

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF WRITING PARTITION TRAUMA BY INDIAN & WESTERN WOMEN

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Abstract: *This study addresses itself to the explication of a very integral and significant aspect of women's writing that has been under-represented in literary criticism. From the description of the traumatic aftereffects of partition and war the present study has been shaped. The present study is significant for its new perspective and vision as it deals with a socio-psychological impact of crimes of violence, abduction, and rape committed during war, partition on the lives of women. It shows how trauma provides a critical lens through which we may begin to read across the multiple literatures of the World without collapsing their specific histories. It is expected that this study provides a fresh insight into the assessment of such representations from the subaltern perspective of trauma.*

Key Words: *objective, gendered narration, relevance of proposed study for society and gendered memory of the partition trauma*

1. INTRODUCTION:

A Comparative Study of Writing Partition Trauma by Indian and Western Women” As an event of shattering consequence, Partition retains its pre-eminence even today, despite two wars on our borders and wave after wave of communal violence. It marks a watershed as much in people's consciousness as in the lives of those who were uprooted and had to find themselves again, elsewhere; indeed it sometimes seems as if two quite distinct, rather than concurrent, events took place at independence, and that Partition and its effects are what have lingered in collective memory. Each new eruption of hostility or expression of difference swiftly recalls that bitter and divisive erosion of social relations between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, and each episode of brutality is measured against what was experienced then. The rending of the social and emotional fabric that took place in 1947 is still far from mended.

Trauma work is also memory work, and the testimony of the survivor does not, in its articulation, determine meaning, and thus close a familial, cultural, or historical chapter. Rather, the speaking of the trauma opens meaning, is productive of meaning, and necessitates a willingness on the part of the listener to bear witness to the catastrophic event, to untangle the narrative knots, and to listen through the gaps and ruptures, which takes precedence over any desire for finality.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Kali Tal, a scholar in trauma criticism and author of *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*, believes that if survivors retain control over the interpretation of their trauma, they can force a shift in the social and political structure. If the dominant culture manages to . . . codify it in its own terms, the status quo will remain unchanged. On a social as well as an individual psychological level, the penalty for repression is repetition.

Caruth, waking from the nightmare is just as disturbing, if not more so, than the dream itself: It is not only the dream that surprises consciousness but, indeed, the very *waking itself* that constitutes the surprise . . . What one returns to in the flashback is not the incomprehensibility of one's near death, but the very incomprehensibility of one's own survival. Repetition, in other words, is not simply the attempt to grasp that one has almost died but, more fundamentally and enigmatically, the very attempt *to claim one's own survival*.

Freud saw that trauma victims often have recurring nightmares of horrific experiences that they would rather not have. Freud posits it is impossible to classify as wish-fulfillments the dreams we have been discussing which occur in traumatic neuroses, or the dreams during psycho-analyses which bring to memory the psychical traumas of childhood. They arise; rather, in obedience to the compulsion to repeat .. to conjure up what has been forgotten and repressed.

According to Lawrence Langer (1982), "The survivor does not travel a road from the normal to the bizarre back to the normal, but from the normal to the bizarre back to a normalcy so permeated by the bizarre encounter with atrocity that it can never be purified again. The two worlds haunt each other"

3. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY:

This study focuses on the specific ways in which women saw and narrated the violence during war and partition, these reveal the difference between women's traumatic experiences and that of men and they illuminate their different perspectives on common experiences. The following aims and objectives the research:

- What is the connection between individual psychic trauma and cultural representations of the traumatic event?
- What does the act of testimony, of bearing witness mean to an individual survivor, to a community of survivors?
- What happens when a survivor's story is retold (and revised) by a writer who is not a survivor?
- How are survivor's stories adapted to fit and then contained within the dominant structure of social, cultural and political discourse?

4. RESEARCH DESIGN:

there are certain experiences that have been thought to be under-represented even while writing trauma of war and its subsequent dislocating effects, effects of violence on individual lives how survivors grapple with normal life, which this study intends to explore. Beginning with this an initial survey belied the hypothesis that war is man's affair and a large corpus of material was found on women writing about the trauma of war so the scope of the present research is narrowed down to concentrate on selected literary representations. An attempt has been also made to see how the representation of this trauma differs culturally. For this, material has been taken from Western women writings about the first and second World Wars and Indian women writings about Partition. Hardly ever and hardly anywhere, have women written history. They have left few accounts, personal or otherwise, and have committed much less to writing than men. Fragments of memory, shreds of a past, remembrances bitter & sweet are strung together in a sequence that often has no chronology, this is a feature of recalling traumatic experience, recollection makes for a reliving of time past even as time present interrupts memory. Everyday time and lifetime overlap and so from the totality of life only a fragment is offered. The study has been based upon data in the form of memoirs, and narratives, stories, books.

Writing partition trauma by Indian women has been taken up in this study, which is different from men writing partition. The accounts of male writers present mostly the historical, administrative and political point of view. Men are not capable of expressing the convictions and memories that women can. The political and historical sequences can produce only factual aspects of war and partition and their consequences. But the methodology in the present study focuses the socio-psychological aspect. The study explores a gendered telling of traumas and experiences. Men write of the relations between communities, races, and broad political realities while women write about their family, children, day today doings, problem, feelings and emotions. six Chapter divided scheme fulfils the aims and objectives the research.

