

Humanity Amidst Communal Violence: Witnessing Partition Victims through Saadat Hasan Manto's *Khol Do*

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Abstract— *The Partition of India in 1947 has become one of the most devastating events in the history of South Asia that saw unprecedented communal violence, mass displacement and human suffering. Literary depictions of the day-to-day life of ordinary people tell the stories that are not always central to official histories. This article takes up the case of Saadat Hasan Manto's Khol Do for an analysis of the role of the writer in its capacity as a witness to the traumatic experiences of Partition victims. Inspecting trauma theory, testimony studies, memory studies and feminist theory, the study proposes that Manto brings fiction to bear as a potent ethical archive of collective suffering. The paper examines the collapse of humanity in face of communal violence, the gender aspect of atrocities of Partition and the lingering psychological impact on the trauma through a close textual analysis of Khol Do. The focal points are Sakina's and Sirajuddin's lives—their split identities and heartaches are the microcosm of the human toll of political violence. Instead of the violence being a one-off event in history, Manto uncovers the ability of violence to shape memory, identity and moral conscience. The paper also argues that by rehabilitating the marginalised victims and keeping the emotions that are usually missing from the historical record, Khol Do confronts the nationalist historiography. This work places Manto's writings in the broader context of the interdisciplinary discussions of witnessing and memory, and underscores the continuing importance of literature in recording human suffering and preserving the memory of Partition.*



Keywords— *Partition; trauma; communal violence; memory studies; gendered violence.*

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most difficult events in modern south Asian history is the Partition of India in 1947. The Partition brought about unprecedented communal violence, mass displacement and the permanent separation of families and communities, due to the formation of two sovereign states, India and Pakistan. In just a few months, almost 15 million people were forcibly displaced by the newly defined borders and as many as 1 to 2 million people perished in communal violence, massacres, abductions, and retaliatory killings. This catastrophe was suffered by women disproportionately: rape, abduction, conversion and honour killings were used as means to establish dominance over each other. Constitutional history and the reconfiguration of territories and states have been the main themes in the

official histories of the period, but these accounts often overlook the emotions and psychologies of ordinary people. In this context, literary narratives develop a rich historical and moral message.

Saadat Hasan Manto is one of the most prominent writers to write about Partition and is well-known for his uncompromising depiction of the suffering and the breakdown of humanity. Diascoursing the nationalist triumphalism, communal partisanship, Manto concentrated on the catastrophic impact of political violence on normal lives. While his Partition narratives do not celebrate the birth of the nation-states, nor blame any particular community for their plight, they reveal the common humanity of human beings facing hatred, displacement, and brutality. In his works which are clearly realistic and

psychologically insightful, Manto has rendered each experience into a lasting witness to a collective trauma, which makes his works essential reading in the study of Partition literature.

Khol Do is one of Manto's Partition stories that is particularly unique in its unflinchingly depicting gendered violence and psychological devastation. The narrative tells of the search which Sirajuddin went through after Partition, looking for his missing daughter, Sakina. The conclusion is a shocking one, in which Sakina is asked to meekly perform the task "Khol Do" ("Open it") after being raped over and over again, and ends up as a mere, soulless instrument devoid of choice and agency. Unlike portraying violence as a sensational event, Manto's restrained, inarticulateness and irony reveal the deep dehumanization of the people of Partition. As such, *Khol Do* is not just a fictional work but also an ethical statement that holds onto the lived realities of the members of the marginalized group in official history.

Khol Do has received a lot of scholarship in the past, and has been explored in the fields of trauma studies, gender studies, realism and Partition studies. Manto's depiction of communal violence, the symbolic use of the female body and the psychological repercussions of displacement have all been pointed out by critics. In contrast, however, comparatively little has been written about the nature of *Khol Do* as an act of witnessing in literature, one which involves trauma, testimony, collective memory, and ethical responsibility. It is only when these issues are discussed in tandem that the complex nature of the issue of building an alternative archive of Partition becomes evident. These issues are discussed separately from time to time by the scholars, but there is still a lack of research on the interconnectedness of these issues to build an alternative archive of Partition.

