



Tracing the Onset and Course of Socio-Cultural and Psychological Trauma in the Works of Khushwant Singh, Bapsi Sidhwa, Kiran Desai and Rohinton Mistry

Mamta Thakur¹ and Dr Ashish Tiwari²

PhD Research Scholar, Department of English Literature, Pundit S.N. Shukla University, Shahdol, MP, India
mamtathakur3022@gmail.com

Professor, Department of English Literature, Pundit S.N. Shukla University, Shahdol, MP, India
profashishtiwarisdl@gmail.com

Abstract

This research explores the origins and development of psychological and sociocultural trauma in the context of invasions, wars, and social unrest. This study is centered around the writings of four well-known authors: Khushwant Singh, Bapsi Sidhwa, Kiran Desai, and Rohinton Mistry. A complex understanding of trauma is provided by the novels "Train to Pakistan," "Ice Candy Man," "Inheritance of Loss," "Such a Long Journey," and "A Fine Balance," which all depict trauma in different ways. With Singh and Sidhwa focusing on the trauma of the partition, Desai analyzing the effects of colonization and post-colonization, and Mistry investigating isolation and insecurity as major causes of trauma, the writers eloquently illustrate the effects of traumatic experiences. The definition of "trauma" is described as a complicated interaction between behavioral, emotional, and psychological changes brought on by unexpected and dangerous events. Experiences of this nature, whether isolated incidents or a sequence of them, have long-lasting negative consequences on a person's ability to function and general well-being. The study highlights how trauma affects people of all ages, genders, races, and ethnicities. It also highlights how universal trauma is. Traumatic experiences can result from a variety of situations, from sudden, extreme events like wars to ongoing issues like domestic abuse. The study emphasizes how trauma affects not just individuals but also families, communities, and entire cultures. It is noted that the "fight, flight, or freeze" response is a typical one during traumatic events, frequently causing feelings of vulnerability, powerlessness, and fear. The unexpectedness of these occurrences—which people may personally experience, see, or hear about—adds even more complexity to trauma. This study attempts to offer insights into the complex nature of trauma resulting from social unrest, wars, and invasions through a thorough analysis of literary works.

Keywords: *Trauma, Literary exploration, Partition trauma, Cultural and psychological effects, Khushwant Singh, Bapsi Sidhwa, Kiran Desai, Rohinton Mistry*



1. Introduction

Trauma is a broad term that encompasses the profound behavioral, emotional, and psychological changes that result from unexpected and frightening events. It has a profound impact on all aspects of human experience. Trauma can impact families, communities, and even entire cultures, regardless of whether it is caused by man-made tragedies like war and violence or by natural calamities like earthquakes and hurricanes. This intricate phenomenon is not limited to particular demographic groups; people of different ages, backgrounds, and ethnicities can be affected by its far-reaching effects.

Beyond the actual event, the complex nature of trauma emphasizes the subjective experience that shapes its effects on a person's functioning, social relationships, and general well-being. In the face of trauma, some people may find flexibility and resilience, while others struggle with long-lasting effects that show up as mood disorders, drug addiction, or posttraumatic stress disorder. Crucially, the understanding of trauma is changing, moving beyond conventional ideas to include a wider range of upsetting events, even ones that may not result in physical harm but nevertheless leave people feeling helpless and alone.

This introduction explores the many facets of trauma, including its causes, expressions, and the complex ways it affects the lives of those who experience it. This talk seeks to give a thorough overview of a phenomenon that drastically changes the path of human existence, covering everything from the historical development of understanding trauma to its various cultural and psychological dimensions.

Psychological trauma is a ubiquitous and frequently incapacitating experience that permanently alters people and communities by influencing how they react to unforeseen and dangerous situations. This significant effect encompasses a variety of psychological problems in addition to the immediate emotional reactions. Natural or man-made disasters, such as war and violence, can cause trauma, but the effects of trauma strain the foundation of a safe and predictable world. This investigation explores the complex dynamics of trauma, looking at its causes, expressions, and various effects on people.

