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Ghosts of Yesterday: Exploring the Intersections of Memory and Trauma in Select Children’s Writings of Sudha Murty

Abhinandan Bag

Abstract

The intergenerational transmission between memory and trauma celebrates the richness of human experience and the interconnectedness of the past, present, and future. This intended study explores the profound thematic elements of memory and trauma in the literary works of Sudha Murty, a celebrated Indian author. Key works in this field, such as Maurice Halbwachs’ *On Collective Memory* (1925), Aleida Assmann’s *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization* (2011), Pierre Nora’s concept of “sites of memory” (1984), and Alison Landsberg’s “*Prosthetic Memory*” (2004), provide foundational insights. These works illustrate how collective and cultural memories are constructed and represented in literature. Halbwachs emphasizes the social construction of memory, Assmann distinguishes between communicative and cultural memory, Nora explores how physical spaces embody collective memories, and Landsberg introduces the concept of prosthetic memory, formed through mediated representations. Trauma theory further enriches this exploration, with Cathy Caruth’s *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub’s *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992), Dominick LaCapra’s *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001), and Viet Thanh Nguyen’s *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (2016) contributing significantly. Sudha Murty’s narratives, particularly *The Mother I Never Knew* (2014) and stories from *Three Thousand Stitches* (2017) and *Wise & Otherwise: A Salute to Life* (2006), serve as case studies. Her works explore themes of memory and trauma through the lenses of collective and cultural memory, sites of memory, and prosthetic memory. Murty’s stories highlight how historical and familial traumas reverberate across generations, influencing characters’ identities and relationships.

Keywords: Collective Memory, Intergenerational Trauma, Societal Stigma, Resilience in Literature.

“For every day they die
among us, those who were doing us some good,
who knew it was never enough but
hoped to improve a little by living.” (Auden & Mendelson, 1979, p. 91)

Introduction

In the evolving landscape of interdisciplinary research, memory studies and trauma theory have emerged as critical frameworks for examining the intersections between literature and human

experience. This study delves into the rich tapestry of insights offered by these fields, exploring the multifaceted ways in which literature engages with memory and trauma.

Memory studies, a multidisciplinary field encompassing psychology, neuroscience, sociology, anthropology, and literary studies, offers profound insights into the complexities of human memory and its representation in literature. Foundational works such as Maurice Halbwachs' *On Collective Memory* (1925) and Aleida Assmann's *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* (2011) have laid the groundwork for understanding how collective memory shapes individual and cultural identities. These perspectives are instrumental in literary analysis, examining how authors depict collective memories and historical events in their works. Further enriching the discourse, Pierre Nora's concept of "sites of memory" (1984) and Alison Landsberg's *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (2004) provide frameworks for understanding how physical spaces and mediated representations influence collective and personal memories. These ideas are particularly relevant in analyzing how literature preserves and shapes narratives that transcend individual experiences.

In parallel, trauma theory, intersecting psychology, literary studies, and cultural theory, has reshaped our understanding of how literature engages with experiences of psychological distress, violence, and suffering. Seminal texts like Cathy Caruth's *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992) explore the disruptions in narrative coherence caused by trauma. These works emphasize the ethical and aesthetic complexities of representing trauma in literary texts. Contributions from scholars such as Dominick LaCapra's *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001) and Viet Thanh Nguyen, in *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (2016) extend this exploration to cultural trauma, examining the representation and remembrance of collective traumas like genocide, war, and social injustice in literature. Their analyses highlight the ethical responsibilities of writers and readers in the politics of representation.

The analytical examination of Sudha Murty's narrative universe, in this study illuminates the intricate ways in which her works, such as *The Mother I Never Knew* and stories from *Three Thousand Stitches* and *Wise & Otherwise*, embody themes of memory and trauma. Murty's characters navigate personal and collective traumas, illustrating how memories of displacement, loss, and violence reverberate across generations. Her exploration of cultural roots and intergenerational trauma underscores the enduring impact of past events on present identities and relationships. Through the lenses of memory studies and trauma theory, this study offers invaluable insights into the resonance of stories across time and space. It underscores the importance of interdisciplinary perspectives in deepening our understanding of how literature reflects and shapes our grasp of the human condition.

