



A Taxonomy of Trauma: The Longitudinal Mapping of Memory and Female Identity in '*Tomb of Sand*' and '*Independence*'

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ABSTRACT: The 1947 Partition of the Indian subcontinent created an indelible mark in the historical timeline that has scaffolded a cosmic array of chronicles encompassing Trauma and memory. The intersection of Trauma and memory constitutes a dynamic terrain where the intricate threads of human experience weave a complex tapestry of identity. The nuanced interplay seeks to illuminate the narratives of women's lives from the construct of Partition in the two seminal works, "*Tomb of Sand*" by Geetanjali Shree and "*Independence*" by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Trauma, a pervasive aspect of the human condition, catalyzes the profound exploration of memory through significant discussions of Cathy Caruth. The intricate nature of memory serves as a repository to understand the experiences of women that reverberated during the time of the Partition holocaust. This provides a fertile ground to dissect the female psyche, unravel the Trauma that imprinted layers, and recognize the patriarchal dimensions. This contributes to the broader discourse on gender studies. It offers insights into how literature reflects societal perceptions of female identity and the resilience and agency displayed in their struggles against entrenched gender norms. Scaffolding the societal constructs surrounding femininity and womanhood, the realms of gender become indispensable subjects. Hence, these complexities embedded in the discourses aim to reflect the symbiotic relationship of Trauma, memory, and the intricate tapestry of female identity.

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1. Introduction

To quote the words of Amrita Pritam, "There are many stories which are not on paper, they are written in the minds and bodies of women" (Kishwar and Vanita, *Stories written on the bodies and minds of women: Amrita Pritam's life and work*, 2022). To understand this, memory is a powerful conduit as it is an essential tool to decipher the politics of human suffering during the historical aftermath of 1947. Literature is a monologue to the diaphragm of Partition, which acts as a trajectory for multidirectional understanding and plays a role in converging the face value of traumatic events like Partition. The catharsis of events from the context of memory and Trauma acts as a fulcrum event in the history of mankind to understand the perennial flow of how humans serve as ambassadors in this era. The inherent gendered dimensions of Trauma, according to Cathy Caruth's definition, it is "too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully unknown events" at the time of the event (Caruth, 1997, p. 142), although it returns later. The intricate multilingual fabric of Indian literature necessitates an accommodation of a multidimensional historical narrative encompassing both the centre and the periphery. The convoluted trajectories shaped by colonial enterprise and nationalist fervour paved the way for the evolution of literature, wherein historical anecdotes are intricately interwoven into the literary tapestry.



1947 Partition- Women with a mutilated face- Gendered Violence.

Weblink- <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/1947-partition-woman-with-a-mutilated-face-f-e-chaudhry/cgFYdLfobboLUg>

Religious and social schisms, accompanied by political ambivalence, have been integral to the discourse of the Indian nation-state. The seismic event of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent has unleashed devastating and far-reaching consequences across generations. Living in the aftermath of colonial rule, the Partition literature bears witness to the disintegration of the Indian subcontinent and explores the profound impact on the collective psyche. The artistic expressions of contemporary writers during this period reflect a notable shift, overcoming initial reticence (Nandi, 2011). This literary genre emerges as a testimonial repository, capturing the horrific experiences of victims, their enduring ordeals, and the poignant yearning for their lost homes. While excavating the gendered dimension of memory work from women's perspective, Ashis Nandi (2011) observes in 'Mapmaking' that a significant number of victims adopted silence as their 'psychological defence' (p. xi) against traumatic memories. Alternatively, he describes it as a manifestation of 'cultivated aphasia' (p. xiv), wherein the minds of these individuals became dominated by a deliberate suppression of discourses.

When we try to understand the projection of self and community, it is probably integral to understand the cognitive taxonomy of Trauma and the magnitude of how literal narratives dominate memory (Caruth, 1997). Through her insightful examination of the oral accounts of female survivors of the Partition, Veena Das highlights how traumatized women explained their silence following the Partition by contrasting "the freedom of a girl in her father's house to speak as she wishes with the constraints in the husband's house where she has to be guarded in her utterances." Accordingly, distinguishing between "that in which speech is possible and that in which it becomes taboo" implies that silence is more than just suppressing Trauma (as demonstrated by the testimonies of Holocaust survivors); instead, silence is incorporated into a cultural narrative that equates the traumatic transition from the old to the new to the traumatic transition from the natal to the married home. "Silence was good for the new *watan* (country) to which they had come," as Das (2001) says about Manjeet, a survivor of the Partition, since "when a woman is happily married, carelessly uttered words can disrupt her whole world." She was regarded as a lady whose life might evolve in line with a traditional telos by society. She refused to elicit speech about her experiences in the village where she was ambushed, enabling her to socially "forget" her experiences.

Embracing a more nuanced approach that transcends traditional dichotomous classifications, the female identity and gender constructs are explored to understand the intricate and symbiotic relationship between individual and collective mnemonic processes, particularly within the narrative dynamics unfolding in the aftermath of traumatic events like that of Partition. Focusing on the novels '*Tomb of Sand*' by Geetanjali Sree and '*Independence*' by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, the literary works consciously acknowledge and navigate the complexities inherent in the intersection of memory and history. These novels, situated at the crossroads of memory and history, serve as a poignant example of how the act of recollection, entwined with historical events such as the Great Divide of 1947, can give rise to a unique form

of fictional memoir. The contextual backdrop of significant historical ruptures, such as the Partition, generates a nemesis that echoes through the narratives. In this context, Marianne Hirsch's seminal work, *'The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust'* (2012), introduces the concept of 'postmemory'. Hirsch (2012) articulates how the 'generation after' relates to the personal, collective, and cultural Trauma endured by those who preceded them.