To fill this gap, this paper attempts to explore *Khol Do* from an interdisciplinary perspective with the lenses of trauma studies, testimony theory, memory studies and feminist criticism. It maintains that Manto turns fiction into a witnessing of the literary kind that archives the emotional truths of Partition that transcend the writing of mainstream history. *Khol Do* centres the subject of Sakina and Sirajuddin and brings historical visibility to the lives of ordinary victims whose plight is lost amid political discourses of nationhood. Finally, this paper argues that Manto's narrative is not just a picture of communal violence but also a lasting moral archive that captures the trauma of the Partition and the unspeakable violence at the hands of the Congress and the Pakistan Army, and reminds the reader that literature has a valuable place to remember and perpetuate the memory of victims.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the Partition of India, there has been a huge volume of interdisciplinary scholarship, focusing on the history of the Partition, literature, gender studies, memory studies, and trauma theory. Although historians have dealt with the political issues that led to Partition, a growing number of literary scholars have focused on fiction as an important medium which allows the emotional and psychological aspects of the Partition to be retained. In this corpus, Saadat Hasan Manto is a writer who puts the sufferings of ordinary people on the forefront instead of the political leaders and ideology. His Partition tales, especially *Khol Do*, have received a continuous stream of scholarly study for their vivid depiction of communal savagery, the gendered nature of the trauma, and the moral decay. However, the current research mainly focuses on these issues separately, and there is much room for an analysis of *Khol Do* as a literary action of witnessing.

Manto has been identified as one of the most forthright writers of Partition experiences of 1947 by scholars of Partition literature. Manto's fiction reveals the devastating effects of the decisions for the displaced civilians, as opposed to nationalistic historiography that often focuses on negotiations and territorial divisions. He rejects religious communalization as the sole cause of violence and that it can be blamed solely on one particular religious group, which is fundamentally different from the discourses of communalization that seek to take collective responsibility. Instead, his stories uncover the moral failure of human beings as a whole, and make communal violence a common human tragedy, not a winning or losing battle of rival nationalisms. This humanistic approach has brought Manto to the forefront in the literary depiction of Partition.

The scholarship on Partition has been revamped by historical studies, especially by Urvashi Butalia, Yasmin Khan, Gyanendra Pandey and Veena Das, which have moved away from the state perspective, to focus on the experiences of the survivors. Butalia's work puts an emphasis on oral histories, making them the voice that is not heard in official history. Like this, Yasmin Khan brings to an understanding of social and humanitarian effects of Partition, focusing on people's displacement, fear and the violence that affected ordinary civilians during Partition. Gyanendra Pandey renders a critique of the traditional historiography of Partition by suggesting that violence was never an incidental to it but an integral part of history, whereas Veena Das sheds light on the process of everyday life and violence, thereby describing trauma as an ongoing social reality and not a past historical event. Together, these scholars show how the lived experience of Partition is

essential to political history and how the latter needs to be grounded in the lived experience.

In the study of Partition, Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin's work is the most extensive, which illuminates the gendered nature of Partition and how women's bodies were an object of violent inscriptions of communal honour, revenge and national identity. Through their analysis, they showed that rape, abduction, forced conversions and honour killings were not random acts of violence, but instead were reflections of the patriarchy and communal power exercised by males. Butalia similarly alleges that women often went missing from official records as they were among the most grievous victims of Partition. Sexual violence can be seen as personal trauma and collective historical trauma in *Khol Do*, and these interventions offer a necessary tool to help understand this situation.

