.305).



The darkness of her thoughts brings chills to one's spine as she feels an extensive amount of guilt holding her newborn, her selfishness eating her up for giving life to the innocent girl who will have to endure what she does not deserve.

As Rich, 1976 says that *"Women have been controlled through their children, bound to an endless cycle of dependency that serves patriarchal needs."* (p. 42) Now that Mukta was a mother she was more vulnerable than ever, if resistance was dangerous before, now it was unthinkable. She could not risk losing her daughter in the darkness of this brothel, she had to do everything the way they asked her as she could not risk losing Asha, her daughter, the only ray of hope (literally and metaphorically) in her life. It became rather even more traumatic for Mukta to be with men, getting raped by the lustful men, as *"Every evening they took her away I would think of her sweet gurgles all through the night, hear her cries as i went through then ordeal of my profession"* (Trasi, 2017, p.328). It broke her to be at the place where she once was as a daughter of a prostitute. Left alone, outside the house, feeling an ache spread in her chest. It was traumatic for her to leave her daughter every night only to realize this must be what her Amma went through, thinking about her the whole time, while she entertained customers at night.

As Asha *"learned to remain hungry through the night"* and *"adjusted her time to Madam's feeding schedule"* her mother had bigger fears now (Trasi, 2017, p.328). The fear which controlled her and traumatized her further was, what if they take her away? as she knew they eventually will! just the way she was taken, despite her mothers' efforts and resistance. While she is afraid of losing her daughter she is unable to keep up with the growing mind and thoughts of Asha as she questioned her one day out of nowhere *"Did they do the same thing to you that makes so many women scream here? She sat up watching my face and I had to hold back my tears"* (Trasi, 2017, p.332). It was the moment of illumination for her as she realized that "I had pretended that she was unaware of this life. The irony was that our terrible lives were all out in the open. How could she have not known? And yet, I didn't want her to know" (p.331). her internal conflict, the constant struggle of knowing that she will be unable to save her daughter, and her need to protect her from her surroundings is the major cause of psychological trauma as pointed out by Herman i.e. *"The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma."* (Herman, 2018, p. 1). Mukta was at war with herself, however what's ironic is that she is at the exact place where her mother once was dealing with the traffickers/brothel owners trying to save Mukta.

The day she dreaded the most, for as long as she could remember, came and her daughter was not brought to her in the morning and she was told that she would have to wait for a few days. While she asked them to bring her daughter she was forcefully moved to her room. She wanted to resist, wanted to shout and scream just like her mother did once, for her. However she could not resist as she knew resistance in this place was futile, if it was possible for her to have her way she would have taken the stand for herself long before giving birth to Asha. While knowing that resistance is futile she could not help herself but think that *"I could have insisted on knowing what they were doing with her but the guards would have beaten me for days..."*. While she knew for sure how she would meet the same fate as her mother if she tried to resist and demand her daughter back, it still broke her completely to realize she was not able to do anything for her child, her Asha who she was responsible for bringing into this world. The guilt and shame for her act of cowardice was too much for her in the coming weeks and months as she says *"It tears my heart everyday, more than anything else, that I wasn't brave enough to endure those beatings for my child"* (Trasi, 2017, p.337). no doubt she felt like a failure, as



Asha's mother; the one who didn't deserve to be her mother for she failed her, by being helpless and miserable.

5 Findings and Recommendations

The traumatic experiences of sex trafficking victims go beyond the limitations of their bodies as they face psychological trauma alongside physical and sexual trauma. Motherhood adds to their burden with added responsibilities and unforeseen guilt it brings with the pleasure of having a baby to hold and love. *'The Color of Our Sky'* is a story of two women across generations dealing with similar trauma as they venture on their journeys of motherhood. Mukta, a victim of sex trafficking just like her mother deals with the compounded trauma of being violated physically and sexually while dealing with the pressures of childcare and anticipation of a dark future for her daughter. Motherhood for women like Mukta brings a lot of pressure, mother guilt and self loathing as they feel responsible for the safety and well being of their kids while living the lives of slaves. There is need for research to understand the ways motherhood is a source of power and resistance for sex trafficking victims as claimed by the theorists.

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