The protagonists of Geetanjali Sree and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni explore the intricacies of a post-traumatic experience, providing insight into the smothered discourse that will affect gender norms in the coming years. The notion of a reaction discharge, however, is not universally attainable. Undischarged memories are proposed to enter a '*second consciousness*' as articulated by Breuer and Freud (2012), where these memories assume the form of secrets- either secluded from the conscious personality or available to it in a highly condensed manner. This oscillation, extending beyond established theories of repetition and catastrophe, resonates deeply with the intricate dynamics of memory, Trauma and the psychoanalytical processes involved in the aftermath of significant historical ruptures for women as they became relics to understand their identity.

Trauma, both individual and collective, serves as a potent force shaping the contours of memory (Caruth, 1997). The mnemonic landscape, thus moulded, becomes a repository for the residue of experiences that reverberate across time and space. '*Tomb of Sand*,' a literary masterpiece that navigates the labyrinthine recesses of human consciousness, and '*Independence*,' a poignant narrative etched against the backdrop of historical upheaval, offer compelling avenues for the examination of Trauma's enduring imprint on memory. Through the prism of these narratives, this research seeks to discern the nuances of gender constructs and the evolution of female identity in the wake of traumatic experiences. The gendered dimensions of Trauma and memory form an intricate tapestry that intertwines personal narratives with broader sociocultural frameworks. Within this contextual framework, the exploration of female identity becomes paramount, as women often bear the disproportionate weight of societal traumas and gendered expectations. '*Tomb of Sand*' and '*Independence*' emerge as literary artefacts that delve into the intricacies of these phenomena, offering a rich terrain for excavation.

The examination of gender constructs necessitates a critical engagement with the sociocultural frameworks that prescribe and circumscribe the roles and expectations assigned to individuals based on their gender. In the context of our investigation, the lens will be focused on the female experience, unravelling the layers of societal expectations, stereotypes and the negotiation of agency within the parameters of trauma-infused memories. '*Tomb of Sand*' and '*Independence*' are poignant literary canvases on which the complexities of Trauma, memory, and gendered identity are vividly painted.

2. Theoretical Overview of the Main Concepts

The partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 had a dramatic impact on history and influenced the numerous forms of narratives that are marked with the symptoms of trauma and memory. The given elements build the interactional structure where the strings of people's lives weave the fabric of subjectivity. As a theoretical analysis goes, this paper discusses women's partition accounts through the lens of Geetanjali Shree's "*Tomb of Sand*" and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's "*Independence*."

After choosing trauma as one of the universal features of human existence, it is possible to further discuss memory with reference to the crucial works by Cathy Caruth. Memory is used to give a framework through which women's lives during the holocaust of the Partition can be understood and how it offers a rich opportunity for analysis of the females' personalities, of layers of trauma, and of recognition of patriarchal features. This analysis adds to the gender studies debates, specifically concerning how literature reflects patriarchal gender constructs and the role and power of women in defiance of those norms.

Thus, this exploration highlights the significance of gender as a topic to emphasize societal constructs of women, femininity, and womanhood. These complexities of the discourses intended to represent the ratios and interconnections between the trauma, memory, and the palimpsest of the female self.

3. Methodology

In order to map the problem of trauma and memory in women's narratives of the 1947 Partition, this study

will use literary analysis as a mode of analyzing the selected texts, psychoanalysis as an employed theory and feminist methodology as the critique. First of all, a bibliographic analysis of "Tomb of Sand" by Geetanjali Shree and "Independence" by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni will be performed accordingly to trace the main themes, motifs, and characterization that describe the women's experience during the Partition. This will be followed by the use of therapist Cathy Caruth's second trauma theory to identify the hidden psychological effects of a tragedy on memory and personality in *War and Trauma: The Psychological Effects of War on the Memory and Identity of Victims*. The analysis of the main themes concerning women's power and strength will follow the principles of the feminist critique in order to uncover patriarchal elements in the given texts. This approach will entail a review of existing literature in gender studies and reports on Partition to situate the outcomes in terms of the female gender and womanhood. Thus, through integrating the listed methodologies, the study is intended to shed light on the relationships between trauma, memory, and female identity, which will enhance the contemporary discussions of gender and cultural memory in post-colonial settings.

4. Memory's Mirage: Decoding Trauma and Identity in '*Tomb of Sand*'

Geetanjali Shree (1957-), an Indian novelist and short-story writer, is well known for her Hindi stories. Her novel, '*Ret Samadhi*' translated as '*Tomb of Sand*' chronicles the poignant narrative of Ma (Chandraprabha Debi), an octogenarian woman who, having lived a life confined to societal roles such as daughter, wife, mother, and grandmother, embarks on a transformative journey of self-discovery. Following the demise of her husband, Ma's withdrawal into silence and her inexplicable disappearance marks the commencement of a riveting tale that traverses familial dynamics and societal expectations. Upon her return, Ma's decision to reside with her unconventional daughter, Beti, signifies a rebellion against traditional norms. Beti challenges societal norms through her open exploration of women's sexuality and becomes the catalyst for Ma's liberation. The familial tensions intensify as Ma resists the expectations imposed by her son, Bade, and daughter-in-law, Bahu, opting instead for the liberating space offered by Beti. According to Simone De Beauvoir (p. 283) in her book "*The Second Sex*", "One is not born but rather becomes a woman," this entails that gender is a social and cultural construct in which women are not fundamentally docile or passive but instead generated by society.