Trauma and testimony studies also provide theoretical underpinnings for an understanding of Manto's literary project. Theoretical approaches to trauma and testimony studies further illuminate Manto's literary project. An experience that is incomprehensible in the moment of its occurrence and reappears in memory in fragments, in silence, and in repetition – Cathy Caruth sees trauma as such. This is supported by the voices of Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, who see testimony as an ethical act of witnessing, through which unspeakable experiences come into historical view. They depart from the nature of factual documentation and make moral demands for witnessing to suffering. In the following, Marianne Hirsch's notion of postmemory adds to the discussion by explaining how traumatic history can have an impact on later generations through cultural memory and the passing down of stories. Similarly Pierre Nora's concept of lieux de mémoire highlights the importance of cultural texts in the process of the retention of collective memory in the presence of the fading of lived memory. These theoretical approaches thus indicate that literature serves not only as a representation of art, but also as an archive that can be used to document histories that are not included in the official archives.

While there is an abundance of scholarship, most of the critique of *Khol Do* revolves around individual issues of trauma, realism, gendered violence or Partition history. Recent studies often focus on the representation of sexual violence or mental or emotional anguish without considering how these two elements are connected in shaping the story as a literary witness. Furthermore, there has been not much study of the links between witnessing, collective memory, trauma and ethical responsibility in a single analytical framework. Thus, the overall impact of *Khol Do* as an alternate history archive is not fully explored.

The present study attempts to fill this void by combining the concepts and doctrines of trauma theory, testimony studies, memory studies and feminist criticism to examine *Khol Do* as a form of literary witnessing. This paper proposes that Manto moves the novel from the realm of Partition violence to one of the emotional truths captured of communal conflict; it is not just a representation of Partition violence. The study highlights how the voices of Sakina and Sirajuddin bring to light the voices of the marginalised victims in history and ruptures the dominant history writing by showing how literature itself can witness to human suffering.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

The study is based on an interdisciplinary theoretical approach which combines trauma theory, testimony theory, memory studies, and feminist criticism and uses this to analyse *Khol Do* by Saadat Hasan Manto, as a literary testimony of the aftermath of the Partition of 1947 and what it wrought upon humanity. This way of working allows for a fuller comprehension of the story as a fictional text, but also as an ethical intervention that chronicles collective pain, celebrates marginalised histories and that poses questions regarding the gendered nature of communal violence.

The analysis is mostly based on trauma theory, especially that of Cathy Caruth, who has theorized trauma as something that can only be understood in the event, but also manifests through incomplete memory or past trauma, silence, and repetition. However, trauma can only be narrated by gestures to the past because the psychological response is manifested in indirect ways, and its effects are often delayed. This theory is particularly applicable to *Khol Do* since the unspoken reaction to "Khol Do" has become a constant psychological repercussion of violence. Her unspoken words and the stereotypical movements show trauma as a physical and non-verbal phenomenon, a non-rational and beyond-language experience.

Testimony theory is a companion to trauma theory, which offers an ethical framework for the understanding of literature as testimony. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub suggest that testimony is not simply the recording of historical events; rather it is an ethical involvement with events that have been silenced and/or excluded from dominant accounts. In this light, *Khol Do* is a literary work of witnessing, making the voices of ordinary victims who are marginalized in state-centred histories of Partition visible. Through Manto's story, therefore, the fictional becomes reality, allowing readers to become witnesses to a set of moral facts – the facts of communal violence.

This analysis is enhanced by the study of memory which considers literature as an archive of different experiences. The contribution of culture to preserving collective memory in the absence of a lived experience is underlined by Pierre Nora's theory of lieux de mémoire, and the way traumatic events influence subsequent generations through culture and narrative by way of Marianne Hirsch's theory of postmemory. These viewpoints are read by *Khol Do* to hold onto the emotions of Partition that went beyond the bounds of official history, so that the experience of violence lives on in the collective memory.

The study also references feminist scholarship such as the work of Urvashi Butalia and Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, who show how women's bodies became a target for communal honour, revenge and the power of the patriarchy during Partition. Sexual violence was not only an attack on individual women, it was an attack on entire communities through the collective humiliation of women. In this context, Sakina's victimisation is a reflection of the gendered nature of Partition and its underlying structures, which combined to turn women into symbols of symbolic retaliation and make their agency and subjectivity disappear.