Guilt, shame, anxiety, depression, and the actual trauma itself are just a few of the negative emotions that frequently define the emotional aftermath of trauma. Studies emphasize the importance of protective and risk factors in determining an individual's response to trauma, including prior trauma experiences, the intensity of the traumatic event, and supportive responses from others. Support from the public and social groups emerges as a critical protective factor that affects the course of recovery.

Trauma affects not only the victim's immediate emotional state but also their physical and mental well-being, affecting their immune and neurological systems. Extended periods of high levels of stress can have long-lasting detrimental effects that lower a person's general quality of life. One of the most dangerous effects of stress is the emergence of post-traumatic stress



disorder (PTSD), which has symptoms that include hypersensitivity, avoidance behaviors, and unsettling thoughts about the trauma.

The complexity of personal reactions has become clear as trauma research has advanced. It is suggested by researchers that roughly two-thirds of adults with a history of trauma experience normative posttraumatic reactions, meaning that not every traumatic event results in PTSD. It is not unusual for acute stress reactions to manifest within a month following trauma, especially in more severe cases. Children are more likely to experience PTSD because of their dependency and psychological immaturity, which highlights the importance of caregivers providing support, clarity, and assurance.

The study of trauma goes beyond personal accounts to include language, memory, and identity. The theoretical underpinnings of psychoanalysis are combined with sociocultural, post-structural, and post-colonial frameworks to explain the cultural and psychological significance of trauma. Since its beginnings in the 1990s, the study of trauma has changed, questioning established theories and adopting a more pluralistic perspective that recognizes the range of reactions to traumatic experiences.

The trauma narrative is further complicated by historical trauma that particular racial, ethnic, or cultural groups have experienced. Historical trauma is linked to significant oppressive events like forced migration and slavery, and it can affect people's physical and mental health for generations. The complexities of intergenerational trauma can be exacerbated by difficulties that the descendants of survivors may encounter, such as cultural identity impairment, attachment disorders, and isolation.

In light of this, the story also discusses particular historical traumatizing events, like the 1947 Indian partition. Even though it signaled the long-awaited independence, this event brought destruction, mental harm, and slaughter. Women in particular were the victims of atrocities that left communities dealing with the lasting effects of this traumatic time and left generations of people scarred. The effects of the Partition of India and Pakistan continue to have a lasting impact on the lives of survivors and their offspring, and the echoes of trauma continue to reverberate across time and into the present. Originally planted in urban areas, the roots of this violence eventually made their way to small towns, leaving a lasting legacy of sorrow, guilt, and silence. Even generations later, the effects of British exploitation and the subcontinent's subsequent division continue to have a significant influence on the stories of those impacted. This severe trauma, resulting from colonialism and the violent division, serves as a moving illustration of the long-lasting effects of past occurrences.

The pain and suffering caused by the Partition, which was evidently a chaotic event of coerced brutality, mass migration, dysfunctional parenting, and the exclusion of women and children, are still being felt today. Millions of people were displaced by the horrific acts of communal and religious violence that followed, and survivors and their offspring still suffer from the trauma.



The trauma that people and communities endure is entwined with the colonial legacy, which endures across generations and permanently alters the collective psyche.

A moving examination of this trauma can be found in literature, where pieces like "Train to Pakistan" by Kushwant Singh and "Ice Candy Man" by Bapsi Sidhwa vividly illustrate the psychological and sociological aspects of the Partition trauma. These stories explore the grief, suffering, anguish, and catastrophic emotions that both Muslims and Hindus endure, providing a complex picture of the harsh realities of life after independence against the backdrop of the partition.

Characters like Lala Ram Lal, Nooran, and Juggat Singh—who experience racial and religious discrimination, atrocities, and bloodshed in the refugee camps—in Kushwant Singh's "Train to Pakistan" eloquently depict the trauma. Nooran's terrifying train experience serves as an example of how the terrible treatment of women is represented in the book as well as the psychological trauma that is depicted in it. Similar to this, Bapsi Sidhwa's "Ice Candy Man" emphasizes the suffering of the Parsi community amid riots, killings, and rapes by showing trauma through the eyes of Lenny, an eight-year-old child.