4.1. Gendered Memory of the Partition Trauma:

The human predicament is to remember. It is remembrance or this ability to remember that helps one make sense of one's life, and reconstruct the past in a coherent way. The survivors of holocaust, genocide or political oppression be it the Jewish Holocaust, or the Partition of India, have tried to reconstruct past events through memory, both voluntary and involuntary, and these attempts at reconstruction have given birth to some of the most enduring works of literature. History cannot tell us the whole truth. It conceals more than it reveals. Every generation negotiates this tension between closure and disclosure in its own way. As regards India, the wave of books that have appeared on the theme of Partition in recent years demonstrates that the culture of remembrance is at its peak, and that story-telling has come to be validated as one of the ways in which individuals try to grapple with the past in an age when the canons of historiography and political thought fail to put the past in order. The presence of the past is now more potent than ever before, leading to a multi-prolonged discussion of the Partition and its aftermath.

An act of remembrance is always subjective, partial and fragmentary. Yet it contains moments of truth that illuminate significant facets of life and historical reality. Though societies discover their own ways of dealing with the past and its unbearable memories, their manner of retrieval and commemoration of them shows convergence as well as divergences. What is common in all societies, however, is a longing to transform the memories of the past culturally, through a multitude of artifacts. Holocaust memories have been sought to be kept alive in Israel, America and Germany through monuments that evoke different emotions in individuals confronting them, depending on their cultural and national identities.

5. GENDERED NARRATION OF THE WORLD WARS:

The central action of the story is left unnarrated and is only remotely implied. Given Scharlach's reputation, Jean is understandably concerned about his family when he learns that the German general has taken his town. As it turns out, the Germans have spared both his family and their ancestral home, thanks to the quick thinking of Jean's

fiancee, Yvonne Malo. The story suggests - but only through Yvonne's unwillingness to spend time alone with Jean, and the absence of other likely explanations - that Scharlach spared the family, house, and village because Yvonne Malo allowed him to have sexual relations with her. But this scene, assuming it occurs, is never recounted. Similarly, it is strongly implied that Jean de Rechamp is responsible for the death of the wounded Scharlach, who has by chance been left alone in his care.

These stories expose the damage done to individuals and collectivities in terms of trauma by revealing the extent to which living at the edge of life and witnessing horrific acts of massive death and destruction shape and impact not only victims but the societies to which they return. Attempting to work through these strikingly traumatic experiences further highlights attitudes commonly found in narratives of survival.

6. TRAUMA AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES:

Two different women, two different memories of work during the war: but their experience may not have been so different. During the war, the same woman might feel all of these things: pride in accomplishment, fatigue and resentment, longing for pre-war routines. Their experience was often an ambiguous one, and official policy and contemporary discourse underlined and exaggerated its ambiguities. What the public, including women themselves, wanted from women's work changed abruptly and frequently during the war. Sympathy and praise were shadowed by suspicion and blame. Women workers were victims, they were heroines, cheerfully shouldering patriotic tasks; they were profiteers, making money from male sacrifice; they were victims again, forced by the war and enticed by their own weaknesses to neglect their true duties to their children upon whom rode the future.

It is not surprising that both at the time and in their memories decades later, the women who replaced men in the workforce during the war had difficulty interpreting their own experience. For women, the liberatory potential of the disruption caused by Partition has generally and understandably been obscured by the trauma of violence and dislocation. That survival, and strategies for survival, can also be instrumental in women finding their feet is amply demonstrated by the experiences of Bibi Inder Kaur, who took advantage of facilities and training provided by the government for widows, acquired economic self-reliance but also great self-respect, dignity and the immeasurable satisfaction of "asking no one for charity", bequeathed a legacy of confidence and self-worth to her daughters and spontaneously preferred what she had made of her life to what her life may have made of her, had Partition not intervened and agreed that it had given her the chance to forge her own destiny, to spread her wings. Survival is traumatic, too, because it leaves the victims alive to ask questions that do not have easy answers and to try to understand the horrific experience in pre-constructed ideas about the world.

Thus, figuring out the implications of survival after a near-death experience and comprehending the meaning of the trauma are two struggles that victims grapple with as they begin their lives anew. Women always become victims in the game of war. The social meanings attached to each woman's gender might be so different as to render the project of describing one woman in terms of the other meaningless. As every woman differs from every other woman in more or less significant ways, it is impossible to determine the (racial, class, cultural, etc.) identity of the authentic woman and thus to unify different women under the signifier woman.

At best, she might be able to speak accurately of her own unique experience of being a woman but then she would be speaking as an individual, not as a woman. To speak of women in a substantive way is to risk projecting onto all women one socially dominant construction of woman, thereby distorting the meanings of the lives of more marginalized women.

7. RELEVANCE OF PROPOSED STUDY FOR SOCIETY:

This study addresses itself to the explication of a very integral and significant aspect of women's writing that has been under-represented in literary criticism. From the description of the traumatic aftereffects of partition and war the present study has been shaped. The present study is significant for its new perspective and vision as it deals with a socio-psychological impact of crimes of violence, abduction, and rape committed during war, partition on the lives of women. It shows how trauma provides a critical lens through which we may begin to read across the multiple literatures of the World without collapsing their specific histories. It is expected that this study provides a fresh insight into the assessment of such representations from the subaltern perspective of trauma. My study attempts to raise some general issues with regard to violence and trauma suffered by women. In some way they are moral and philosophical questions about how societies organise their universe and how the individual will often triumphs above adversity.

8. COCLUSION:

The goal is to present a coherent rendering of the relationships between individual trauma and cultural interpretation, using as focus the World war, Partition of India and the phenomenon of sexualized violence against women during war. What is the connection between individual psychic trauma and cultural representations of the traumatic event? What does the act of testimony, of bearing witness mean to an individual survivor, to a community of

survivors? What happens when a survivor's story is retold (and revised) by a writer who is not a survivor? How are survivor's stories adapted to fit and then contained within the dominant structure of social, cultural and political discourse? It is difficult to articulate such questions, and impossible to answer them within the framework of traditional academic disciplines.

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