The author, Geetanjali Shree, adeptly captures the intricacies of familial relationships, portraying the shifting roles within the family. The patriarchal authority of Bade contends with the autonomy exercised by Beti, while Ma undergoes a metamorphosis, shedding societal roles to embrace her authentic self. The narrative unfolds against a planned journey to Pakistan, revealing Ma's hidden past linked to the Partition. Shree masterfully explores the tension between tradition and individual freedom through humour and familial dynamics. The characters of Ma and Rosie, a hijra, stand out as vibrant and enduring, challenging societal norms and evoking empathy.

In essence, "*Tomb of Sand*" emerges as a narrative that transcends boundaries—be they national, gendered, or religious. It serves as a profound reminder of shared humanity amidst societal divisions, all while delivering a unique blend of humour and poignancy. Shree's work, brought to life by Rockwell's translation, constitutes a literary exploration that resonates with contemporary themes, making it a compelling and original contribution to literature. Veena Das asserts the pervasive denial of voices of freedom, judgment, self-expression, and independence to a substantial population of South Asian women, as elucidated in her work (Das, 2001). The central protagonist of the discussed novel mirrors this plight, having dutifully fulfilled her maternal responsibilities yet finding herself on the periphery within her own familial and domestic sphere. Although ostensibly attended to by her family members, a discerning examination reveals an underlying apathy that falls short of providing her with a sanctuary characterized by solace and carefree habitation. This lacuna prompts her to disengage from the facade of familial life, symbolically turning her back and aligning herself with the wall. The novel is divided into three sections focusing on the ties of human relations, women and metaphorical dialects like 'wall', 'door', 'window', and 'borders' (Shree, 2023, p. 88). If we choose an illustration from the literature itself, we can understand it well. "A story going to narrate itself. Complete and incomplete in itself, as it is generally the trend of stories" (Shree, *The Tomb of Sand*, 2023)

Shree's narrative vividly portrays the entrenched influence of tradition in legitimizing patriarchal

privileges. The protagonist's marginalization within the family structure highlights the enduring impact of patriarchal norms, relegating women, despite fulfilling conventional roles, to marginal significance. This marginalization facilitates a disconnect between the remembering self and the remembered self. The story layers authentically depict political events and their repercussions, mainly through the remarks and dialogues of the adult world. Maurice Halbwachs's research on "collective memory" asserts that "memory is inherently group-oriented, shaped by continuous reflection and recreation within a shared context" (2013). Scholars often merge "collective memory" with Pierre Janet's distinctions between "traumatized and narrative memory", elucidating how traumatic experiences can disrupt the narrative continuity of memory. The symbolic withdrawal of Maa from familial pretences poignantly illustrates the discord between societal expectations and women's actual experiences, shedding light on the subjectivity of memory formation. Such discrepancies, as portrayed in the novel, prompt a deeper examination of the cultural foundations perpetuating gender inequalities and impeding women's agency.

The narrator undertakes a poignant exploration of the Partition, shifting the focus to the female perspective and elucidating the harrowing experiences of women in the context of violence, dislocation, and displacement. With meticulous skill, she unveils the agonizing exodus that unfolded in the aftermath of the Partition's declaration. This narrative encapsulates how an individual memory transcends to become a cultural phenomenon. Mieke Bal (2012) states, "We invoke the discourse of cultural memory to mediate or modify difficult or taboo moments of the past—moments that nonetheless impinge, sometimes fatally, on the present." Cultural memory demonstrates that memory can be understood as a cultural phenomenon as well as an individual or social one. The narrator's endeavor is not merely a historical account but an intricate exploration of the multi-faceted impacts on women's lives, spanning the social, physical, emotional, psychological, and cultural dimensions. Dr Pragati Sobti and Dinesh Kumar, in their work "*Partition as Memory: Construing Women*" (2022), echoes this sentiment, emphasizing the significance of Ma's narrative in shedding light on the myriad repercussions of the partition catastrophe on women's existence.

In essence, the novel serves as a lens through which one can analyse the intricacies of patriarchal structures within the South Asian context, providing a platform for scholarly inquiry into the multifaceted dimensions of gendered experiences. The author, Geetanjali Shree, foreshadows a tangible example of how custom has reinforced the patriarchal power-

"Shouting is traditionally rooted in the family. Shrieking of elder sons is an old custom. As if masterly right. Custom is absolute. One may not be cruel by heart but he has to don the attire of strictness. It is assumed in the family that Bade's father was more adept in shouting but Bade has not the equal boiling rage. But they have equal pitch of talking." (Shree, *The Tomb of Sand*, 2023, 25)

The intersection of Trauma, memory, and patriarchal structures becomes a crucial analytical framework for understanding the protagonist's predicament. When we look at the dominant struggle of Maa and understand the movement for political Independence, her idea of memory, like several women, can be located within a specific utopian setting related to what Mikhail Bakhtin calls a 'chronotope' (91). Shree skillfully employs this fractured narrative structure to convey Trauma's disjointed and disorienting nature, challenging readers to grapple with the elusive essence of selfhood. Moreover, Shree engages with the concept of Trauma not merely as an isolated event but as an enduring force that shapes the contours of one's identity (Caruth, 1997).

