



## PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA AND WAR MEMORY IN MANTO'S SHORT STORIES: INDIAN PARTITION IN FOCUS

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**Abstract:** The current study has taken into consideration Saadat Hassan Manto's fiction about the Partition of the Indian Subcontinent. This study aims to highlight the narratives of psychological trauma and war memories in the traumatized characters of Manto, caused by the havoc of partition. Manto, an eyewitness of Partition, played a significant role in highlighting the brutality of partition with brutal honesty, reflected in his short stories all those events which propagated violence, murders, rapes, abducting, abusing, psychological scars, horrible emotionality, and the gloomy milieu during the wartime of partition. This study has presented a detailed overview of psychological trauma and war memories in Manto's selected short stories and highlighted those events of despair which resulted in the untold memory of the experience in the victims of partition. The theoretical framework which has been used is Trauma theory, taken from Cathy Carruth's *Trauma Exploration in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996).

**Key Words:** Manto, Partition, Violence, Victims, Psychological Trauma, War Memories.

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### INTRODUCTION

The partition of India which is also known as a "Great Divide" stands as a Holocaust in the history of the Indian Subcontinent. Millions of people were killed, displaced, abducted, migrated, and suffered by the menace of partition. Saadat Hassan Manto, one of the literary witness during the unprecedented killings and violence of partition, used his imaginative faculty very wisely to depict the psychological trauma and war memory of victims of partition and left no stone unturned to unleash the shameful project of partition imposed on Indian Subcontinent by the British Raj. Manto was deeply dejected by the act of partition which inculcated a kind of rebellious behavior upon his personality. Once he stated:

The Partition of the country and the changes that followed left feelings of revolt in me...when I sat down to write I found my thoughts scattered. Though I tried hard I could not separate India from Pakistan and Pakistan from India...my mind could not resolve this question: what country did we belong to now, India or Pakistan. - Manto 1950 (quoted in Mahey 2001: 153).

Saadat Hassan Manto was himself a victim of partition, born in 1912 in India but migrated to Pakistan when the communal riots broke up. It was a hard time for him and was dejected by the evil act of partition but skillfully portrayed his feelings in his writings. Many writers discussed the trauma of partition in their works but Manto's writing is deeply psychological and spotlights the scars of partition which caused a kind of collective neurosis in the minds of the people. The psychological wounds caused by the partition are still living in the minds of the first and second generation.

Manto gathered his courage and explored the inhumanness of people during the horrible event of genocide and massacre of partition. This paper is based on exploring the wide-range effects of partition on the psychological and emotional level and focused on the depiction of psychological trauma and war memory of the victims and traumatized characters in the selected short stories of Manto. This paper draws the attention of the people towards the menace of partition which caused psychological trauma by using the theoretical framework of trauma and memory studies.



## Statement of the Problem

The menace of partition has affected the lives of the people on psychological, emotional, cultural, and social levels. Partition was imposed deliberately by the British Raj, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs to achieve the targets of their stakes which caused psychological trauma and printed the memory of the war in the minds of those people who experienced it. The deep psychological scars of killings, murder, rapes, beatings, the violence of partition are still alive in the first and second generation of both countries, India and Pakistan. Therefore, this paper aims to explore those events and situation which caused the trauma of partition and added a horrible war memory to the minds of people in Manto's selected short stories.

## Research Objectives

Objectives of this research are as follows:

- ❖ To highlight the events which caused the psychological trauma and memories of war in the minds of people during the partition of the Indian Subcontinent.
- ❖ To depict the trauma narratives of traumatized characters in the selected short stories of Manto.

## Research Questions

Research questions of this study are:

**Research Question 1:** What insights can be attained from psychological trauma and war memories during partition in the selected stories of Manto?

**Research Question 2:** How do the traumatic narratives portrayed by Manto claim the experiences of the victims who suffered from the menace of partition?

## Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it draws attention to the devastating event of partition which caused psychological trauma and war memory in the minds of people. Partition of the Indian Subcontinent into Pakistan and India has affected the lives of people very badly on a psychological and emotional level. Most of the writers have depicted the theme of partition in different ways but Manto stand-alone in portraying the trauma of partition in a more humanistic way than any other writers without the influence of any religious or national ideology. He depicted and satirized the madness and violence of people on both sides of the border and gave a clear and impartial picture of human nature during such horrible times. This study attempt to analyze the traumatized characters and traumatic experiences of the people and gives deep insight on the psychological fronts to the victims of partition.

