



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**A Study of Partition Trauma in *Anguish of Separation*: Gobind Malhi's Perspective**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study examine trauma theory, as framed by Cathy Caruth, and concepts of identity in Gobind Malhi's *Anguish of Separation* are shaped by postcolonial discourse, specifically through Partition and memory. Drawing on Edward Said's Orientalism, Homi Bhabha's hybridity, and Gayatri Spivak's subaltern concept, the research analyzes how Partition trauma and colonial narratives marginalize voices and impact generations. Thematic analysis reveals that suffering, loss, and cultural alienation contribute to fractured identities. While Bhabha's theory explicates hybrid identity formation, Spivak highlights the silence of subaltern voices, and Caruth addresses trauma's enduring psychological effects. Said's framework focuses on the 'self/other' binary and changes in Eastern identity. Collectively, these approaches demonstrate that personal and collective separation after Partition deeply impacts identity, memory, and power relations. Under colonial and postcolonial circumstances enforcing the concept of 'us' and 'others'. Whereas, fractured sense of identity is visible which is at the heart of Bhabha's hybridity theory.

**Keywords:** Partition, Memory, Identity, trauma, separation, Marginalization

**Introduction**

The partition of India-Pakistan took place under the Indian Independence Act, which was passed by the British Parliament on July 18, 1947. The division was scheduled to go into effect on August 15. This led to one of the biggest mass displacements of 15,000,000 Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims who hurried to cross the borders drawn before the partition was finished. Between 200,000 and 2,000,000 individuals are thought to have perished during the division (Dosaanjh, 2016). On the other hand, Mookerjea Leonard (2017) reports abduction of around 75,000 women who were violated by men from rival religious groups. The division, which was achieved at great human cost It permanently altered the national psyche of Pakistan and India and its effects are still felt by the people of those nations today. Displacement on such a large scale took a lot from people, no matter which race and/or religion they were a part of. The actual argument of the reasoning behind this partition was religion, yes, but soon within the respected religions, people of different languages started fighting (Singh, 2012). Muslims were fighting with other Muslims because they chose not to speak the same language. Hindus did not like anyone that wasn't on the same page as them. The partition gave each religion its own land but took so much from the people of said land, that the trauma of those events is still found in the survivors and is causing animosity between the two countries up to the present time. The people thought their biggest concern was crossing the border, they weren't ready for the violence and the bloodshed. They did not take into consideration the loss of identity they'll feel on being misplaced and having to uproot their entire lives. The sense of confusion was immense in the people because even though they were on the side of "Muslims" or "Hindus", they were now in a place where people looked different and languages that were being spoken were not at all what they had been familiar with. When the new borders were revealed, approximately 15,000,000 Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus escaped from their homes on one side of the freshly drawn borders to what they believed was to "safety" on the other side (Butalia, 2017). Though none of this was