From a methodological point of view, this article uses a qualitative perspective through textual analysis techniques using the method of close reading of the story *Khol Do*. The interpretation is complemented by historical analysis of Partition and pertinent trauma, testimony, memory and feminist theory. The analysis does not isolate the story from its historical and cultural setting, but situates it against the backdrop of the rich historical and cultural context, to show how Manto uses the fictional text as an ethical archive that testifies to the lived realities of the victims of Partition. This interdisciplinary approach allows for a more complex interpretation of literature as not only art form but also as a form of history, and shows the enduring importance of *Khol Do* in the perpetuation of memory of one of the twentieth century's great humanitarian tragedies.

Witnessing the Collapse of Humanity

Saadat Hasan Manto's *Khol Do* does not tell of the partition of 1947 as a political event; it tells of the partition as a great humanitarian tragedy which undermines the moral fabric of society. Instead of painting a picture of big battles or politics, Manto's work is about the life of ordinary people whose lives are torn apart by communal violence. The making of a story about Sirajuddin and his daughter Sakina reveals how Partition violence infiltrates the sacred and profane spaces of human existence, changing everyday places into ones of terror and life. By doing this, Manto

takes the focus off the national victory and communal culpability and onto the universal humanity of suffering.

Khol Do is one of the most characteristic story to portray everyday violence as an ordinary circumstance rather than an uncommon event. Violence does not just happen in grand moments of bloodshed, and it is present in everyday living – in the form of displacement, uncertainty, separation and constant danger of death. As Sirajuddin rushes to find his daughter, he finds himself in overcrowded refugee camps, ravaged landscapes and communities without security or stability. These everyday tragic events show that the Partition humanitarian situation was more than just physical suffering: it has shattered family relations, undermined social identities, and denied people their fundamental rights for human dignity:

over and over again and gave them a description of Sakina. 'She's fair and very beautiful; she's taken after her mother, not me. She's about seventeen. Large eyes, black hair, there's a big beauty spot on her right cheek. She's my only daughter. Please find her. Your God will reward you.'

Manto's avoidance of sensationalism in depicting violence suggests that he intended to let violence's subtle and pervasive nature serve as her message of the catastrophe's magnitude. This all-pervading violence is closely allied with the moral disintegration of communal conflict. The story illustrates how violence destroys moral values and in its place, compassion is replaced by suspicion, brutality and indifference. People who are otherwise supposed to be a part of humanist values become engagers in or silent spectators at acts of unthinkable savagery. This moral breakdown is not presented in terms of a moral condemnation, but through subtle storytelling devices that draw the reader to the norm of violence. The worst moments in *Khol Do* are exactly those moments for which Manto refuses to imagine a drama. Instead, Manto shows how the most brutal moments become part of the normal activities of society, "*She's alive, my daughter's alive!*" This kind of representation is a warning of the kind of violence that can tear apart the moral fabric of society and make communal hatred so readily available.

Another key theme of the story is the strife and breakdown of communal coexistence. Prior to Partition there were various religious groups coexisting, despite social and political differences. These relationships were fractured by the violence of 1947, which ushered in new dynamics of mistrust and suspicion between neighbours and neighbours became enemies. Importantly, Manto does not make simplistic victim/perpetrator distinctions based on religious identity. His story is not about the suffering of one

community at the expense of another – it shows how communal violence took hold of people of every religion. Manto's refusal to identify violence only as Hindu or Muslim or Sikh, stands in opposition to the nationalist and communal histories that blame collective guilt. He is very focused on the pain suffered by the act of hatred, not on the identity of one who suffers or brings it.