Unveiling the Impact of Memory and Trauma in Literature

Memory and trauma are integral elements of the human experience, shaping individual identities, collective histories, and cultural narratives. In literature, these themes hold profound significance, serving as powerful vehicles for exploring the complexities of human emotion, resilience, and understanding. Through the lens of memory and trauma, literature illuminates the enduring impact of past experiences on present realities, offering insight into the human condition and the ways in which individuals and societies confront the shadows of their past. At its core, literature serves as a repository of memory, preserving stories, emotions, and perspectives across time and space. Through narratives, characters, and imagery, literature captures the essence of human experience, allowing readers to immerse themselves in different

worlds and perspectives. Memory, both individual and collective, is intricately woven into the fabric of literary works, shaping characters' motivations, relationships, and journeys.

One of the most profound ways in which memory manifests in literature is through the exploration of trauma. Trauma, defined as the psychological and emotional response to deeply distressing or disturbing events, lies at the heart of many literary narratives. Whether it be the horrors of war, the pain of loss, or the scars of abuse, trauma permeates the lives of fictional characters, driving plot lines and shaping character development. Literature offers a space for the expression and examination of trauma, allowing authors to delve into the complexities of human suffering with empathy and nuance. Through vivid imagery, evocative language, and intimate portrayals of characters' inner lives, literature conveys the visceral impact of trauma on individuals' psyches, relationships, and sense of self. By bearing witness to the characters' struggles and triumphs, readers gain insight into the universal human capacity for resilience, survival, and healing.

Moreover, literature provides a platform for the exploration of memory's role in shaping personal and collective identities. Memories, both cherished and painful, inform characters' perceptions of themselves and the world around them, influencing their beliefs, values, and behaviors. Through the interplay of memory and identity, literature delves into questions of belonging, heritage, and the search for meaning in a rapidly changing world. In addition to individual memory, literature also grapples with the complexities of "collective memory" - the shared narratives, myths, and histories that bind communities and cultures together. By revisiting pivotal moments in history, literature prompts readers to confront the legacies of trauma and injustice, fostering empathy, understanding, and a deeper appreciation for the diversity of human experience.

Furthermore, literature serves as a form of catharsis and cathexis, allowing both writers and readers to confront and reconcile with their own experiences of trauma and memory. Through storytelling, individuals can give voice to their pain, sorrow, and resilience, finding solace and solidarity in the shared human experience. By bearing witness to characters' journeys of healing and transformation, readers are inspired to confront their own demons, forge connections with others, and embrace the power of storytelling as a tool for healing and empowerment. In conclusion, the significance of memory and trauma in literature cannot be overstated. Through the exploration of these themes, literature illuminates the depths of the human psyche, the resilience of the human spirit, and the enduring power of storytelling to bridge the divides of time, space, and experience. By bearing witness to the characters' struggles and triumphs, readers are reminded of the universality of human emotions and the transformative potential of empathy, compassion, and understanding. As we confront the shadows of our past and navigate the complexities of our present, literature offers a guiding light - a testament to the enduring power of memory, trauma, and the human capacity for resilience and redemption.

Navigating Memories and Traumas in the works of Sudha Murty

Sudha Murty, a prolific Indian author, philanthropist, and social activist, has crafted a diverse body of work that delves into the complexities of human experience, including themes of memory and trauma. Through her novels, short stories, and non-fiction works, Murty sensitively explores the impact of past experiences on individual lives and collective consciousness, shedding light on the enduring power of memory and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of trauma. In Sudha Murty's writings, memory serves as a central motif, weaving through the fabric of her narratives to shape characters' identities, motivations, and relationships. Murty's stories often feature characters grappling with the weight of their

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past experiences, whether joyful or sorrowful and the memories they carry with them as they navigate the complexities of life. Moreover, Sudha Murty's works sensitively explore the impact of trauma on individuals and communities, shedding light on the lasting scars left by deeply distressing or traumatic events. Through her narratives, Murty confronts difficult topics such as poverty, caste discrimination, gender inequality, and societal injustice, highlighting the ways in which these systemic issues perpetuate cycles of trauma and suffering for marginalized individuals.