easy because there were religions involved and the killings kept taking place in the trains that were transporting refugees across the new frontier. People travelling by foot were victims of travelling for days on foot, starvation, and losing their family members in the crowds. Up to 2,000,000 people were killed in communal massacres during that terrible fight of innocents (Talbot & Singh, 2009). Sikhs, who had taken up residence in Punjab's new division, sustained the greatest number of casualties in comparison to their population. The first 6 weeks of division were the worst with the most casualties recorded but that did not stop from religious people to taking matters into their own hands and eliminating any and all persons from the different religion. Conflicts and fights started breaking out in places that were considered "safe" and people had picked those to take refuge. Upon reaching people soon discovered it was every man for himself because the lack of water and food was a burden they all had to suffer through. The grief was heavy on everyone but accompanied by the filthy refugee camps and unsanitary living conditions, people started losing their lives even when they had thought they were out of the woods (Khan, 2017). On the side of Pakistan, fights between eastern and western provinces broke out because of different language, which resulted in Bengali's gaining their country now known as Bangladesh, previously known as Eastern Pakistan. Though the fight over Kashmir is still ongoing between India and Pakistan because that part wasn't distributed properly at the time of the independence. It has been 75 years since the separation, but the arguments and the animosity these countries and their people are still ongoing, being fed by the governments of each side. The rivalry between India and Pakistan is getting more, rather than less, dangerous: the two countries' nuclear arsenals are growing, militant groups are becoming more capable, and rabid media outlets on both sides are shrinking the scope for moderate voices". People who have suffered through the partition or have heard stories from their parents believe the tension will never end between the countries as they've collectively suffered extraordinarily traumatic bloodshed that accompanied it (Roy, 2019). The partition is and will always be remembered as a part of history that brings up heavy emotions. War is always heavy on women and children, yes, the men have to go and fight the fight, taking place but the women have to stay behind and look after themselves for months with the burden of knowing the breadwinner of their families might never make it back. The children are often victims of diseases that need serious medical help, which was mostly not available on demand and they had suffered by being malnourished. There is no lie when it is said "women suffered the most during the partition." Women on both sides of the border were unsafe and survived through the consequences of choosing their religion and their native language. Since both religions, Hinduism and Islam, treat their women with great respect and have the notion that their honour is within the honour of their wives, daughters, sisters etc. The men on the other side decided to take it upon themselves to harm that honour (Menon & Bhasin, 1998). Women in the time of partition went through inhumane and horrific events, such as rape, kidnapping and slaughter "About 75000 women are thought to have been abducted and raped" On the other hand, Ian Talbot argues that cases of women abduction were 100,000. Most of the kidnapped women were always forced to give up their religions and convert to the one which their captor was following. The news of horrific punishments had people, especially women on high alert and when they sensed looming danger around their area of refuge, they would take their honour into their own hands and would choose to exit this world on their own terms (Jalal, 2013). The trauma that our own grandmothers and their moms faced is significantly present within us too. The intergenerational trauma is said to still affect the women of India and Pakistan to this day. Intergenerational trauma causes a reduction in cortisol levels, which is a type of hormone that is crucial for stress management. The children of these traumas are more likely to be anxious in their day-to-day lives and suffer from PTSD. Numerous studies have also found that survivors of sexual abuse are more likely to have children who are also subjected to sexual violence (Butalia, 1994). Scientists, practitioners, and researchers worldwide are devotedly attempting to increase our understanding of trauma, intergenerational trauma is an essential component in the effort of understanding trauma. Research about the mass effect of historical trauma originating from such large-scale events as the Partition of India,

which can and frequently does harm the descendants of entire communities, has just started happening and has opened up the topic to people on both sides of the border. This research can assist in recognizing and resolving certain behavioral and emotional problems that might emerge in today's generations as a result of indirect trauma exposure. Even then, the researchers are unable to locate any research that compared the degree and kind of intergenerational trauma in children and grandchildren of trauma survivors, including those who survived the Indian Partition.

## Literature Review

As the literature surveys the aftermath of colonial rule, prioritizes themes such as identity crises, displacement, trauma, and hybridity. One of the most horrific impacts of colonialism in South Asia was the Partition of Pakistan-India in 1947, which led to mass violence, forced migrations, and deep-seated cultural bursts. Partition literature, written by survivors and later generations, serves as a strong channel to reflect on this historical damage and its lingering effects.