## Delimitation of the Study

Trauma and memory studies is a broad field of knowledge that has been brought forth by many theorists who depict the traumatic experiences and traumatized character during war times or any other act of violence. Hence, this study is delimited to the theory of trauma and memory studies and only focuses on the five short stories of Manto such as Open it, Yazeed, Sahaye, Cold Meet, and Toba Tek Singh. The theoretical framework used for this study has been taken from Cathy Caruth's *Trauma Exploration in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996).



## LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review of the study contains two parts. The first part contains reviews of major critics on the works of Saadat Hassan Manto while the second part is a theoretical perspective that consists of the emergence and salient features of trauma and memory studies.

### Scholarship on Manto's Works

Saadat Hassan Manto (1912-1955) is a prominent writer of Urdu fiction. He depicted different social, political, and moral issues with "brutal honesty" through his fiction. Many famous critics found his work a masterpiece of art and criticized it from different angles. Chhetry authored an article under the title of *Nationalism and Madness: A Study of Saadat Hasan Manto's stories* (2015) has discussed the ideology of nationalism and its impact on people during the partition. She highlighted one of the basic reasons for partition which caused chaos and a catastrophic situation. The idea of nationalism and national pride suddenly prevailed among the people and they became enemies of each other. She criticizes the works of Manto and draws a very thin line of demarcation between nationalism and madness. She beautifully spotlights the instances during partition when skewed nationalism inflicted a jingoist behavior in the minds of the people on both sides of the border. Saha (2016) analyzed the socio-cultural and political dynamics of partition in the works of Manto. She analyzed the ways of different leaders, prompting the idea of partition from a postcolonial perspective. InayatUllah and Iman authored an article and highlighted different discursive strategies and politics of Neo-colonialism. They highlighted the issues of globalization and its impact on Pakistani culture after the partition of the Indian Subcontinent. They criticized very beautifully the discursive strategies used by the United States of America for the exploitations of economic and cultural belief of the newly born independent state of Pakistan. RajPaudel (2018) in his research explored the violence of partition and trauma in Manto's short stories. He mentioned that the trauma of partition changed the socio-political landscape of the Indian Subcontinent in such a way that its repercussions and aftermath effects are still felt by the people in this present age. The massacre, deaths, destructions, and tumult caused by partition affected the lives of millions of people socially, culturally, psychologically, and emotionally. He beautifully highlighted the violence, trauma, and politics of blame during the havoc of partition. Tayde (2019) evaluated Manto's work from a feminist perspective. He criticizes predetermined patriarchal structure prevailed in the world and highlighted the exploitation, marginalization, and suppression of women in the selected stories of Manto. His research is more tilted towards the social reforms and equal rights of women in the Subcontinent. Jokinen and Assadullah (2019) analyzed the psychological aspects of Manto through the lens of his short story *Toba Tek Singh*. They highlighted Manto's experience of partition propagated by his mental illness which is reflected in his short stories. This spotlight the role of Manto's mental illness in his post-partition writings. Fouzia and Mushtaq (2020) evaluated the works of Manto from the perspective of New Historicism. This newly emerging theory of New Historicism addresses the issues of power circulation, representation, and issues of identity and framing of all these issues in the overall power structure. They depicted those aspects of New Historicism which are interconnected with the selected short stories of Manto by identifying and highlighting in different passages.

### Scholarship on Theoretical Perspective

Trauma studies emerged in the early years of the 1990s based on the Freudian psychoanalysis that deals with the extreme experiences and sufferings of people on the emotional and psychological level. Khatri (2003) in his research explores the trauma of partition in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*. He focused on the sensitive and realistic picturization of the trauma of partition in which millions of people were on the flight and almost one million were massacred. Rastegar (2006) explored the trauma of partition in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*. He

explored the trauma of war in the feminist works on the partition. Visser (2011) authored an article that has focused on the project of decolonizing trauma theory in the postcolonial scholarship. Kumar (2016) authored his article that highlighted communal trauma in the literary works of Khushwant Singh and Manohar Malgonkar written about partition. He focused on the comparative analysis of both writers and highlighted different traumatic situations and traumatized characters in their works. Martin (2018) in his article highlighted the relationship between personal and historical trauma in the context of postcolonial Australia. Kishan (2018) in his article analyzed the trauma of partition in the literary works of Khushwant Sing and ChamanNahal. He unfolds the dreary effects of unprecedented violence, displacement, dislocation, abduction, and atrocities of partition in his research.

## METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is reflexive in nature and qualitative in approach which is based on textual analysis of Manto's selected short stories. As qualitative research is based on personal interpretations of the researcher the same has been used by the scholar as well and also mentioned the opinions, ideas, and researches of other scholars for adding value to the conclusion of the study.

For analyzing the text of Manto's selected short stories Trauma theory has been used as a framework for the study. The theoretical framework used for this study has been taken from Cathy Caruth's *Trauma Exploration in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996). The field of trauma studies emerged in the early 1990s as an attempt to construct an ethical response to forms of human suffering and their cultural and artistic representation. Psychological trauma, its representation in language, and the role of memory in shaping individual and cultural identities are the central concerns that define the field of trauma studies (Nasrullah, 2018).

Physical trauma involves an intense injury to the body while psychological trauma involves a deep wound to the mind which causes psychological pain and repressed experience in the unconscious. As Cathy Caruth stated, "Psychic trauma involves intense personal suffering, but it also involves the recognition of realities that most of us have not begun to face" (Caruth, viii). Trauma is a deep scar to the mind and memory of a person or community suffered from horrible and violent circumstances. The history of trauma studies has been traced back to World Wars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century during which soldiers suffered from shell shock, combat stress, and traumatic neurosis. American Psychiatric Association recognized the phenomena of psychological trauma under the title of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder of PTSD.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The trauma of partition has affected the lives of millions of people and people are still get traumatized by those memories and stories. Partition was a catastrophic event that ravaged the minds of the people on a colossal scale not only of victims but of survivors as well. Manto himself was traumatized by the whole project of partition that is why we see so many reflections of psychological and physical trauma in his writings. The researcher is going to discuss the traumatic situation and traumatized character one by one in Manto's selected short stories.

### Trauma and War Memory in 'Sahaye'

This story is about the partition of the Indian Subcontinent and shows its impact on the dignity of friendship between a Muslim (Mumtaz) and Hindu (Juggal). Juggal received a letter from Lahore in which someone has written about the death of his uncle by Muslims there in Pakistan. This news suddenly changed his behaviors to a violent and jingoist man. Before this trauma, they were really good friends and spent most of the time together. As Manto has written, "The news affected him in a bad way" (p.192). Here the character of Juggal was stroked by trauma

and arouse a feeling of revenge in his heart. The image of his uncle appeared all the time in his mind and it was difficult for him to maintain his friendship with a Muslim friend because his uncle was killed by the Muslim community at Lahore. "To be traumatized is precisely to be obsessed by an image or event" (Caruth, 13). Here we can easily relate the psychological balance of Juggal with this statement of Caruth that he was possessed with the image of his uncle in his mind, sometimes alive, sometimes dead that defined him very clearly as a traumatized character caused by the actual event of partition. He captured as "...purely and inexplicably the return of the event against the will of the one it inhabits" (Caruth, 3). In another event in the story when Mumtaz asked Juggal about his intention if the riots broke up in the neighborhood, he said "I might kill you, Juggal said in all seriousness" (p.192). These words awake a feeling of sadness and dejection in the heart of Mumtaz, and he starts thinking about the behavior of his best friend, who was changed in no time by the communal chaos of partition. Mumtaz was also traumatized by the violence of riots and harsh words of his friend and "feel silent, dead silent, and his silence continued for eight days" (p.192) which shows the mental pain he went through on such a horrible day. As Cathy Caruth mentioned about such condition "Freud's peculiar strength was to say what could not be said, or at least to attempt to say it, thus refusing to be silent in the face of unsayable" (Caruth, 18) but here Mumtaz said silent and said nothing.

### **Trauma and War Memory in 'Yazeed'**

*Yazeedis* also witnessing the story of the evil of partition in which a Muslim man, Karim Dad, lost his father and his wife, Jaina, lost her brother during the war of partition but they both responded differently to these traumatic situations. Karim Daad was not so moved by the death of his father rather felt happy and praised his father as a courageous person.