This is not a communal partisan stance that leaves Manto apart from ideological discourses which portray Partition as a Muslim versus Hindu struggle. The story does not glorify the nation-state or condone the act of retaliative violence for communal honour. Manto, however, places the common fragility of human nature at the centre of the political situation to which they are subject. Sirajuddin's grief as a father in search of his daughter rises above his faith and is universal in nature: grief, fear and helplessness. Likewise, the idea of Sakina's suffering is not just the tragedy of a Muslim woman, but a representation of the scores of women whose bodies were sacrificed by communal wrangling, without regard to national or religious differences. These characters bring to life persons who are frequently identified only as numbers in historical context, thus reviving their individuality.

The narrative also reveals the extent of moral decay that comes when civilization fails. Other institutions and individuals that ought to preserve the lives of the helpless are helpless to prevent violence and restore justice. Fear, prejudice and opportunism prevail over the humanitarian ideals which sustain social coexistence. But Manto does not blame this moral cowardice for being unique to a specific community or institution, this is a human problem in which violence is killing the moral responsibilities people have towards each other. This is because of his restrained narrative style: the reader is able to detect that there is no compassion in the absence of the judgement of the author.

From the perspective of literary witnessing, *Khol Do* makes these acts of violence and moral decay a lasting witness of Partition. Manto does not write history, but rather his emotional truths, which official histories tend to miss. He presents the view of the ordinary suffering that stands in opposition to triumphalist stories of Independence that saw the emergence of nations alongside the loss of countless lives. Thus, *Khol Do* insists in the fact that the real Partition's legacy is not only the changing borders but also the irreparable trauma that has been caused in human relations, ethical values and collective consciousness. The story unfolds and unfolds, driven by a persistent sense of joint suffering, to be one of the most devastating literary critiques of communal violence in contemporary South Asian literature.

Sakina's Body as the Battlefield of Partition

The most disturbing part of Saadat Hasan Manto's *Khol Do* is its portrayal of the female body as the main arena where the violence of Partition is being applied. Although the search for the girl is a central theme in the novel, its ambiance and intent are much broader than simply being about an old man's quest to find his daughter; it's also about an attempt to understand how bodies become symbolic zones in which ideas of honour, revenge, and patriarchy are violently negotiated by the community. Instead of Sakina being shown as just a single victim, Manto shows her as a representative figure, and shows the suffering of thousands of women who were abducted, raped, converted and displaced in 1947 during the Partition. *Khol Do* is exposed in Sakina's doomed story as the acts of violence against women were not random, but rather a deliberate policy of communal retaliation.

Time and time again, Partition scholarship has found that women were always at the heart of communal violence, due to their bodies being seen as repositories of family honour and religious identity. Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin believe the violence against women during Partition was very symbolic and aimed at not just the individual victim, but the entire community. As they observe,

each sought to punish the other not only by inflicting pain but also, and more specifically, on the women of the other group so that the memory of indignities would never cease to haunt the future (Menon and Bhasin 31).

Their argument highlights the role of sexual violence in Partition as it became a means to express communal hatred against women. In *Khol Do*, Sakina's body too becomes a contested space on which violence of Partition gets inscribed; a more general patriarchal logic that substantiates the violation of women as a dishonouring of an entire community.

For a woman whose life revolves around sex, Manto's depiction of rape is stunning in its moderation. Instead of picturing Sakina's suffering in graphic detail, he leaves the impact of the violence that is done to her implied and silent. The climax of the story is when the doctor in the hospital says to someone, "Khol Do" ("Open it"), in the hospital. Sakina feels the assaults repeatedly, and has internalized them so she automatically unfastens the drawstring on her trousers as instructed. This one action is all that is needed to symbolize the irreparable psychological damage caused by sexual violence. Manto does not indulge in sensationalism; it is the normalization of the worst of the horrors that lies in the victims' consciousness. No longer an independent person, Sakina's reaction is a trauma that has been internalised, without choice and not under her control.

