

## Psychological Concern in Elie Weisel's Novel "Day"

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper presents psychological concern in Elie Weisel's novel Day. Most of the Weisel's work deal with the life of Holocaust. The protagonists of the Elie Weisel's work are portrayed as suffering, pain, death, Sorrow, grief, misery, anxiety, and torture of Holocaust. In this paper, Weisel emphasises the protagonist Eliezer, who is suffering with the psychological anxiety. Elie Weisel's character in his work Day is supremely psychological concern, if we go through Weisel's life; we analyze the reasons that his works are expression of his life. Elie Weisel is himself the Holocaust survivor. This novel deals with the theme, after survived of the Holocaust, how does one live in the world. And also questions: Is it possible for survivors to forget their past and create a new life for themselves without their family and dear ones. The novel explores suffering, isolation, disaster and self destruction that befall an entire Jewish people during the Holocaust through the Eliezer's eyes. This paper has the modest aim of analyzing the psychological concern of Eliezer, though the Holocaust has over, but still the effects of Holocaust is present in the minds of survivors.*

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Weisel's *Day* deals with the effect of psychological suffering after the Holocaust. It reflects the mentality of a person who always lives in past. The character in *Day*, Eliezer is always tangled in psychological issues and is affected by this problem. Elie Weisel express his feelings which is responsible for his frustration:

That said, certain episodes here are true—that is, taken from life. The accident actually happened to me. I didn't see the taxi coming. The possibility of a suicidal impulse was invented for the sake of the story. In fact, the question has haunted me for a long time: Does life have meaning after Auschwitz? (12)

Eliezer, a Holocaust survivor, narrator and also the protagonist of this novel, who fights for his life after the accident and begins his journey through his past. One evening, Eliezer is crossing the street in Manhattan (New York) and he is hit by the taxicab. He gets injured and spends a week in hospital. After a week, he wakes up and feels pain. To feel this pain, he memorises his old fear and pain again, which he experienced during the Holocaust. He says when he got fraction, people came to meet him in the hospital, they were giving their hands from right, left and above. But Eliezer imagines that everything is not good. He thinks that Holocaust is still going on, people who are sitting near to him they are speaking in the same way like people used to speak during the Holocaust and says, "The same lips whispering the same incomprehensible words. An elderly man seemed to be saying something to me. I think it was not to move. He had close-cropped hair and a moustache" (9).

Though it's been years still he cannot forget his old sufferings of the Holocaust. He tries to search meaning of his life and is bothered by the questions. Eliezer questions; Will his happiness be ever complete? Will he be worthy of love? The part of the Holocaust that suffering, fear and pain, still goes within him. He realises that he would have preferred to die. Dr. Russell visits and tells him that your enemy is weak due to fever, when it will rise, we will kill him. Eliezer express his

infuriation towards God, to the doctor. He says, "Do you believe in God, Doctor?" My question took him by surprise. He stopped suddenly, wrinkling his forehead. "Yes," he answered. "But not in the operating room. There I only count on myself." His eyes looked deeper" (59). Eliezer also memorises his grandmother who had suffered in the camp. He feels the same pain as his grandmother had suffered in the camp. He compares his feeling of being with his grandmother dying in the gas chambers. He says:

I thought grandmother would have understood. It was hot in the airless, waterless chambers. It was hot in the room where her livid body was crushed by other livid bodies. Like me, she must have opened her mouth to drink air, to drink water. But there was no water where she was, there was no air. She was only drinking death, as you drink water or air, mouth open, eyes closed, fingers clenched. (28)

Eliezer's present and future is overwhelmed by what he has witnessed in the past. He feels that world is not changed. It is the same as it was at the time of the Holocaust. Eliezer describes his feeling: "first shot. Nothing. I didn't feel it. Second shot, this one in the arm. Still nothing. I had so much pain that I couldn't even feel the injection" (32). He feels frustration, anger and rebellion. He also doesn't believe in God. He says, "I still blush every time I think of the God makes fun of human beings, his favourite toys" (34).

In spite of this he has a girl friend named Kathleen, who is exquisitely beautiful. He thinks, that she is not more beautiful. "Kathleen no longer had the beautiful black hair that she was so proud of. Disfigured, her face had lost its youth. Her eyes, as if in the presence of death, had grown larger, and, incredibly enough, she had grown a moustache"(10). He memories the first meeting with Kathleen in Paris introduced by Shimon Yanal. On the day they first met, Kathleen asks him to tell her about himself. He says if he will tell her, she will start to hate him but after the hesitation, he tells her about his suffering and all the people he loved who were killed in the

concentration camps. Gradually Eliezer gets recovered. People come to meet him. Kathleen comes and asks about him, during the days when he is in coma. She says to him that you said only one thing "Sarah". Eliezer tells, Sarah is his mother. He says "I am Eliezer, the son of Sarah" (73). He says to Kathleen if would forget his mothers name angel will not come to take him in the heaven. When he was a child he always had lived in fear of forgetting his mother's name. He talks Kathleen that he had not forgotten his mother's name. Hearing this she bursts into tears. He says:

You will be condemned to wander in the sphere of chaos where nothing exists, neither punishment nor pain, neither justice nor injustice, neither past nor future, neither hope nor despair. It is a serious thing to forget your mother's name. It is like forgetting your own origin. Remember; "Eliezer, the son of Sarah, the son of Sarah, Sarah, Sarah". (73)

Eliezer feels lost; it is a fear of the Holocaust. His frustration leads to pain. He finds unity with the outside world. There are many ways to union including his relationship with Kathleen. Eliezer recalls how things were, when he and Kathleen first reunited in New York. They had a relationship. They saw each other every night, often going out and doing social things like going to the theatre. Eliezer notes how much Kathleen has changed from her suffering. He lays to her to try and make her feel better. Despite his trying to cure her, she becomes more and more detached from life and begins to waste away. One night while lying in bed Kathleen proposes

an agreement that they would both help each other forget about the past and learn to live again, to love again; Eliezer absentmindedly agrees with her. This was the night before the accident.

For ten weeks that he is in the hospital, three people visits Eliezer everyday: Kathleen who comes in the evening, Dr. Russell who comes in the morning, and his painter friend Gyula who comes in the afternoon. Gyula is a Hungarian painter who has a very similar world view as Eliezer. Each day Gyula comes to sketch him and tells him stories. It's then that Gyula tells him he needs to stop thinking about the dead people of Holocaust, for they no longer suffer. But Eliezer asks him about the people who have died during the Holocaust. Gyula says now it's time to leave them and care only for the present, his lover Kathleen and friends, like Gyula. Though Eliezer agrees to live in the present but doesn't want to abandon his past. Then on the day before Eliezer is discharged from the hospital, he looks at the sketch and imagines that it is his grandmother who wore black shawl and expression of peaceful suffering. Gyula burns the portrait as a symbolic gesture. In the end, only the ashes are left behind in the room.

Thus, the novel shows the effects of the Holocaust on survivors. This helps to know that suffering is closely connected with the mind. After the Holocaust survival are unable to forget that horror, pain and trauma leading to the psychological problem. The feeling of the suffering and the pain after Holocaust is still felt by Eliezer throughout the novel.

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