*Separation* by Gobind Malhi is a seminal literary work on Partition literature offering a unique contribution to this literature and a unique Sindhi perspective. The novel adds to the broader available Partition of India discourse. His work is a Sindhi perspective in the novel portraying the forced displacement and trauma experienced by Sindhi Hindus. The novel explores their struggles as a result migration and expresses loss of identity and longing for their homeland forcibly taken away from them. As a result, the novel treats memory as a tool for preserving identity, showcasing how forcibly displaced individuals struggle to maintain a link with their past. The novel also presents how the partition caused psychological pain, emotional suffering and cultural loss ensuing longing for their lost homeland. Orientalism by Edward Said examines how colonial discourse constructed South Asian identities and construction of the 'East' as the 'Other'. This is pivotal in deciphering how ideological orientation contributed to the binary division leading to the Partition of India (Butalia, 2015). Similarly, the concept of hybridity by Homi Bhabha contributed to unpack identities of all those individuals who were caught in-between especially vis-à-vis survivors of the partition and their descendants grappling with a sense of fragmented sense of belonging (Bhabha, 1994). On the other hand, Spivak's subaltern studies offers insights into the marginalized and unheard voices, especially women, refugees and the poor. Lastly, Trauma theory by Cathy Caruth helps gain deeper understanding of the psychological and generation across partition impact (Butalia, 2017). And this study integrates these postcolonial frameworks to examine the work that represents the subaltern and marginalized voices of the Sindhi Hindu experience serving and contributing to the subaltern historiography of the displaced individuals, refugees and forgotten communities of the partition and by integrating these theories the study examines how partition, memory and identity are represented and remembered. Gobind Malhi's *Anguish of Separation* provides a criticism to the political decision resulting in suffering and loss of millions. Thus it requires a detailed understanding vis-à-vis postcolonial theory, trauma studies and other perspectives such as subaltern voice to unfold identity, memory and historical representation. The novel can be studied using the postcolonial theories of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity, Gayatri Spivak's subaltern studies and Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma to critically analyze partition representation and to explore the themes of identity, memory as a tool for preserving it and the search for belonging among those who migrated. Each of these lenses offers a perspective to understand how and in what ways colonial discourse constructed identity, traumatic events having influence on collective consciousness and marginalized voices of the poor and women struggle to be heard in dominant narrative voices. Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity (1994) as to the liminal identities of the partition survivors is useful, especially the identities of the displaced individuals after the partition (Gayatri, 2009). Bhabha is of the view that the postcolonial subjects live in 'third space' – a space where cultural identities are not fixed but they are

constantly negotiated between the past and the present. This representation exemplifies as hybrid identity, carrying memories of the people, places and houses from which they were forced to move away. Thus the characters are seen to oscillate between a longing for the kind of life they lived and trying to assimilate into the new identity. For example, masters turned into refugees related how they lived in harmony with neighbour of different faith and how they were forced to redefine their identity based on religion. Gayatri Spivak's '*Can the Subaltern Speak?*' (1998) questions the erased voices of the marginalized in dominant historical narratives (M. J. Dutta, 2018). Spivak is of the view that the subaltern such as the poor, women and other marginalized people usually have no access to platforms where their voices get audibility. Consequently, the elite has the voice and reflects their perspective. As far as the partition is concerned, most of the women, lower class refugees were affected severely but remain underrepresented in the mainstream narrative. Many accounts depict life and achievement of political leaders and military achievements thereby neglecting those who suffered most. For example, women suffered violence as they were abducted, sexually assaulted and converted forcibly but still their voices have been neglected in historical annals. In this context, Spivak's theory helps critique such representation and drawing attention to the historically silenced voices. This framework allows to analyze silenced and marginalized voices in the novel *Anguish of Separation*.

### **Cathy Caruth's Trauma theory**

As to the lingering psychological wounds of the partition Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma (1996) explores how traumatic events resurface in individual and collective memory. According to Caruth the trauma is usually experienced retrospectively in the form of inherited memories, flashback and recurring nightmares. This trauma is not bound to those who underwent it but can be seen across generations in the form of loss, dislocation and inherited grief. Gobind Malhi's *Anguish of Separation* allows to examine in what ways a literary attempt articulates historical trauma and serves as a memory text to reconstruct loss (DUTTA, 2009). The transformation of indigenous Sindhi Hindus to Indian Sindhi Hindus. Previously, they were living in Sindh. They did not have a threat to the practice of their religion, but their ethnic identity was at risk of losing. After partition and migration to India, they attempted literary platforms and tried to align their ethnic affiliations not within the Indian refugee camps but also Sindh, the left place during the migration (Dutta, 2015). Gobind Malhi is a prominent writer but his contribution is seen within the limited framework of language and Sindhi literature. His works particularly *Anguish of Separation* is not studied from postcolonial perspective and the scholarship remains little. This study explores how Gobind Malhi's *Anguish of Separation* enriches the literature on partition showcasing a perspective on displacement, memory and identity from Sindhi Hindus perspective. In doing so, his work is rightly awarded a broader academic literary discourse on the partition of India. Also, this study by challenging dominant narrative offers valuable insights into postcolonial studies giving recognition to the experience of Sindhi Hindus in the global literary and historical discussions (Johnston, 2015).