The intertextual layering in '*Tomb of Sand*' adds another dimension to the exploration of Trauma and identity. Shree weaves a tapestry of literary allusions, drawing on a rich storytelling tradition to illuminate the complexities of the human psyche. By interweaving cultural, historical, and mythical references, the narrative transcends the individual experience of Trauma, situating it within a broader socio-cultural context (Das 22). This intertextual approach underscores the universality of the protagonist's struggles, inviting readers to recognize the echoes of their own traumas within the larger human narrative. The deliberate use of silence and gaps in the narrative is a powerful commentary on the elusive nature of memory and the indelible impact of unspoken traumas on identity formation (Caruth, 1997). Shree probes the intersections between personal Trauma and the collective traumas that shape communities and

nations. In the third chapter, Trauma is used as a means of negotiating a deeper entry into Ma's life, following the nearly cathartic experience with life before and after Partition (Freud, 1971).

The narrator recounts how Ma and the other girls were hauled from truck to truck and tormented to vicious torture for several days while consuming very little. The question was posed to them: "Do you want to save your honour or your life?" (Shree, *The Tomb of Sand* 604) Girls were brutally abused, raped, and subjected to sexual harassment for days. Fortunately, Ma was rescued and discovered in a cantonment. She discovered that a boundary had been drawn, and she had arrived in India. She left behind her family, her life, and her dignity. In their article "*Sexual Objectification of Women: Advances to Theory & Research*," Szymanski, Moffit and Erika write, "Women are sexually objectified and treated as an object to be valued for its use by others. Sexual objectification occurs when a woman's body or body parts are singled out and separated from her as a person. She is viewed primarily as a physical object of male sexual desire" (38). The responses to the female victims of Partition were influenced by the discursive developments around "ideal" womanhood in Hindu cultural nationalism, the idea that "the gendered and sexed female body... to bear the burden of excessive symbolisation," and the idea that "the violence of the Partition was folded into everyday relations" and that the events of Partition "came to be incorporated into the temporal structure of relationships." (Das, "*The Act of Witnessing: Violence, Poisonous Knowledge, and Subjectivity*"). These ideas are supported by a reading of Jyotirmoyee Devi's works (Mookerjee-Leonard, 2004) when we draw a concomitant connection to this with the narrative of Geetanjali Shree and understand charting the histories of women's oppression that acquires the semantics of a political project.

The narrator contemplates the Partition as a historical catastrophe, lamenting its devastating impact on communities and families. The narrative underscores the harrowing experiences endured by women, highlighting the appalling violence, harassment, and sexual assaults they faced (Aggarwal and Naik, *Narratives of Indian Women and Their Catastrophes: A Study of Geetanjali Shree's Tomb of Sand*). Kidnappings, harassment, and rapes were tragically common, leading many women to resort to suicide as a desperate means of self-protection. Ayesha Jalal (2013), in "*The Pity of Partition*," astutely observes that the Partition's seemingly extraordinary nature may vary in its extent and severity. However, it is ultimately closely linked to the daily violence experienced by women, a phenomenon perpetuated by both Indian society and the family, both of which are entrenched in patriarchal structures.

In Shree's narrative, language emerges as a powerful tool for repression and liberation. The protagonist grapples with the inadequacy of language to capture the nuances of Trauma (Ron, 1966), as words often fall short of encapsulating the visceral and ineffable aspects of lived experiences. However, language also serves as a means of "resistance and reconstruction" (Hirsch, 2012, p. 44). Through storytelling, the protagonist reclaims agency over their narrative, reshaping the contours of their identity. Shree's exploration of the dual nature of language underscores its potential as both a constraint and a conduit for the expression of traumatic memories (Jalal, 2013). Geetanjali Shree's '*Tomb of Sand*' offers a profound exploration of Trauma and identity, weaving a narrative tapestry that transcends individual experiences to touch upon the universal aspects of the human condition. Through a masterful interplay of 'fragmented memory' (Hirsch, 2022), symbolism, intertextuality, and the complexities of language, Shree invites readers to confront the intricate foreplay between Trauma and identity. This metaphorical encoding of dissociation and remnants of Trauma provides an encoding of a narrative of selfhood. Shree's work is a testament to the transformative power of storytelling in navigating the labyrinth of memory and constructing a resilient identity to testimony trauma, as stated by Caruth (1997).

Drawing inspiration from Caruth (26), who posits that Trauma is not readily located in a singular violent or originating event within an individual's past. Instead, it surfaces in a manner that eludes immediate recognition; the narrator's exploration resonates with the intricacies of traumatic experience. Caruth's contention that Trauma, beyond its psychological dimensions of suffering, introduces a paradoxical relationship whereby the most direct encounter with a violent event manifests as an absolute inability to comprehend it reflects the nuanced approach adopted by the narrator in probing the multifaceted traumas experienced by women during the Partition (Caruth, 1997). Additionally, Caruth's insightful elucidation that immediacy in traumatic experience may paradoxically assume the guise of belatedness further resonates with the delayed and complex unfolding of the consequences of violence on the identities of women affected by the Partition (Caruth, 1997). In alignment with Caruth's framework, the narrator's

exploration transcends mere documentation of physical violence, delving into the intricacies of Trauma by acknowledging the protracted and indeterminate nature of its aftermath. The profound impact of the Partition on women is depicted not as a singular, isolated event but as an enduring, haunting spectre that surfaces later, defying immediate understanding. The choice to unravel the layers of Trauma beyond its apparent manifestations reflects a commitment to unravelling the complexity of the female experience during the Partition, echoing Caruth's assertion that traumatic experience defies simplistic and immediate categorisation.