One of the hallmarks of Sudha Murty's storytelling is her ability to imbue her characters with empathy, resilience, and a sense of agency in the face of adversity. Despite the challenges they face, Murty's characters often draw strength from their memories and experiences, using them as sources of wisdom, courage, and inspiration to overcome obstacles and forge their own paths in life. Furthermore, Sudha Murty's writings highlight the importance of "collective memory" and cultural heritage in shaping individual and communal identities. Through her exploration of Indian traditions, folklore, and cultural practices, Murty celebrates the rich tapestry of human experience and the interconnectedness of past, present, and future generations.

Sudha Murty's works offer a poignant exploration of themes of memory and trauma, weaving together narratives that illuminate the complexities of human experience with empathy, insight, and grace. Through her storytelling, Murty invites readers to confront the shadows of their past, embrace the resilience of the human spirit, and find hope and redemption in the power of memory, resilience, and the enduring bonds of love and compassion. As we journey through the pages of her works, we are reminded of the timeless wisdom and universal truths that connect us all, bridging the divides of time, space, and experience.

The Focus of Sudha Murty's Literary Inquiry

Memory and trauma studies may seek to explore in the works of Sudha Murty the cultural, social, and historical context in which her stories are set. This intended study aims to understand how cultural beliefs, traditions, and societal norms influence characters' experiences of memory and trauma, as well as the broader implications for cultural identity and heritage. This involves analyzing the portrayal of characters' memories, experiences of trauma, and their impact on individual lives and relationships, so as to understand the impact of memory and trauma on characters' psychological, emotional, and social well-being within the context of Murty's narratives. Furthermore, in order to get to the core of Murty's psyche this study investigates how Murty's characters cope with traumatic experiences, how memories shape their identities and behaviors, and what is the role of resilience in overcoming adversity. This is to seek to understand how readers interpret and engage with these themes, as well as connect to the emotional and intellectual impact of Murty's narratives on different psychological levels. This study of memory and trauma studies in the works of Sudha Murty intends to deepen our understanding of how literature can serve as a medium for exploring complex human experiences, fostering empathy, and promoting healing and resilience in the face of adversity. By analyzing Murty's portrayal of memory and trauma, this study aims to shed light on the universal truths and enduring human values that resonate across cultures and generations.

Literary Insights into Memory Studies

Memory studies, a multidisciplinary field encompassing psychology, neuroscience, sociology, anthropology, and literary studies, has been a fertile ground for exploring the complexities of human memory and its representation in literature. In this study, some key works have been taken as a reflection that has contributed significantly to the intersection of literature and memory studies. One seminal work in this area is Maurice Halbwachs' *On Collective Memory*

(1925), which has laid the groundwork for understanding how “collective memory” shapes individual and cultural identities. Halbwachs argues that memory is not solely an individual process but is socially constructed through shared experiences within a group or society. This perspective has been instrumental in literary analysis, particularly in examining how authors depict collective memories and historical events in their works. Moving forward, Aleida Assmann’s *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* (2011) expanded on Halbwachs’ ideas, proposing a framework for understanding how societies construct and transmit memories across generations. Assmann distinguishes between communicative memory, which is constantly evolving through everyday interactions, and “cultural memory”, which is even more stable and institutionalized through cultural artefacts like literature. This distinction has been in question and doubt for scholars analyzing how literature functions as a repository of “cultural memory”, preserving and shaping collective narratives.

In the realm of literary theory, Pierre Nora’s concept of “sites of memory” (1984) has been influential in understanding how physical spaces embody collective memories. Nora argues that certain sites, such as monuments, museums, and landscapes, serve as tangible manifestations of a society’s memory, often intersecting with literary representations. This idea has been particularly relevant in analyzing how authors use settings and landscapes to evoke historical events and cultural heritage in their narratives. Turning to more recent scholarship, Alison Landsberg’s *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (2004) explores how mass media and popular culture mediate personal and collective memories. Landsberg introduces the concept of “prosthetic memory”, whereby individuals form emotional connections to historical events and experiences that they did not directly witness but rather through mediated representations like films, literature, and digital media. This perspective has profound implications for literary studies, highlighting the role of literature in shaping and preserving memories that may transcend individual experiences.