In this episode, another dimension of violence, dehumanizing effects of patriarchal violence, is also exposed. The whole story depicts Sakina as a faceless object that is denied agency and subjected to different forms of male authority. Her identity is increasingly erased as she becomes increasingly a body exploited over and over, instead of being a daughter looking for protection. The patriarchal ownership is not limited to specific individuals, it is also part of the collective “family” ideology which views women as objects of collective honour instead of human beings. As for Partition, menon and Bhasin note that the politics of violence against women was not from the periphery, it was from the very centre of the Partition where communities claimed their supremacy and tried to maintain their ideas of purity through women's bodies. Manto's storytelling powerfully reveals this patriarchy, as she does not romanticize the pain of a woman, nor take Sakina as a symbol of the victim position, but instead the voice of her silence is a terrible accusation against the systems and structures that allowed for this pain.

As noteworthy is Manto's employment of voicelessness as a style of storytelling. The violence Sakina suffers isn't explicitly described and she doesn't tell her own story. This muteness is not meaningless, it's trauma that will not be uttered. She is unable to talk about herself because there are so many other women who were unable to find a voice in history due to shame, stigma and social ostracism. In this regard, *Khol Do* is a perfect example of testimony theorist's conception of the limits of language in communicating extreme violence. Manto is aware that not all suffering can be described in words, but can only be expressed through the medium of silence. The story thus forces readers to look at what isn't said, to look at absence as one of the most powerful means of witnessing.

In finality, Sakina surpasses herself to represent the countless women who were affected by Partition in such a way that their lives were forever changed. Her life is broken, a symbolic representation of the communal violence and patriarchal brutality of which women's bodies were the theatres. In focusing on her experience, Manto offers a counternarrative to triumphalist accounts of nation building, and calls attention to the suffering of people, who have been forgotten from official narratives. *Khol Do* is not only a story of one fictional character but also the history of countless characters whose names have not been recorded—confirming the vital role literature plays in remembering and bringing the humanity back to those who are too often forgotten in history.

Trauma Beyond Physical Violence

In the devastation of Partition, Saadat Hasan Manto's *Khol Do* shows the violence not only goes beyond physical

violence. Though sexual assault and displacement are portrayed, the narrative is more about the long-term psychological impacts of trauma that remain with survivors long after the violence has ended. In the character of Sirajuddin and Sakina, Manto shows that there were invisible wounds of Partition that shattered memory, identity and emotional stability. In this way, the story reaffirms Cathy Caruth's notion that trauma is not just the trauma of the event but one that comes back in, and out of, the repetitions, silences, and involuntariness. Trauma can, thus, be experienced as a historical event, but also as a psychological state.

The emotional heart of the story lies in Sirajuddin's frantic lookout for his missing daughter, and represents the psychological trauma of many of the Partition survivors. Sirajuddin's emotional disorientation is caused by the murder of his wife and the disappearance of Sakina in the crossing that has since been established between the two nations. He is not certain that his daughter is alive - he is just hoping that she is. Instead of suggesting a progression in grief, Manto suggests that grief is a state of constant uncertainty, in which the lack of closure can deepen emotional pain. As Sirajuddin tries to find Sakina again, he repeatedly searches for her, illustrating the shards of consciousness of a survivor who now subsists on memory, longing, and despair.

The emotional splitting-up is indicative of what trauma theorists refer to as an “interruption of coherent identity”. Traumatic experiences, Caruth states, “*will not fully enter the consciousness, and they will therefore manifest indirectly and repeatedly*” (7). This is illustrated by Manto's Sakina's involuntary reaction in the hospital. If the doctor orders her to “*Khol Do*” (“Open it”), she will automatically unwind the drawstring on her salwar without being aware of what is going on around her. The violence she suffered is imprinted on her body and mind, and her mechanical reaction, which is a response to this violence, proves that. The scene demonstrates how trauma lingers beyond the healing of physical wounds, and has its own way of expressing itself - not through words but through actions.