In concurrence with this perspective, U. Niaz, in the "*Discourse on Violence Against Women in South Asian Countries*" (2003), aptly contends that Indian traditions have played a pivotal role in shaping women's personalities and dictating their social status after the horrors of Partition. The prevalence of violence against women is, therefore, intricately linked to the rigidity of societies and deeply ingrained patriarchal views that devalue the role of women. Caruth says, 'Trauma can rupture and reshape one's sense of self', which is deeply reflected in Ma's discourse in '*Tomb of Sand*'. Within the confines of such societies, violence is often condoned within families, propelled by the absolute dominance of men in the home and the misguided perception that family affairs are inherently private. By shedding light on the intersection of Trauma, memory, and identity in the female experience during the Partition, the narrator compels readers to confront the deeply entrenched patriarchal norms that fuelled and justified the brutality against women, shedding light on how 'trauma is a complex psychosomatic experience that disrupts the normal course of human memory and history' (Caruth, 1997). The narrative not only serves as a historical testimony but also acts as a powerful commentary on the societal structures that perpetuated such violence against women.

The emphasis on women as the bearers of communal honor during the Partition is particularly striking. It underscores the systemic reduction of women to mere vessels for safeguarding the perceived honor of their communities. In this regard, Caruth (1997) explores the idea of 'belatedness of trauma', which refers to traumatic events comprehended much later. It happens but instead manifests later in dreams and flashback memories. This delayed processing of Trauma can also cause disorientation, leading to unexamined behavior, as reflected through Ma when she crosses the threshold to reach Pakistan. In this lens, the Partition becomes a geopolitical event and a profound rupture in the fabric of women's lives, leaving an indelible mark on their identities. In this context, when we look at the exploration of Ma's discourse, we understand that within the intricate web of associations, dissociations, and representations that make up Freud's theory of memory, there are periods when the network is active and periods when it is passive (1971). According to Freud, memories associated with Trauma are more challenging to forget, more resilient than ordinary memories and do not participate in activation through retrieval. This conceptual framework sets the stage for a nuanced exploration of how Trauma can either constrict an individual into a self-imposed exile from the world or foster a continuous dialogue with loss, thereby paving the way for the emergence of a world-in-becoming (Caruth, 1997). It emphasizes the dual nature of Trauma – as a force that can either lead to closure or become a catalyst for ongoing transformation and growth.

The narrator's adept exploration of the female perspective amid the Partition is a profound testament to the intricate interplay of Trauma, memory, and identity. The Partition, viewed not merely as a historical cataclysm but as a crucible, becomes a transformative force that reshapes the lives of women, subjecting them to violence, displacement, and a profound redefinition of their societal roles. The narrative, woven through Ma's experiences and enriched by scholarly insights, invites readers to engage in a reflective journey beyond the historical dimensions of the Partition. It beckons them to contemplate the enduring reverberations of Trauma etched into the very core of the identities of women who weathered the storms of this tumultuous period.

5. Feminine Paradox: Memory and Trauma in Divakaruni's '*Independence*'

"The year is 1947. It is the best of times; it is the worst of times." — Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, *Independence*, 2023.

Set against the backdrop of India's Partition, '*Independence*' by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni unfolds the narratives of three siblings- Priya, Deepa, and Jamini – within a rustic village in Bengal as the progeny of the esteemed village physician, Nabhkumar. Deepa, the eldest and most aesthetically captivating, ardently

aspires to elevate her family's societal standing and bliss through a judicious matrimonial alliance. Jamini, the family's perfectionist, exhibits astute acumen yet perennially resides in the periphery. She, a proficient quilt maker, collaborates with her mother in this enterprise, contributing to their financial sustenance. While possessing fervor and intensity, Jamini guards her profound desires with discretion. The youngest, Priya, epitomizes intellectual acuity. Nursing lofty ideals and aspirations, she aspires to emulate her father's medical vocation despite the societal disdain prevalent in the male-dominated milieu of that era.

The felicity of their sheltered familial cocoon shatters abruptly when their patriarch, Nabhkumar, succumbs during a riot, rendering the sisters bereft and marginalized, even estranged from erstwhile amicable neighbors. In the aftermath, the trajectories of the sisters' lives metamorphose precipitously as the vicissitudes gripping the nation reverberate through their personal spheres. Determinedly, Priya endeavors to emulate her father's professional legacy, dedicating herself wholeheartedly to her burgeoning medical career. Concurrently, Deepa, ensnared in the escalating national unrest, finds her heart entwined with Raza, a Muslim, leading to familial discord.

The aphasia, a psychosomatic effect of the Partition trauma reflects in the writing of *'Independence'*. Halbwachs (25) posited an insightful perspective on memory, contending that 'it transcends individual boundaries to encompass relational and collective dimensions within familial, social, and societal frameworks.' He underscored the distinction between history and memory, perceiving history as a preserved past devoid of experiential immediacy while elevating the meaningfulness of memory. This challenges the primary tradition accorded to historiography, shifting the focus towards the rich tapestry of memory's significance in understanding the past. Pierre Nora (1989) further elaborated on this interplay between history and memory, introducing the notion of *'lieux de mémoire'* or sites of memory. These sites are characterised by their capacity for metamorphosis, which is perpetually evolving. However, criticism has been levelled at Nora's (1989) conceptualization for its emphasis on nationalistic narratives and official sites of memory.

Examining characters from Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel, *'Independence'*, such as Priya, Deepa and Jamini, reveals a nuanced deconstruction of Trauma, illustrating an intergenerational memory lineage of memory. The legacy of Partition continues to reverberate, with women bearing the enduring scars of unimaginable violence and forced displacement. Ananya Kabir's concept of *'post-amnesia'* elucidates memory recollection in the aftermath of nationally enforced forgetting. Similarly, when we delve deeper into Hirsch's (2012) notion of *'post-memory'* finds resonance in the narratives of survivors, encapsulating the memory of traumatic events passed down through generations. The narratives of the novel *'Independence'*, particularly those from female perspectives, foreground personal loss, traumatic family separations, and unheard experiences over political and economic concerns (Caruth, 1997). These unveil fractured realities, offering a gendered depiction of the Partition's impact on the division of the countries. These reconstruct the tragedies and reflect the lived experiences of women during Partition.