Literature has long served as a medium for exploring the complexities of memory, from individual recollections to collective narratives of history and trauma. Scholars in memory studies have drawn on a diverse range of theoretical frameworks to examine how literature both reflects and shapes our understanding of memory. By interrogating the intersections of literature, culture, and memory, these works offer invaluable insights into the ways in which stories continue to resonate across time and space, drawing from interdisciplinary perspectives to deepen our understanding of how literature reflects and shapes our understanding of the human condition.

Literary Insights into Trauma Studies

Trauma theory, a field situated at the intersection of psychology, literary studies, and cultural theory, has fundamentally reshaped our understanding of how literature engages with experiences of psychological distress, violence, and suffering. In this intended study some key works have been explored that have contributed to the development of trauma theory within literary studies. One foundational text in this area is Cathy Caruth’s *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), which explores the ways in which traumatic experiences disrupt conventional modes of representation and narrative coherence. Caruth argues that trauma is characterized by its belatedness, wherein the overwhelming nature of the event renders the individual incapable of fully processing it at the time of occurrence. This delayed processing often manifests in fragmented memories, intrusive flashbacks, and repetitive behaviors, all of which challenge traditional narrative structures in literature. Caruth’s work has been instrumental in highlighting the ethical and aesthetic complexities of representing trauma in literary texts, sparking a rich body of scholarship on the subject.

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Building on Caruth's insights, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992) examines the role of testimony in bearing witness to traumatic events. Felman and Laub argue that traditional modes of testimony are often inadequate in conveying the full extent of trauma, as survivors may struggle to articulate their experiences in linear, coherent narratives. Through close readings of literary texts and psychoanalytic case studies, the authors demonstrate how literature can provide alternative modes of testimony that capture the affective and sensory dimensions of trauma. Their work has been influential in expanding the scope of trauma studies beyond individual pathology to encompass broader questions of witnessing, responsibility, and ethical representation.

In the realm of cultural trauma, Dominick LaCapra's *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001) offers a critical examination of how collective traumas, such as genocide, war, and social injustice, are represented and remembered in literature and historiography. LaCapra argues that while literature has the capacity to evoke the emotional and ethical dimensions of trauma, it also runs the risk of aestheticizing or sensationalizing suffering. By engaging with a diverse range of texts, from Holocaust literature to postcolonial narratives, LaCapra underscores the importance of critically interrogating the politics of representation and the ethical responsibilities of both writers and readers.

More recently, scholars like Viet Thanh Nguyen, in *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (2016), have examined how literature mediates the memory of historical traumas and their ongoing legacies. Nguyen's work explores the ways in which narratives of war and violence are shaped by cultural, political, and ideological factors, highlighting the complex interplay between memory, identity, and power. By analyzing a wide range of texts, including novels, films, and oral histories, Nguyen underscores the importance of recognizing multiple perspectives and voices in the construction of "collective memory".

Trauma theory has emerged as a vital framework for understanding how literature grapples with experiences of suffering, violence, and historical injustice. By illuminating the ways in which trauma disrupts conventional modes of representation and narrative coherence, scholars in this field have opened up new avenues for exploring the ethical, aesthetic, and political dimensions of literary texts. Through close readings, interdisciplinary dialogue, and critical reflection, trauma theory continues to shape our understanding of how literature bears witness to the complexities of human experience.

Unravelling the Layers of Sudha Murty's Narrative Universe:

Sudha Murty's *The Mother I Never Knew* (2014) delves into the complexities of memory and trauma through the intertwining stories of two women, Sushma and Saru, who are brought together by fate. The narrative navigates themes of identity, family, and the enduring impact of past traumas. Through their journeys, Murty explores how memory shapes people's understanding of themselves and their relationships, and how traumatic experiences reverberate across generations. The novel is set against the backdrop of India's partition, a traumatic event that reshaped the lives of millions. The characters' family histories are marked by the scars of partition, illustrating how historical trauma can echo through generations. Memories of displacement, loss, and violence linger in the collective consciousness of the characters' families, influencing their perceptions of themselves and their relationships with others.

