



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Violence And Memory In Manto's Selected Short Stories: *Thanda Gosht* And *Khol Do*

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Abstract- The relationship between violence and memory in Saadat Hasan Manto's Partition tales *Thanda Gosht* and *Khol Do* is examined in this essay. Both tales illustrate how the pain of Partition persists as an embodied memory and psychological scar long after the violence has ended. Ishwar Singh's discovery of the murdered girl and his subsequent impotence in *Thanda Gosht* reveal how cruelty leaves a lasting memory that undermines connection and identity. In contrast, Sakina's dehumanized state, where her robotic answer to the command "open it," attests to the erasure of agency under the weight of repeated assaults, is how *Khol Do* foregrounds the collective pain of displacement and sexual abuse. Together, these stories illustrate Manto's unflinching portrayal of Partition as not merely a historical rupture but a continuing site of memory, where survivors and victims' alike embody the afterlife of violence. Drawing on trauma theory, particularly Cathy Caruth's notion of trauma as a belated and intrusive experience, this paper argues that Manto situates Partition within a framework of unending remembrance, making visible the inescapable entanglement of violence, memory, and identity.

Keywords

Violence, trauma, memory, partition, Manto and Caruth

Introduction- "Partition was not a simple line drawn across a map, but a wound carved into the subcontinent, whose scars we continue to carry in memory and history." *The Other Side of Silence*, Butalia. One of the worst instances of mass violence in South Asia occurred during the 1947 Partition of India. The largest forced migration in modern history occurred when British India was split into India and Pakistan, displacing between 12 to 15 million people. Families, villages, and regions were divided by the hastily constructed Radcliffe Line, tearing apart communities that had lived together for decades. An estimated one to two million people died as a result of the terrible communal violence caused by the upheaval, which included massacres, kidnappings, and sexual assaults. Beyond the immediate carnage, South Asian communities and diasporas are still shaped by the profound trauma scars, broken identities, and lost memories left by Partition.

As a chronicler of the human cruelty and bloodshed that accompanied India's Partition, Saadat Hasan Manto has a significant place. His works examine identity ruptures, the instability of moral frameworks, and the lasting pain inflicted upon individuals and communities, going beyond the simple documentation of historical events. Manto shows how Partition was a site of profound psychological division in addition to being a geopolitical reconfiguration by highlighting the everyday realities of the event, such as sexual assault, communal hatred, displacement, and isolation. By doing this, his stories place human suffering at the forefront of historical consciousness and turn Partition into a discourse of memory and pain.

The heart-wrenching and realistic short stories of Sadat Hasan Manto attracts thousands of scholars towards South Asian Literature. Manto's writings covers a wide area which includes class, creed, prejudice and gender. This paper particularly centers on the violent events and acts that take place in the backdrop of partition and how it shapes and impacts the individuals and their memories in the selected short stories of Manto. With a focus on *Thanda Gosht* and *Khol Do* in particular, this study highlights how violence and memory interweave in Saadat Hasan Manto's Partition narratives. These tales demonstrate how violent crimes are not limited to the time they are committed; rather, they are etched into both individual and societal memory, resurfacing as long-lasting psychological wounds. In *Thanda Gosht*, violence is expressed through the desecration of the human body, as recalled in Ishwar Singh's late confrontation with his own crime; and in *Khol Do*, the devastating yet silent revelation of Sakina's violated body illustrates how trauma defies words, continuing instead through gesture and silence. Collectively, these stories demonstrate Manto's interest in the enduring effects of violence in memory, presenting Partition as a cause of moral upheaval and psychological division in addition to a historical upheaval.

Theoretical Framework

One of the leading authorities on trauma research, Cathy Caruth, contends that trauma cannot be viewed as a straightforward, sequential experience that starts and finishes with the initial violent incident. Instead, it is characterized by recurrence, resurfacing in unexpected and frequently uncontrollable ways. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), Caruth observes: "Trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on" (p. 4).

In this passage, Caruth highlights how trauma is not fully experienced at the time it happens, but rather re-occurs later on through intrusive memories, flashbacks, disturbing dreams, and even physical manifestations. The mind's incapacity to completely comprehend or "know" the traumatic event at the time of its occurrence is indicated by this recurring recurrence. Trauma is therefore present in this contradictory temporality, both as an absence during the initial incident and as an unrelenting presence in its aftermath.