All he knew was that the war had claimed the life of his father, Rahim Dad, whose corpse he had carried on his shoulder and laid to rest in the grave he had dig by a well with his own hands (p.172)

Here the situation is very opposite the traumatized character does not feel any dejection and sorrow for his father rather he is using different defense mechanisms to keep his psychological and emotional balance. This condition can be situated in the understanding of reality and inevitability of death, mostly in the time of partition "psychic trauma involves intense personal sufferings, but it also involves the recognition of realities that most of us have not begun to face" (Caruth, 7). Karim Dad recognized the real and inevitable nature of death in the crucial hours of partition, although he was not in favor of any war still he lost his father. The case with Jaina was different, she lost her brother a year ago in the riots but still, his memories haunt her and leave her traumatized for the rest of her life. His death was a great loss for her but now his memories are causing more deep scars to her mind. As Caruth said "to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed with an image or event" (Caruth, 13).

### **Trauma and War Memory in 'Toba Tek Singh'**

*Toba Tek Singh* is one the most heartrending story by Manto which debunk the effects of the menace of partition which also affected the lives of lunatics. Bishan Singh was a lunatic who was traumatized and puzzled by the act of partition. The Pakistan and Indian governments decided to exchange the lunatics. Bishan Singh was from Toba Tek Singh, Pakistan, but the government was sending him to India just because he was Sikh. This foolish act of both governments was satirized by Manto which caused trauma in the character of Bishan Singh. As Caruth said:

"understood as an attempt to explain the experience of war trauma; for those who undergo trauma, it is not only the moment of the event but of the passing out of it is traumatic; that survival itself, in other words, can be a crisis" (Caruth, 17)

Nobody can understand the gibberish words of Bishan Singh, which is a kind of embodiment of his trauma caused by this act of partition. He was sure after leaving this place he will not survive



and survival itself will become a kind of crisis in his life, therefore he died in “no man’s land” to escape from the trauma of survival.

### **Trauma and War Memory in ‘Open it’**

*Open it* is another pathetic story by Manto, which shows the havoc played by a partition with women depicted the traumatized character of Sakina, Sirrajudin, and the Doctor. In this story, a Muslim girl was raped by a group of Muslim boys so many times that caused, what Caruth called a “double wound”; in her mind as well as in her body. Caruth further discussed that trauma of the mind is more intense than the trauma of the body. The wounds of the body heal after some time but the wounds of the mind leave deep scars on the mind of the traumatized. Sakina was raped so many times when the Doctor asks her father to open the window, Sakina opens her waistband she was suffered from the “collapse of witnessing” which shows the traumatic re-experiencing of the same event. Manto draws a heartrending picture of Sakina as a victim of rape explores the inhumane physical and psychological violence of partition.

### **Trauma and War Memory in ‘Cold Meat’**

In the *Cold Meat*, the protagonist of the story, Esher Singh, experienced a shocking trauma after raping a girl who was already dead. After committing such a heinous crime he was feeling remorse upon his inhumane act which traumatized his character. On the same night, he killed six Muslims during the communal and take that girl from the home and raped her dead body. This story revolves around the trauma of Esher Singh and his sexual psychology that leads him to emotional and psychological destruction. As Caruth mentioned “indeed, not the mere telling, not the mere fact of reporting of the accident, but the witness readiness to become himself a medium of the testimony (Caruth, 39). It was difficult for Esher Singh to tell the truth because his trauma was larger than, more profound, and less definable.

## **CONCLUSION**

To conclude, the violence portrayed by Manto in his work is an objective representation of the trauma of partition. Murdering, rapes, killing, abduction, terror, and other acts of destruction has deeply affected the lives of people but the psychological and emotional level was inevitable for everyone during that actual time of partition. Thus, the works of Manto are not only a representation of partition but also give a deep insight into the minds of traumatized characters in his stories. His short stories are a testimonial record that represented the trauma and brutality of partition with brutal honesty, caused by the communal riots and madness of nationalism. Thus, we attained a grave psychological and emotional insight of terror, horror, gloom, inhumanness, darkness, and despair from his traumatic narrative of partition.

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