One of the central themes in the novel is Maurice Halbwachs' idea of "collective memory", which refers to the shared memories and experiences of a group or community. This is evident in the way Mukesh grapples with his past and tries to piece together his identity

through the fragmented memories of his biological mother, Rupinder, and his adoptive mother, Sumati. The quote, “Amma, why did she give me away? Am I a sardar?” (Murty, 2014, p. 68) reflects Mukesh’s struggle to reconcile his sense of self with his cultural and familial heritage. Murty portrays how the trauma of partition is passed down through family stories, oral histories, and cultural practices, highlighting the enduring impact of past events on present-day identities.

“Cultural memory”, an idea spoken by Aleida Assmann, is also explored in the novel through the characters’ connections to their cultural roots and traditions. Rupinder’s decision to give Mukesh up for adoption is influenced by cultural beliefs and societal norms, as seen in the quote, “Just because I had a dark patch on my foot and your mother-in-law felt that it was a bad omen, how could you reject me without a second thought?” (Murty, 2014, p. 83) This highlights the ways in which “cultural memory” shapes individual choices and actions. Murty sensitively portrays how traumatic memories can linger in the psyche, influencing individuals’ behaviors, emotions, and relationships long after the events themselves have passed. The novel explores how trauma reverberates within families, affecting intergenerational relationships and dynamics.

Pierre Nora’s idea of “sites of memory” is reflected in the novel through the characters’ journeys to uncover and integrate these lost parts of their histories. Venkatesh’s journey to find “‘Why did Mother never use any of this?’ Venkatesh wondered. He remembered his mother wearing only four thin gold bangles and a black-beaded *mangalsutra*. ‘Perhaps Grandma didn’t allow her to. I’ve never seen these at home.’” (Murty, 2014, p. 43) The narratives shared by relatives and community members act as repositories of memory, preserving histories that are otherwise unrecorded.

The concept of Alison Landsberg’s “prosthetic memory” is exemplified in the gold chain that Mukesh receives from Rupinder. The quote, “The same woman who had a farm next to a mango grove. She’s the one who gave me this gold chain,” (Murty, 2014, p. 95) illustrates how material objects can carry emotional significance and trigger memories of the past. Mukesh takes on the memories of his half-brother’s life and their shared but separate familial history. The same also takes place for Venkatesh. He starts to integrate the memories and stories he learns from others into his own sense of self. This is evident when “Venkatesh had found his proof—Madhav Rao had concealed his love for his first wife from his mother. Inside the pouch, Venkatesh found a letter and a money order form addressed to ‘Bhagirathi, c/o Gopal Kulkarni, Shurpali, Taluka Jamakhandi, District Bijapur, Karnataka.’” (Murty, 2014, p. 44)

Murty examines how trauma can disrupt familial bonds and communication, leading to cycles of pain and dysfunction that are passed down through generations. The novel explores how memory shapes people’s sense of identity and belonging, and how traumatic experiences can fracture and reshape one’s sense of self. Sushma’s search for her biological mother is driven by her desire to uncover the truth of her origins and reconcile her fragmented sense of identity. Her memories of her mother, though fleeting and fragmented, serve as anchors for her sense of self and belonging. Saru’s journey towards self-discovery is marked by her efforts to confront and come to terms with her traumatic past. Her memories of abuse and betrayal serve as obstacles to her healing and growth, but also as catalysts for self-reflection and empowerment. Murty portrays memory as both a burden and a source of strength, illustrating how people’s memories shape their understanding of themselves and their place in the world.

In the short story “Three Thousand Stitches” in Sudha Murty’s *Three Thousand Stitches: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives* (2017) the protagonist’s initial encounter with