### **Material and Method**

This study adopts a qualitative research design which focuses on textual analysis to uncover postcolonial themes. This design is appropriate for literary and cultural studies as meaning, representation and interpretation lie at the heart of the texts. Moreover, qualitative research is effective to understand the text contextually and engage with it using interpretive paradigm unlike quantitative approach which is fit for statistical data. According to the interpretive paradigm reality is constructed socially and historically and meanings are not fixed. *Anguish of Separation* mirrors the lived experiences during the partition. These lived experiences of displacement and trauma offer individual consciousness, fragmented memory and identity crisis. Gobind Malhi's *Anguish of Separation* is the primary data source which is analysed for closed reading and thematically. In addition to the primary text, this study extends the analysis to secondary sources related

to postcolonial and trauma theory sources, books, journal articles, research papers on the partition literature and historical documents and accounts of partition experiences. The analytical method includes close textual analysis with a focus on themes such as trauma, memory, identity and marginalization using interpretive tools. To unpack the themes, the selected novel is read repeatedly to identify major themes of displacement, violence, memory, silence, hybridity and fragmented identity.

## Results and Discussion

The study offers seeds of division in the novel *Anguish of Separation*. Social and psychological fragmentation is the reflection in these chapters during the partition of India that the Hindu Sindhi migrants experienced. It powerfully presents a microcosm of the sufferings and how and in what ways the Partition of India in 1947 impacted Sindhi Hindus. Thus the story of the novel delves deeply into the human experience of separation and explores themes of Partition, loss, longing, memory and fractured identities. The story is seated in the Sindhi narrative and provides a cultural landscape and social ethos of Sindh in connection with Sindhi speaking Hindus who migrated to India. Also, it explores how individuals who were forcibly displaced suffered psychological turmoil as they had to leave their dream homes and loved ones. The indelible scars of the partition are shown through the main character depicting how memory and identity are interconnected and cause historical trauma. Malhi has effectively interweaved elements of personal pain with collective memory depicting the episode of the partition not only personal pain but as a cultural and historical anguish. It piques readers' attention and emotion making them be on empathy with the pain of the protagonist. He is seen immersed in the past memories and attempting to wrestle with the anguish of separation. Despite that fact that he intends to move on, he is seen stuck in emotional detachment showcasing love, longing and attachment as a source of suffering. The analysis situates the characters and their interactions within the frameworks of postcolonial perspectives, particularly focusing on theories of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and Cathy Caruth and explores individual and collective trauma, displacement and the struggle for self-definition.

When Kundan expresses his willingness to help Saanwal, his psychological anguish hunches. This is the time which is the latent period of trauma as the actual partition has not taken place but its looming shadow is causing pain and distress.

*"The result was the widening rift between the Hindus and the Muslims of the village (Malhi, 1953/2014, p. 2)*

His fear is intense and physical. This is reflected in these lines:

*"Kundan inadvertently bit his lip while eating the potatoes...Once again a chill ran down his spine (Malhi, 1953/2014, p. 1) "He began to shiver all over, sleep took wings, his heart was filled with fright" (Malhi, 1953/2014, p. 4).*

Kundan's physical response demonstrating anxiety is not the immediate physical danger but a moral dilemma. It indicates deep psychological pain. He claims the discovery of the pain in these terms.

*"The fear of being apprehended kept haunting me (Malhi, 1953/2014, p. 1).*

This aligns with the Caruth's idea of bypassed trauma rather than immediate threat of discovery and later on it returns in the form of guilt and shame. Moreover, Kundan's understanding of reality is broken when he discovers that his father's rituals are meant to exploit instead of offering security.

He confesses: *"But today I broke into that fort. May be father meant this for thieves from outside.... This is injustice, definitely injustice (Malhi, 1953/2014, p. 4).*

This utterance shows that he realizes morality as lie and stealing act is secondary compared to psychological trauma when he comes to know the exploitative tactics used by his family. This is how he weighs on his father's piety against the injustice done to Ebrahim. Kundan notices calmness and peacefulness of the village shattered after the lapse of a few months. This aligns with Cathy Caruth theory of belated traumatic experience. As a result of that shift there is a psychological shift in their interpersonal relationships. There is also a physical shift in tone and behavior of the people who used to be humble and loving. Instead they have started misbehaving and have perturbed the peaceful atmosphere of the village. A place where they used to live in harmony without any religious boundary.