Several significant events, notably the Noakhali Massacre and Direct Action Day, are meticulously documented. These incidents, characterised by their sheer brutality, serve to instil terror in the minds of the populace, thereby asserting the perpetrators' perceived omnipotence. Nevertheless, amidst the chaos and bloodshed, a nuanced understanding emerges in the words of Amit, who astutely observes, "The Muslims in Noakhali have done atrocious things, but the ones in Ranipur have not" (174). Moreover, Amit invokes the call for unity articulated by the Prime Minister, highlighting the imperative of transcending communal divides. Shobe and Kihlstrom remark, "Traumatic levels of stress sometimes lead victims to invoke mental defences, such as repression and dissociation, which result in a 'psychogenic' or 'functional' amnesia for the stressful event itself." (22). The upheaval wrought by dominant factions disrupts the lives of ordinary individuals, compelling acts of bravery and selflessness. Nabo exemplifies such courage, risking his life to fulfil his duty: "I know the back roads between here and the clinic. I will make sure to stay away from any rioters." (Divakaruni, 2023). The grim reality spares not even Nabakumar's family, precipitating Nabo's demise en route to his clinic in Calcutta, Bina's traumatic episodes of sleepwalking, Jamini's harrowing ordeal of being burned and assaulted, and the fracturing of the familial unit. In the face of adversity, Priya remains resolute, echoing the words of her father: "Take care of them, you said to me, Baba. I made a promise. I must keep standing on my own feet like the woman you admired, Matangini Hazra, Sarojini Naidu. Carry the flag of my independence. It is what you would have wanted for me. It is what I

want for myself." (Divakaruni 2023). Van der Kolk (1994) specifically invoked the concept of implicit memory when discussing the aftermath of Trauma and abuse: "Research into the nature of traumatic memories indicates that trauma interferes with declarative memory (i.e., conscious recall of experience) but does not inhibit implicit or non-declarative memory, the memory system that controls the conditioned emotional responses, skills and habits, and sensorimotor sensations related to experience." (258). These analogies relay how Trauma impairs memory as a matter of course, leading to troubled aphasia.

Furthermore, these trials thrust individuals into a confrontational stance against entrenched patriarchal structures emblematic of feminist discourse. Rejecting the notion of gender as solely biological, scholars like Millett assert that gender is a socially constructed entity (2016). Within this construct, male dominance is pervasive, with men internalising notions of superiority over women. Beauvoir elucidates this dynamic, contending that "Man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being" (22). This relegation of women to a subordinate status parallels colonial dynamics, wherein the coloniser asserts authority over the colonised, as in women found in *'Independence'*. Similarly, the dichotomy between male and female mirrors the class struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie, with women relegated to the status of 'untouchables' within this hierarchical framework. Barrett (2018) observes that women's oppression is deeply entrenched in the structures of capitalism, perpetuating injustices such as the preferential treatment of men in education. Despite these systemic injuries, Priya defiantly asserts her agency: "I do not care. I would not allow such trivialities to bother me. I would prove to them that I can be as good a doctor as any man." (Divakaruni, 2023, p. 17). Priya's rejection of archaic customs, such as participation in funeral pyres, underscores her defiance against entrenched patriarchal norms: "Baba never believed in such senseless customs. We sisters will do it" (55). Engels contends that women's subordination stems not from biological determinism but from social interactions, with the family unit serving as a locus of male dominance.

The aspirations of individuals like Priya are buoyed by the unwavering support of progressive male figures such as Nabakumar and Somnath. Their plight resonates with Stuart Hall's exploration of the subjection of women, wherein empathy serves as a catalyst for resistance against entrenched traditions. In a very recent discussion, when we look into the centrality of Trauma and memory, Eyerman (2017) posits that "emotion plays a pivotal role in understanding the trauma process, suggesting that a central, if not the primary, focus of a carrier group's efforts is the communication of affect and emotion" (*Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* 99). This perspective frames the trauma process as fundamentally a mechanism through which emotions are disseminated across society, as reflected in the voice of Priya. This experience can profoundly affect individuals, potentially transforming them into carriers themselves, thereby "perpetuating the dissemination of these emotions. Much like the phenomenon of moral panic, this creates a spiralling effect within the trauma process as increasing numbers of people become emotionally engaged in the event" (Eyerman, 2004, p. 58).

Eyerman (2004) describes cultural Trauma implemented on women as a "discursive process, resulting from extreme violence and exposing the deep emotional base that grounds individual and collective identity. Cultural Trauma is both an articulation/ representation of this emotional grounding and, simultaneously, a working- -through- a collective effort at repair." This definition not only links to the episodes of extremely violent memories that we witness in the characters of Divakaruni but also highlights the centrality of emotion, approaching a psychological definition of Trauma by incorporating the concept of 'working through' (Caruth, 1997). This concept indicates that the trauma process transcends rationality, manifesting as an emotion-driven endeavour to process and make sense of a profoundly distressing event. By emphasising its emotional foundations, this reinforces the intrinsic nature of cultural Trauma within women after the Partition (Kolk, 1994, p. 44).