Beyond isolated tales, these literary works depict more generalized societal traumas such as gender and religious discrimination, agitation within communities, and the predominance of male characters over female ones. The story reveals the significant effects of the partition on the social fabric of India and Pakistan by focusing on the trauma experienced by refugees on both sides of the border, mistreatment by police, and social unrest.

Essentially, these literary investigations show the psychological, sociological, and emotional aspects of trauma, shedding light on its complex nature. The trauma caused by the partition challenges ideas of harmony and trust among communities, transcending individual experiences to become a collective wound. Examining these stories helps us understand the trauma's lasting effects and serves as a moving reminder of the intricate relationship between historical occurrences and the human psyche.

2. Author's Perspective

Among the numerous eminent writers from across the nation who have woven the narrative of history into literary works that bear particular significance to the story of the partition is Bapsi Sidhwa. The goal of the historiography reading of *Cracking India* by Bapsi Sidhwa is to examine the parallels and differences that occurred during the partition while focusing on the most startling and painful aspect of the split of communities and hearts. It will also make an attempt to examine how the female characters in the book fight for their lives and express their displeasure at realizing that there is no hope for the future.



One historic event was the separation of India and Pakistan. In addition to having an impact on the citizens of both nations, the partition was followed by long-lasting conflicts over communal rights and border disputes. Bapsi Sidhwa, a Parsi author from Pakistan, has written about the horrific events of the partition movement. *The Bride*, *Crow Eaters*, and *Ice Candy Man* are among the books used in the research. Sidhwa depicts a train massacre prior to Partition in the opening scene of *The Bride*. She also combines the train tragedies in *Ice Candy Man* in order to highlight the expense of Partition. Sidhwa focuses on the deep emotional and psychological shifts that the train killings brought about in the characters of the book *Ice Candy Man* (*Cracking India*). This study's foundation is a careful reading of the novels' texts in light of the horrific events that resulted from the partition movement.

A major author, historian, critic, and exceptional observer, Khushwant Singh combined his talents to become a contemporary Indian English book author. His experience with the 1947 Partition of India inspired him to write his most famous book, *Train to Pakistan*, which was published in 1956 and adapted into a movie in 1998. In Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, a great number of people are forced to flee their ancestral countries, depicting the terrible experience of the Partition. In Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, stories he, his family, and associates encountered in Pakistan are described, bringing truth and fiction together with mind-blowing influence. The goal of this analysis is to demonstrate how Khushwant Singh presents a plausible account of India's and Pakistan's partition. The Singh wrote this book with the intention of highlighting the Holocaust that took place during the India-Pakistan partition and continues to affect people's thoughts to this day. Muslims were forced to leave India and Hindus were forced to leave Pakistan after the 1947 Partition. After reading Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, one can create a moving picture of everything that happened during the hour of partition in front of their own eyes.

Indian novelist Kiran Desai is well-known for her debut work, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. When the book was released in 1998, it received great reviews from critics all around the world. In addition, the writer is well-known for "*The Inheritance of Loss*," which she co-won the Man Booker Prize for. The various factors like multiculturalism, globalization, poverty, isolation, and issues related to an individual's loss of identity and insurgency are the main themes that the books address. The book also covers a number of topics related to the division of India and Pakistan or the losses brought about by that division. The book's title talks about the cultural and personal loss they were going through. The loss that is portrayed in this book is related to the losses that the immigrants experienced both during and following the partition. The book discusses the sense of alienation that people experienced during the division. The book discusses the emotional isolation and claustrophobic experience of being transferred to a new region and language, which are aspects of the personal trauma that the refugees underwent. As a result, the book explores the diasporic experience of marginalization, identity questing, and identity for assimilation that refugees encountered during the division.

Writer Rohinton Mistry, a Canadian of Indian descent, gained notoriety in 1991 with the publication of his book *A Long Journey*. He later gained both international and national recognition as a result of this specific book. *A Fine Balance*, however, is one of his other most



well-known works and was released in 1995. The four Bombay residents who struggled with India's political climate and ongoing political turmoil are the main subjects of this book. So, it is known that the book was the recipient of multiple honors, including the Commonwealth Writers Award and the Griller Prize in Canada. The absence of communication between the citizens of the two countries is the central theme of the book "Such a Long Journey." The book also addressed the growing notion of infinity among the populations of the two countries following their partition.