Dimensions of Violence in the Stories

Physical Violence- Eesher Singh's statement from *Thanda Gosht* "The house I attacked had seven people in it. I killed six of them." This statement very well portrays that how violence and brutality become a normal phenomenon during events such as partition. Partition is marked by acts of intense physical violence like rape, killing and mutilations. In the story Ishwar Singh not only kills six people without any double thought but also happen to rape a girl only to discover later that she is already dead. "She was dead, Kalwant it was a dead body..." The fervor of violence during Partition dehumanized people to the point where even the sanctity of life was obliterated, and this act perfectly captures that misery. In *Khol Do*, Sakina is kidnapped and repeatedly sexually assaulted while being carried under false pretenses of rescue. Here, the physical wounds of Partition are engraved upon bodies as proof of institutionalized violence. Manto consistently demonstrates that violence is corporeal, etched into flesh and blood, rather than abstract.

Psychological Violence- Manto is equally concerned with the invisible scars left by Partition, like as guilt, shame, helplessness, and silences, as he is with the physical violence. Ishwar Singh becomes helpless in *Thanda Gosht* after learning that the female he attempted to attack was already dead. His illness is not just a physical one; it is also a psychological one, as the pain of his conduct eats away at his sense of honor and masculinity. Sirajuddin's powerlessness as a father looking for Sakina in *Khol Do* symbolizes yet another type of mental suffering: the never-ending fear of being uprooted and uncertain. The knowledge of what she has been through severely undermines his happiness at finding her alive.

Memory of the Afterlife of Violence-

Embodied Memory- One of Manto's most striking claims about how violence becomes ingrained in the body and transforms memory into reflex is found in *Khol Do*. Sakina, a little girl who was separated from her father Sirajuddin during the Partition riots, is kidnapped and repeatedly raped by her purported rescuers under the guise of being "rescued." The physician tells someone to "Khol do" (open the window) when she is

later discovered comatose in a hospital. Sakina's hands automatically reach for and loosen her salwar's string at this point. Manto writes: "The girl on the bed stirred slightly. Her hands moved feebly to undo the knot of her salwar, and with a gentle movement, she lowered the garment."

This scenario illustrates how Sakina's body has internalized the memory of numerous violations after losing its autonomy. Her body recalls the violence even though her intellect is unable to articulate it, converting memory into an embodied reflex. Her body is a living legacy of the gendered cruelty of Partition since the trauma is not expressed in words but rather is etched into her flesh.

Memory is also embodied in *Thanda Gosht*, but in a different way—through the helplessness of the criminal, Ishwar Singh. Singh kidnaps a Muslim girl during the Partition riots with the intention of raping her, only to find out later that she has already passed away. He is internally destroyed by the trauma of this encounter. Later, Singh is unable to consummate his connection with Kulwant Kaur after being confronted by him. His body's refusal to engage in sexual activity because it retains the memory of the attempted rape of a corpse causes his impotence to become a psychosomatic representation of his guilt. Manto explains Singh's admission: "When I pulled away the sheet, I realized the girl was dead... stone cold. Dead... Thandi... Thandi... Gosht." The word "cold" is used repeatedly to emphasize Singh's own lifeless masculinity as well as the corpse. His physical dysfunction is only one aspect of his impotence; another is an embodied memory of horror and guilt, which serves as a punishment for his body's inability to forget what his mind cannot. Manto illustrates how even those who commit acts of violence cannot avoid the afterlife of violence because, like victims, their bodies bear the imprint of memory.

Conclusion- Manto's fiction is characterized by violence that never truly ends; it persists as memory and resurfaces in physical, sensory, or psychological forms. Sakina's uncontrollable reaction to the phrase "Khol do" in *Khol Do* serves as an example of how trauma leaves its mark on the body, transforming memory into reflex. Ishwar Singh's impotence is shown in *Thanda Gosht* as a living sentence, with his body bearing the burden of his humiliation and guilt. When taken as a whole, these tales demonstrate that memory is not just an act of conscious recall but rather something that endures in the body and senses, making the past unavoidable.

According to Manto, Violence and memory are inevitable legacies of Partition that shapes relationships, community awareness, and individual identities. While males like Ishwar Singh experience remorse and impotence that shatter their sense of masculinity, women like Sakina find that the brutality of Partition changes their fundamental being. Manto maintains that Partition becomes an ongoing wound because of the violence and its resultant memories which remain engraved into people's lives forever. The violence and its traumatic memories does not allow it to remain as a closed historical chapter rather it remain a very active part of their present lives. His tales make us acknowledge that this enduring anguish, which is passed down through acts of violence, memory, silence, and bodily scars, is the real legacy of Partition.

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