Caruth discusses how Trauma re-emerges in the form of flashbacks and repetitive actions (88), a notion that can be applied to the sisters' narratives. She writes, "Trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures: not as a simple understanding of the pasts of others, but rather as a way of precisely coming into the consciousness of oneself." (Caruth, 1997). For Deepa, the memories of her love for Raza and the violence of Partition repeatedly haunt her, shaping her present actions and relationships. This continuous return to traumatic memories underlines the persistent impact of Partition on her psyche. Caruth's ideas on

collective Trauma can be used to explore the broader societal impacts of Partition depicted in the novel. She posits, "To be traumatised is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (32).

Caruth's exploration of the intersection between Trauma and memory can elucidate the complex dynamics of remembering and forgetting in the novel. She writes, "Trauma is an event that, in its unexpectedness, has the structure of a language: it refers to a past that was never fully present" (4). This idea is pertinent in Jamini's clandestine love for her sister's betrothed and her efforts to unite the family. The traumatic past continually influences her actions, demonstrating how memory shapes identity and interpersonal dynamics. Caruth's concept of the "enigmatic core" of Trauma, where the event itself remains elusive and beyond complete understanding, can be applied to the sisters' experiences. She states, "The traumatic event... is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known, and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor." (4)

Deepa's storyline further illustrates Caruth's concept of the "insistent return of the traumatic event." Her love for Raza and the subsequent familial and societal conflicts exemplify how past traumas- both personal and collective- recur in the present, shaping and reshaping her reality. Caruth notes, "The repetition of the traumatic event – which remains unavailable to consciousness but repeatedly intrudes on sight and thought- is not so much the return of the event itself but of the wound of the event" (1997, p. 4). Deepa's enduring love for Raza, despite the societal upheaval and familial opposition, represents this repetitive intrusion of Trauma into her life. Jamini's character also resonates with Caruth's exploration of Trauma and memory. Her unspoken desires and the burden of keeping the family together amidst the chaos of Partition reflect the deeper psychological and emotional struggle (34). Caruth's insight that "the trauma is never fully integrated into memory, thus continually returns to haunt the survivor" (Caruth, 1997) is evident in Jamini's experiences.

Furthermore, Caruth's work emphasises the importance of listening to and acknowledging the narratives of Trauma and survivors. She writes, "The history of a trauma, in its inherent belatedness, can only take place through the listening of another" (Caruth, 1997, p. 11). This idea is crucial in understanding the dynamics between the sisters in *"Independence."* Their ability to support and listen to each other becomes a critical factor in their individual and collective healing processes (Caruth, 1997, p. 99). The solidarity and empathy they share, despite their divergent paths, illustrate Caruth's notion that the sharing of traumatic experiences can facilitate a deeper understanding and integration of those experiences (68). The concept of "speaking the unspeakable" is another key aspect of Caruth's theory that resonates with Divakaruni's novel. Caruth argues that Trauma invokes an element of unspeakability, a profound disruption that cannot be easily articulated. She states, "Trauma is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" (Caruth, 1997, p. 4). Moreover, Caruth's insights into the collective nature of Trauma are particularly relevant to the broader context of Partition. She explains, "Trauma is understood as a wound inflicted upon the body but upon the mind" (Caruth, 1997, p. 3).

"Insistent return of the traumatic event, which thus constitutes trauma and points towards its enigmatic core", claims Caruth (5). Caruth emphasises the painful comeback of Trauma and memory: "Trauma is an attempt to come back that eventually fails, as does life and the urge itself. This figure, this idea, this narrative- which also happens to be the tale of the little boy who plays with his reel- is about memory and history. It's also about the idea of archiving its own history as it moves away and back towards its starting points." (22) This is reflected in the poignant characterisation of Deepa from *"Independence"*, where she faces heartbreak and chaos and furthermore shows resilience when she is separated from Raza, a man with whom she falls in love. It depicts the tragic turn and the flashback of memories that haunt her till the very end of the novel. "The lines they draw on the map cannot sever the bonds we share, nor the humanity within us. This violence, it cannot be the answer." (Divakaruni, 2023, p. 178).

The "cynical indifference" (Neal, 1988, p. 4) states as a fact of disruptive change in a person's life after a traumatic event permeates onto benign neglect by "dismissing or ignoring" as reflected in the penultimate chapter of Divakaruni's novel *Independence* evokes the limpid frenzy within the three sisters – Deepa, Jamini and Priya. This provides evidence of Erikson's theoretical innovation regarding individual to

collective trauma. Both the attention to collectively emergent properties and the naturalism with which such collective traumas are conceived are evident in the following passage –

"By individual Trauma, I mean a blow to the psyche that breaks through one's defences so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively. By collective Trauma, on the other hand, I mean a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damage the bonds attaching people together and impair the prevailing sense of communality. The collective Trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it. So, it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with Trauma. But it is a form of shock all the same, a gradual realisation that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared. 'We' no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body." (Erikson 153-54)

And what more do we find but the epistolary content of how the internal complexities of the three sisters mould into a psychological division (Menon and Bhasin), unrooting into a psychosocial division from individual to collective Trauma?

The story's postscript, after the epilogue, is quite intriguing as it reads-

"Here is a river. Here is a wind rising. Here is a village. Here is the year. The river is time, ebbing, flooding. The wind is memory, it can carry flowers, it can carry flames. The village is the world, and you are at its centre. The year is now. What will you do with it? What will you do?"

Thus, the construction of Trauma and the association and condensation of memories in Divakaruni's characters claim an ontological reality for the Partition.