The story also highlights the simultaneous absence(s) and grievances of helplessness that are a feature of the aftermath of communal violence. The absence of Sirajuddin's ability to safeguard his daughter is indicative of the complete breakdown in family and social security, and Sakina's silence represents the lack of voice that can be often associated with severe psychological trauma. Here Manto's silence is not a lack of narration but a moral way of portraying unspeakable suffering.

Historical accounts of Partition are often expressed in terms of statistics of death or displacement, and by foregrounding

these psychological aspects, *Khol Do* calls this into question. The story shows that violence is not over when the blood dries up, but that it continues in the memory, identity, and daily life. Survivors' lives continue to be haunted by loss, fear and emotional fragmentation, and this is the afterlife of Partition. In the midst of Sirajuddin's perpetual sorrow and Sakina's physical suffering, Manto shows that the worst scars of the Partition are unseen but indelible. For this reason, *Khol Do* is a strong reminder of the long-lasting psychological impact of communal violence, emphasizing the enduring nature of trauma beyond mere history.

Literature as Testimony

Khol Do is more than just a story, it is a cry for literature and a literary testimony of Saadat Hasan Manto. The story is not just about one episode of the Partition violence but is an account of experiences which are largely missing from official historical records. Historiography of Partition tends to focus on political discussions, population figures and the movement of boundaries, thereby marginalizing the human aspect of the Partition. But Manto makes a shift in focus to the domestic lives of everyday people – who suffer from loss, fear, displacement, gendered violence. By doing so *Khol Do* has captured those truths of Partition which can't be told in the official archives. The story becomes an ethical archive, not just a description of the what but also the what it was like to experience one of the biggest humanitarian catastrophes of the twentieth century.

Khol Do is important because of its ability to tell stories of marginalized pasts. Frequently these victims were denied a place in state-centred historical narratives that focused on nation-building instead of on the suffering of the victims, especially women, refugees and displaced families. Manto's story does just this and tells the stories of the violence that may not be recorded or even remembered in official history. The drama of Sakina is not narrated as a one-off story of tragedy; rather it is offered as a metaphor for the many women whose plights were never recorded due to social taboos, a silence of the patriarchy, and politics. Manto brings these forgotten lives back to the history books in literary testimony.

While official archives must be substantiated by documentary evidence and by the facts, literature will capture emotional truths that may not be captured by facts. Trauma is often too much to be directly represented and finds its way back through the memory, through the silence, and through the repetition, says Cathy Caruth. Manto employs this type of writing by denying readers a visual representation of the violence that has taken place, while leaving it implicit, and instead using the psychological disintegration to reveal the trauma. The words Sakina utters when told to 'Khol Do' are the most powerful description of

the devastating consequences of sexual violence to come out of it than if it were described explicitly. The story thus documents not only the event itself but also the long-term psychological effects that it had, documenting aspects of experience unknown to the standard archive.

Manto's literary testimony also gives voice to marginalized victims, who are not heard in mainstream history. Butalia makes a point that official narratives do not capture the history of Partition because there are many stories which do not appear in the official history, especially those of the women and the marginalized groups. Likewise, Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin argue that women were turned into "symbolic bearers of communal honour" and 'sexual violence' therefore spread across the board, which was buried under the ideology and jargon of nationalism (Menon and Bhasin). By never making Sakina's plight into just a number or abstract symbol, Manto speaks directly to these realities of history. Rather, he makes her human, by making it salient how violence affects her emotionally and psychologically, and how this is irreversible.

In this regard, *Khol Do* is similar to the oral histories gathered by other scholars like Urvashi Butalia and Anchal Malhotra. In contrast to the oral testimonies which seek to reconstruct the lived realities of Partition through recollections of the survivors, Manto's fiction imaginatively represents Partition through literary devices. These two modes of narration problematize the official history by giving greater weight to memory, feeling, and personal anguish than to political history. While oral narratives give voice to those who went unrecorded by history, Manto's fiction exudes psychological and ethical truths that the facts will often not record. Literary testimony does not contradict historical evidence, it merely adds to it, encompassing the emotional aspects of violence that can be found only in its literary context.