3. Conclusion

One would be able to experience firsthand the Partition and the frustration of being cut off from their countries by taking a train to Pakistan. One could argue that one of the most horrific events in our recent history was the Partition of India. We should make the decision that we would never permit it to happen again after reflecting on what happened in 1947 and realizing the potential consequences of its repetition. Singh paints a picture of India that was united after Partition into two phases: Muslim Pakistan and Hindu India.

Khushwant Singh has accurately depicted the true nature of the adverse effects of Partition and demonstrated the agony and, more importantly, the real misery that people were forced to go through. Singh gives a variety of character voices that convey different viewpoints. Partition is seen by Khushwant Singh as an injury. Singh has allowed us to see a true picture of the suffering and division of feelings and hearts that are truly there.

In fact, The Train to Pakistan implies that the disintegration of Mano Majra and its accord represents the disintegration and self-destruction of humanity rather than the disintegration of a nation. The remainder of the novel, given that the author does not behave in a sectarian fashion, is a monumental report on objectivity. He holds both Muslims and Hindus equally responsible for the horrible event and is adamant that the division is not a division of a territory but rather a division of people's central selves.

As a result, it has been discovered that Kiran Desai discussed the trauma that migrants experience when they relocate in her book. She has also brought attention to the fact that the migratory population experienced trauma in the form of economic inequality and loneliness. They were marginalized and subjected to racial discrimination as well. In contrast, Rohinton Mistry emphasized in his book the refugees' sense of rootlessness and loss of identity in a foreign land. The story's protagonist experiences trauma as he works with his son to define his identity in society. While his father wants him to study a certain field, his son has no interest in it, illustrating a psychological trauma.



4. References

1. Abdullah, M. A. S. (2021). The Subcontinent Falls Apart: Communal Violence and Religious Intolerance in Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan. *Literary Studies*, 34(01), 107-117.
2. Adverse Childhood Experiences and Premature All-cause mortality. *European Journal of Epidemiology*, 28(9), 721–734. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10654-013-9832-96>
RupkathaJournal, Vol. 12, No. 5, 2020
3. Balaev, M. (2008). Trends in Literary Trauma Theory. *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, 41(2), June, 149-1666. Retrieved July, 2020, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44029500>
4. Begum, S. (2012). Women's Sensibility and the Partition Trauma: An Analysis of Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice Candy Man. *Labyrinth: An International Refereed Journal of Postmodern Studies*, 3(3).
5. Bhat, A. A. (2018). Reflection of cultural incompatibility in the Inheritance of loss. *The Criterion: An International Journal in English*, 9, 64-70.
6. Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript. Retrieved October 11, 2020, from, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1wxrhq.5>.
7. Butalia Urvashi. (1998). *The other side of silence: voices from the partition of India*. New Delhi, India: Penguin Books India (P) Ltd.
8. Caruth, C. (1995). *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Johns Hopkins Univ. Press.
9. Choudhury, J. (2020). Study of Trauma and Transgression of the 'Adult-child' in Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy-Man. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 12(5).
10. Crane RJ. "Inventing India: A History of India in English Language Fiction." London: Macmillan, 1992. *Journal of Xi'an University of Architecture & Technology* Volume XIII, Issue I, 2021 ISSN No : 1006-7930 Page No: 201
11. Dar, Bilquees. "The Theme of Partition in Khuswant Singh's Novel Train To Pakistan." *International Journal of English Language and Linguistic Research* 1 (2013): 21-23.