6. Synopsis of the Main Research Outcomes

The events of the year 1947 embody common thematic features which reflect history in its most conscious and artistic form: trauma and memory. These two themes get intermingled to form a multifaceted structure of human experiences contributing to the formation of identities where gender and especially women's identities during the period of partition are highlighted. Specifically, "Tomb of Sand", written by Geetanjali Shree and "Independence", written by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, has been chosen to analyze the connection between trauma and memory as concepts that reveal women's stories. In view of this, drawing from Cathy Caruth's seminal discourse on trauma, I consider how memory acts as an archive to explain women's suffering in the course of the Partition, with the formation of different layers of trauma and the patriarchal deficit. This endeavor enriches the field of gender studies with the analysis of the ways in which literature reproduces the culture's visions of the woman and her fight against the dominant patriarchal paradigm.

This particular research serves as a reminder that women's role and even womanhood have to be questioned within the constructs of the society; hence, gender makes it a very important subject area in these discourses. The depiction of traumatic memory as the cause of breaking down the female personality is coupled with the combination of both concepts into a single whole and their integration into the multifaceted and highly developed woman's personality. Breaking up such complexities, the study will help to enhance the discussion in the field of gender studies and show how the literature can react to the norms of a society. The presented analysis of the female narratives from the period of the Partition contributes to the consideration of women's experiences, their ability to cope with the adversities they faced, and their agency during the historical events in question, thereby deepening the understanding of the role and experience of women and the impact of trauma and memories of the Partition on the present female lives.

7. Conclusions

The exploration of Trauma and memory, particularly within the context of the 1947 Partition of India, serves as a profound lens to examine the intricate dynamics of identity, especially female identity, in historical and sociocultural frameworks. The works "Tomb of Sand" by Geetanjali Shree and "Independence" by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni offer rich narratives that navigate the labyrinth intersections of Trauma, memory, and gender, shedding light on the profound impact of historical upheavals on personal and collective identities. Trauma, as both a personal and collective phenomenon, emerges as a potent force

shaping the contours of memory and identity. The mnemonic landscape crafted through these narratives becomes a repository for the residue of experiences reverberating across time and space. In *"Tomb of Sand"*, Shree adeptly captures the intricate interplay between personal Trauma and collective memory, weaving a tapestry that reflects the psychological landscapes of her characters. The protagonist's journey through fragmented memories and buried traumas is a poignant excavation of the human psyche, highlighting the enduring imprint of historical ruptures on individual identity.

Divakaruni's *"Independence"* roots its story in the Partition's broader setting. It digs into the harrowing ordeals of three sisters. Their lives take different turns amid family and social turmoil. The book highlights Partition's shared Trauma. It shows how group experiences of brutality and uprooting build a collective memory. *"Tomb of Sand"* examines how the main character gets pushed aside in her family. This shows how old ideas about men and women still affect people today. The story paints a vivid picture of how society's rules clash with what women go through. It shines a light on how memories form and how culture keeps the unfair treatment of women going.

"Independence" by Divakaruni dives into gender as a social construct. It shows how patriarchy shapes characters' lives. The book reveals how society reduced women to honour-keepers during Partition. The sisters' fight against gender rules takes centre stage. Divakaruni paints a picture of women's strength in tough times. She offers new views on how Trauma and memory mix with gender identities. The story brings to light women's power to act even when facing big challenges. It gives readers a fresh look at how gender roles played out in a critical historical moment. The author's take on this topic adds depth to our grasp of Partition's impact on women. These novels enrich the growing talk about hurt, memories, and gender identity. They reveal how people build and keep shared memories after awful historical events. Shree and Divakaruni dig into the many sides of women's lives during the Partition. Their books show how big events in history affect both one person and a whole group. These stories act like time capsules.

In essence, the narratives of *"Tomb of Sand"* and *"Independence"* transcend historical documentation, becoming complex psychoanalytical paradigms suggesting the organic and recurrent development of memory post-trauma. Through their post-memory exploration, these novels invite consideration of established theoretical frameworks, offering new perspectives on the intricate play between Trauma and memory. The protagonists' journeys through personal and collective traumas provide insight into the smothered discourse that will affect gender norms in the coming years, highlighting the potent force of Trauma in shaping the contours of memory and identity. In conclusion, the interplay of Trauma and memory within the context of the 1947 Partition, as explored in the novels, offers a profound insight into the complex dynamics of identity, particularly of a female. The nuanced portrayals of Trauma, memory and gendered experiences in these novels contribute significantly to the broader discourse on gender studies and the exploration of historical and sociocultural frameworks. The authors illuminate the enduring impact of historical ruptures on individual identities by examining the intricate relationship between narratives and memory, offering a rich terrain for scholarly exploration and reflection.

8. Limitations, Implications, and Further Directions of Research

Far from being confined to the genre of Partition literature, the findings of this study suggest how such a history affects the construction of social and individual memory within the context of women's writing. Thus, based on Geetanjali Shree's and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's texts, which are analyzed in this work, it enhances the gender studies discussion and demonstrates the women's ability to survive and regain their power despite the tragedy that was the Partition. It stresses the importance of literature in capturing and undermining the set social norms of the female gender as well as in gaining a better understanding of the relationship between Trauma, memory and the concepts of womanhood and femininity.

To start with, the study is not without limitations in the sense that some variables could not be included due to their complexity and impact on the subject. The chosen approach may lead to the oversimplification of women's suffering and experiences during Partition, even if focusing on two literary masterpieces is illuminating on some levels. Further studies should investigate different narratives and media varieties, such as oral and artistic, that can enrich the perception of the given topic. Moreover, it would be beneficial to include psychological and sociological methodologies in this study so that the analysis of Trauma and memory can be deeper and the aspects of these experiences in culturally different settings can be revealed.

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