

A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF THE INCLUSION OF TRAUMA THEORY IN COURSES ON LITERARY CRITICISM IN SRI LANKAN TERTIARY EDUCATION

JWKID. Jayasundara¹

Trauma studies gained traction in 1990s and its impact is clearly seen in literature and cultural studies. Trauma studies draws on Freudian psychoanalysis, interpretations and definitions in terms of trauma. Literary trauma theory is predominantly used in literary criticism to analyze fiction saturated with trauma and violence. The key theorists in trauma literary theory are Geoffrey Hartman, Roger Lockhurst, Soshana Felman, Cathy Caruth, Ted Morrissey etc. This study examines as to why and how trauma theory can be used as a literary framework to assess the Sri Lankan postcolonial experience as reflected in Sri Lankan English, Tamil, and Sinhala novels, specifically written during and after the Sinhala and Tamil ethnic conflict. The study is qualitative research which utilizes document analysis as a research method. Policy documents on Humanities and Social Sciences, language policy planning and quality assurance of Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in Sri Lanka were analyzed. One of the key findings of the research is the absence of references to the trauma theory in policy documents on Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), which set the guidelines that stipulate module/degree outcomes in literary criticism modules/degree programs involving the development of students' emotional intelligence. The study highlights that the Sri Lankan texts can be analyzed in the classroom through cultural trauma theory since it provides an analytical framework to identify the events that challenge the core values of a community leading to the rupture of sense of the belongingness within the members of the community. This study recommends that trauma theory should be extensively taught and researched in Higher Education Institutes in Sri Lanka to further national harmony, territorial integrity, and reconciliation within a multicultural society. The study recommends that the assessment of traumatic knowledge should be a key benchmark stipulated for a graduate profile designed for degree programs on literary criticism, cultural studies or language studies.

Keywords: Literary Criticism, Fiction, Sri Lanka; Trauma; Violence

¹ isharajayasundararecovery@gmail.com