Pierre Nora's idea of lieux de mémoire also brings to light the historical importance of Manto's work. Nora asserts that cultural texts, when they are not lived again and the lived experience therefore fades from collective memory, are the locations of memory. From this angle, *Khol Do* serves as a literary memorial of Partition that helps to pass on the human history of Partition to future generations. The story does not allow the suffering of the ordinary people to be forgotten over the years, or obscured by nationalist celebrations of Independence. It shifts the individual suffering into collective memory, and sees literature as a medium to preserve history.

In the end, *Khol Do* shows the special power of literature to testify to human suffering in the face of official archives that lie silent. Through its preservation of marginalized narratives, documentation of emotional truths and the

visibility of narrative for the victims, Manto makes fiction an everlasting form of historical memory. His tale is one with oral histories it is necessary to keep, a testament to the fact that the most profound truths of history lie not in documents issued by the government but in the stories that bravely retain the voices of those who were silenced.

IV. CONCLUSION

Khol Do by Saadat Hasan Manto is one of the most interesting literary accounts of the human tragedy of the Partition in 1947 for its attention to the human reality of Partition victims instead of political history. The study has contended that the narrative has to be read as a testimony of fiction, rather than simply a fictionalized history of this communal violence, but as a profoundly literary record of human suffering and emotional and psychological authenticity of one of the twentieth century's greatest humanitarian disasters. As Sirajuddin and Sakina's lives weave together, Manto is able to tell us that the impact of Partition is not just physical, it is also emotional, mental and spiritual; it is about the family, its bonds and values, all of which have been shattered. His story refuses nationalistic dualities and communal polarization, puts human suffering on the forefront, and thus reclaims dignity for people whose history has been on the margins of official history.

One of the major themes of *Khol Do* is the change from fiction to testimony. But Manto does not chronicle political facts or historical figures, instead of which she documents emotional truths that are often missing from government records and traditional history. The unsaid words, the involuntary body language and Sirajuddin's frantic efforts all reveal the unseen horrors of Partition that remain with the survivors long after the shooting has stopped. Through the preservation of these experiences, Manto also creates an ethical archive, urging readers to remember that communal hatred has a human cost, and that literature can be a powerful tool for doing so, while also reminding them of ways in which histories are forgotten.

The character of the Partition violence is also highlighted in the story. Through the character of Sakina, Manto highlights the individual and the collective as equally protagonist; she shows the communal revenge that went beyond an individual body and became one of a myriad of women's bodies. His understated storytelling is devoid of sensation and shows how silence, breaking and psychological destruction are a permanent sign of trauma. As such, *Khol Do* not only enters into the world of Partition literature but also into the larger world of trauma, memory, gender and human rights.

Khol Do is the ongoing significance of the time of the past. As communal warfare, forced immigration, ethnic violence

and humanitarian crises continue to plague the world, Manto's tale is a strong reminder that there is a moral obligation to witness a suffering world. Literary witnessing asserts that the dominant representation of the world is incomplete, and that voices that it fails to hear or acknowledge can be heard instead through literature. The transmission of the survivor's generation of memory to the next makes the cultural value of literary texts such as *Khol Do* more and more important as cultural archives that help to maintain collective memory and prompt critical reflection of the outcomes of intolerance and violence.

Comparative studies with Manto's fictional testimony and Partition oral histories, memoirs and non-fictional Partition narratives, such as Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence*, Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin's *Borders and Boundaries*, Anchal Malhotra's *Remnants of a Separation* and Devika Chawla's *Home Uprooted*, may be extended in the future. These inter-disciplinary research would enrich the knowledge about the entanglements of literature, memory, testimony and history and show how varied forms of narration have been able to hold and preserve the experiences of Partition together. The book is in the first place not just a story of a violent incident; it refuses to be forgotten and reminds readers of the long-lasting moral ramifications of communal hatred and the voices of the forgotten victims of Partition.

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