A happy event for the Muslims would be equally happiness heralding for the Hindus and a pain for the Hindus would be Muslim's pain.

*"Kundan also noticed that debt-ridden Muslims who used to come earlier meekly to his father now came and misbehaved...Although there wasn't much apparent change in Ahmed Shah's behavior on the surface, deep inside he too was affected. (Malhi, 1953/2014, p. 9).*

According to the theory of Caruth these later symptoms of anxiety render it difficult to integrate the events into a coherent narrative. As a result, symptoms of social breakdown are visible before the event of partition.

Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity argues that 'Third Space' is a situation in which different cultures interact mingle and the identity of the people living in such a situation overlap and there is no categorization of who they are in the first place. The village fits Bhabha's 'Third Space' in the beginning but later on money, power and politics end up forcing these spaces into black and white. And it was like *Sangam* lost to describe the lost hybridity of the friendship between two cousins.

*"The connecting of the hearts was like the Sangam of Ganga and Yamuna. At sufi gatherings, gambling dens and at religious meets, everywhere, Kundan would be with Saanwal (Malhi, 1953/2014, p. 9).*

In this extract, it is evident that Muslims and Hindus lived in a world of communal harmony and in such a world division seems irrelevant. This is parallel to the Homi Bhabha's third space. Malha's narrative is rooted in the pre-political nostalgia and longing for unhomeliness. As the familiar village becomes unhomely, for the political argument makes the accepted norms of harmony unacceptable. Saanwal is perturbed by the forced parting and feels pained. The pain is expressed when he has an interaction with Kundan. In it the concept of 'unhomeliness is evident when the familiar village becomes strange.

*"Isn't my mother anything to you? And Kundan realizes the distance created by wealth and communal labels, he feels the weight of a world that is no longer hybrid (Malhi, 1953/2014, p. 9).*

Saanwal and Kundan are the epitome of that the hybrid space as it is seen under attack when they come to know about the political figures of the Syed which leads to violent partition of the region and separation of the once hybrid world.

*"...train coming from Sakrand to fo to Padidan and then proceed to Karachi (Malhi, 1953/2014, p. 13).*

According to Homi Bhabha 'Third Space' shapes cultural identity in which meanings are not fixed but are negotiated. It seems to be crumbling when controversy over Lal Khan's

role as Krishna. He had been performing the same role 'since years but there was never such a controversy and there was no objection over his playing Krishna. His role which emerges as nostalgia is held in high esteem and reinforces the sense of loss. This harmonious coexistence stands in contradiction with polarizing event and eroding hybrid existence. The narrative argues: "*We just don't want any Muslim enacting the role of our God.*" The religious ownership builds walls of separation. The growing political fanaticism perturbs the existing hybrid culture and existing fluid religious boundaries. Banning of the play attacks hybrid identity.

*"Although Lal Khan has been enacting the role of Krishan in 'Krishna-Sudama' since years, the thought of insult to Hindu religion, or boycotting the play had never occurred to anyone. (Malhi, 1953/2014, p. 90).*

The dialogue demonstrates that the boundaries between the Hindus and the Muslims were indistinguishable but forced rigid categories have come into play shattering their togetherness and syncretism. As the relationship between Saanwal and Kundan was the relationship of "*Sangam of Ganga and Yamuna*' (Malhi, 1953/2014, p. 9) which symbolized holy syncretism of two different streams. Orientalism by Edward Said argues how power structures creates the concepts of 'us' and 'other' to define others as inferior and themselves (us) as superior. In Gobind Malhi's *Anguish of Separation* characters who are poor and debt-ridden are defined 'other' by the wealthy and pious Mukhi. Among the 'other' are Saanwal, Jevuama, Ebrahim and Musa. These binaries become basis for the political boundaries during partition crisis.

