

Talaq from the Womb: Identity and Trauma in “Heart Lamp”

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the idea that ‘a daughter is another person’s wealth’ is a sentiment that has always stalked women in life and death. The ‘female’ identity has forever shifted and changed in accordance to the man she’s associated with, as her father’s daughter, as her brother’s sister, her husband’s wife, her son’s mother and finally, both as tribute and site of war. This paper seeks to examine the maltreatment faced by the common Muslim women of India, by referring to Banu Mushtaq’s short story, “Heart Lamp.” The trauma of Mehrun is analysed as a woman who is abandoned by her infidel husband, and her natal family who refuse to accept her as their daughter and sister. She is humiliated, abandoned, traumatized, and she remains grasping for acknowledgement and identity. Through thorough analysis of the story, Mushtaq exposes the greater structures that influence a woman’s struggle to matter and belong. It is also an exploration of generational trauma, that festers and enmeshes itself in a woman’s self-worth, and becomes life and death. A close reading of the text through feminist and trauma theory has been applied to understand the “obedient woman” in an Indian society.

Keywords: Trauma, Acknowledgement, Identity, Struggle, Association.