12. Dhass, S. V., & PK, A. B. (2021). A Study on The Identity Crisis of The Protagonist In Rohinton Mistry's Such a Long Journey. *IJRAR-International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR)*, 8(3), 104-107.
13. Dhawan, R.K. and Novy Kapadia. *The Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa*. New Delhi: Prestige, Books, 1996. Print
14. Dodiya Jaydeepsinh, (2010). *Bapsi Sidhwa*, Rajkot, Wide Margin Books.
15. Hossain, A. (2020). FORCED MIGRATION IN ALLEN GINSBERG'S "SEPTEMBER ON JESSORE ROAD" AND KHUSHWANT SINGH'S "TRAIN TO PAKISTAN"(A COMPARATIVE STUDY). In *Book of Proceedings* (p. 69).
17. Hossain, M. J. Enigma of Partition Depicted in Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy-Man.
18. Katariya, A., & Chaudhary, P. The Transformation of Ice-Candy-Man: Account of Partition Trauma in Cracking India.
19. Kelly-Irving, M., Lepage, B., Dedieu, D., Bartley, M., Blane, D., Grosclaude, P., Lang, T., Delpierre, C. (2013).
20. Khan, A. H. (2016). Text, Representation and Revision: Re-visioning Partition Violence in Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan and Bhisham Sahni's Tamas. *Indialogs: Spanish journal of India studies*, 3, 0081-97.
21. Khaniya, P. (2020). *Sense of Dislocation in Rohinton Mistry's Such a Long Journey*
22. (Doctoral dissertation).
23. Khatri, C. L. (n.d.) Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan.
24. Kumar, R. (2016). Communal Trauma: A Comparative Study of Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan and Manohar Malgonkar's A Bend in The Ganges. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences*, 5(2), 220-229.
25. Masten, A. S. (2011). Resilience in Children Threatened by Extreme Adversity: Frameworks for Research, Practice, and Translational Synergy. *Development and Psychopathology*, 23(2), 493–506. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0954579411000198>
26. Meenakshi, D. S. (2018). Theme of partition and freedom movement in Train to Pakistan.
27. *Journal of Ideal Research Review*, 60(1), 1-3
28. Mohanty, S. (2019). Treatment of Trauma in Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan.
29. Mohd Ishaq Bhat- Partition from Postcolonial Perspectives: A study of Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice Candy Man (cracking India) PARTITION FROM POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES: A STUDY OF BAPSI SIDHWA'S ICE CANDY MAN (CRACKING INDIA) Mohd Ishaq
30. Bhat Ph.D. Scholar, Department of English, University of Kashmir, Hazratbal, Srinagar, J & K, Pages 120-122 120.



-
31. Mookerjea-Leonard, D. (2017). *Literature, Gender, and the Trauma of Partition: The Paradox of Independence*. New York, US: Routledge.
 32. Mumtaz, M., & Raza, M. (2022). Diagnosing the Unassimilated Wounds of Partition's Trauma; A Probative Study of Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan and Saadat Hassan Manto's "Khol Do". *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, 59(1), 19.
 33. Nanda, A. (2021). Of cityscapes, affect and migrant subjectivities in Kiran Desai's Inheritance of Loss. *Subjectivity*, 14(3), 119-132.
 34. Phukon, R. R., & Roy, K. P. (2020). The Traumatic Effect of the Partition of India: A Study of Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan.
 35. R. S. (1982). *Midnight's Children*. New York: Avon Books.
 36. RAO, P. A. ALIENATION IN ROHINTON MISTRY'S NOVELS "SUCH A LONG JOURNEY" AND "FAMILY MATTERS".
 37. Rao, V. Pala Prasada, K. Nirupa Rani, and Digumarti Bhaskara Rao. "IndiaPakistan: Partition Perspectives in Indo-English Novels." Discovery Publishing House, 2004.
 38. Rehman, T. (1991). *A History of Pakistani Literature in English*. Lahore: Vanguard.
 39. Roy, A. G. (2020). *Intangible Violence*. In *Memories and Postmemories of the Partition of India* (1st ed., pp. 42–61). essay, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.
 40. Roy, Rituparna. "South Asian partition fiction in english: from Khushwant Singh to Amitav Ghosh." Vol. 4. Amsterdam University Press, 2010.
 41. Schönfelder, C. (2013). *Theorizing Trauma Romantic and Postmodern Perspectives on Mental Wounds*. In
 42. Shah Nawaz, M. (1990). *The Heart Divided*. Lahore: ASR Publications. Sidhwa, B. (1987). *The Bride*. Karachi: Liberty Books.
 43. Sidhwa, B. (1989). *Ice Candy Man*. New Delhi: Penguin Books. Sidhwa, B. (1990).