Edward Said argues that identity is created through opposition. In the text of *Anguish of Separation* this opposition is created Hindus versus Muslims. When Lal Khan, who plays the part of Krishna god, is banned and considered an insult to their carnations, it shifts agreeable coexistence into the state of antagonism. With it 'Us' becomes rigid and creates religious differences. Saanwal questions this behavior in these words. '*Will heavens fall if a Muslim enacts the role of Krishna?*' On the other hand, Kundan justifies his status and wealth of his family. He, thus, creates binaries of economic disparities. His internal monologue justifies it in which Mukhi is 'deligently augmented' and is considered responsible while the uncle labelled as 'squandered' is deemed irresponsible. The binary indicates that the other is financially incompetent and Mukhi as competent. His financial competence justifies his exploitative lending practices.

*"My father and uncle both got equal share from grandfather, but uncle squandered all his wealth...on the other hand my father saved and diligently augmented his share. (Malhi, 1953/2014, p. 3).*

On the other hand, the chief Ahmed Shah enforces the newly constructed binaries with an iron hand. He becomes the colonial or patriarchal epitome to police the marginalized segment of society. The narrative argues that:

*'Ahmed Shah, in front of thousands, had ripped off his turban and broken his bones...Now at the Mukhi's instance, he will surely kill me (Malhi, 1953/2014, p. 4).*

As a result, Ebrahim becomes the victim of being 'other' is afraid of physical violence being inflicted by the powerful Ahmed Shah. Ebrahim was threatened with a 'truncheon' and belittled. It reinforces the absolute power and policing others based on status.

*'You some of an idiot....truncheon. . (Malhi, 1953/2014, p. 17).*

The politics in the village has become manipulative where local leaders for political gains create hijacked binaries. Both Muslims and Hindus construct religious binaries for their gains and manipulate simple-minded people from both sides. Abid Khan and Bachal

represent the construction on the Muslim side who propagate 'Islam in danger' (Malhi, 1953/2014, p. 2) and Gurmukh, Maharaj and Shankar represent Hindus who propagate 'Hindu religion in danger' (Malhi, 1953/2014, p. 2) to exploit religious sentiments. Thus both the groups deliberately manufacture the binary concept of 'us' and 'other'. Saanwal was a devotee to the Syeds. Therefore, Maharaj mocks him in these words in the narrative.

*"You too are a fan of the Syed, isn't it... What does this Sufi-Lakufi drug addict know besides consuming bhang and gambling (Malhi, 1953/2014, p. 3).*

Abid Khan labels the Hindus as infidels. Thus he employs religious rhetoric to strengthen his political stand. He argues:

*"Islam is in danger, we have to face four Hindus and so a tough Muslim is required...I want to defeat these infidels on their own turf (Malhi, 1953/2014, pp. 10-11).*

The text not only manufactures the concept of 'us' and 'other' on religious grounds but also on the grounds of wealthy and moral self and poor and degenerate other. Ahmed argues that Kundan should reject Saanwal and maintain his status. He asserts:

*'It is easier to be wasteral rather than be upright, it is easier to lose ones character than to develop it (Malhi, 1953/2014, p. 5).*

Ahmed Shah enjoying his statues also creates the binaries of the Law-give and the criminal. He can relegate anybody by exercising his political power. Thus he enjoys central position in the political arena of the village which goes parallel to the concept of Edward Said's construction of power.

Shah argues: *'Criminals are terrified of my repute...I am after all the Chief for Khanna and the entire village (Malhi, 1953/2014, p. 4).*

## Conclusion

The study of *Anguish of Separation* reveals that the partition trauma is a psychological wound that disrupts belonging, identity and memory. This study has enabled a deeper understanding of the emotional and intergenerational impact of partition highlighting how and in what ways historical wounds continue over time. According to Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma and hanging psychological wounds surface and resurface in the novel in the form of silence, fragmentation and betated recognition. The emotional suffering emerges through memory gaps, loss, longing, pain and recollection. And the trauma during the partition is not carried out by survivors but by the generations that follow them. And this trauma returns indirectly. *Anguish of Separation* broadens the scholarly understanding of the partition drama which goes beyond physical violence. It includes psychological aspect of narrative silence, fragmentation of identity and disrupted memory.

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