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the devadasi women reveals the trauma embedded within their community. The women's hostile reaction and their resistance to external help is clearly visible as "Each story was different but the end was the same—they all suffered at the hands of a society that exploited them and filled them with guilt and shame as a final insult." (Murty, 2017, p. 5) suggesting deep-seated trauma and mistrust stemming from years of exploitation and societal stigma associated with their profession. Despite facing rejection and humiliation, the protagonist persists in her efforts to help the devadasi women. This reflects both her resilience and the resilience of the women themselves, who have endured years of hardship and exploitation. Their ability to survive and maintain a sense of dignity in the face of adversity is a testament to their strength. Through the protagonist's interactions with the devadasi women, there is a process of Maurice Halbwachs' "collective memory" and identity reconstruction taking place. "I remembered their green saris and bangles, the smears of yellow bhandara (a coarse turmeric powder) and their thick, long hair as they entered the temple with goddess masks, coconuts, neem leaves and a kalash (a metal pot)." (Murty, 2017, p. 1) The women's stories and experiences challenge societal narratives and stereotypes about their identity, highlighting the complexity of their lived experiences beyond the stigma attached to their profession. The protagonist's approach of prioritizing education and community building as means of empowerment reflects a trauma-informed strategy. By addressing the root causes of the women's vulnerability and providing them with agency and support, she facilitates their journey towards healing and self-determination. The formation of the devadasi-owned bank and the celebration of their achievements symbolize a collective process of healing and transformation. By reclaiming ownership and agency over their lives, the women not only break free from the cycle of exploitation but also challenge the structural inequalities and injustices that perpetuate their marginalization.

The short story "A Life Unwritten" in Sudha Murty's *Three Thousand Stitches: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives* (2017) is set in a remote village during the year 1943, amidst the backdrop of World War II. The isolation of the village, the continuous rain, and the surrounding jungle contribute to a sense of confinement and danger. This setting creates an environment where the characters are emotionally and physically vulnerable, which can be seen as a microcosm of the larger traumatic context of war and upheaval. The protagonist, Dr. R. H. Kulkarni, experiences various traumatic events throughout the story. His feelings of boredom, fear, and helplessness in the isolated village, compounded by encounters with dangerous animals and the responsibility thrust upon him during the unexpected childbirth when "she looked at him with big innocent, teary eyes and slowly began, 'Don't save me. I don't want to make it through the night.'" (Murty, 2017, p. 39) all contribute to his individual trauma. These experiences leave a lasting impact on him, shaping his future decisions and actions. The young girl who goes into labor represents another layer of trauma in the story. She faces the trauma of an unwanted pregnancy, abandonment by her partner, and the prospect of facing violence and rejection from her family. Her plea for death reflects the depths of her despair and the trauma she anticipates. Dr. Kulkarni's memories of his experiences in Chandagad "I will be happy if she doesn't survive. She will be spared from a cursed life." (Murty, 2017, p. 40) resurface when he encounters the woman whom he helped deliver a baby many years ago. Memory serves as a coping mechanism for both him and the woman, allowing them to process and make sense of their past trauma. The woman's relentless search for Dr. Kulkarni demonstrates the significance of memory in her healing process and her need to express gratitude for his intervention. Despite the traumatic events depicted in the story, there are elements of resilience and healing. Dr. Kulkarni's actions, though initially driven by fear and uncertainty, ultimately lead to positive outcomes for the young girl and her daughter. The establishment of the nursing home named after Dr. Kulkarni signifies a form of healing and closure for both him and the woman he helped. The story highlights the interconnectedness of trauma and memory, illustrating how traumatic events can linger in one's memory and shape

future experiences and actions. Dr. Kulkarni's encounter with the woman serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring impact of past trauma and the power of memory in fostering healing and reconciliation.

In the short story "No Place Like Home" in Sudha Murty's *Three Thousand Stitches: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives* (2017) both Nazneem and Gracy undergo significant individual trauma. Nazneem's experience involves being lured into a promise of better opportunities abroad, only to find herself trapped in a situation of exploitation and abuse. She faces physical and emotional abuse, isolation, and manipulation. Gracy, on the other hand, experiences trauma in the form of sexual harassment and objectification in her workplace, where she initially felt safe and valued. The quoted lines "I screamed and she shushed me. 'Don't scream. Nobody will come to help you. You are a servant and must behave like one. Go and start working now,'" she said, her volume matching mine." (Murty, 2017, p. 49) subtly interweaves the experience of both women in terms of betrayal of trust by those who are supposed to protect them. Nazneem trusted the promises made by the agent and her employers, only to find herself in a situation of bondage and exploitation. Similarly, Gracy trusted her employer's assurances of safety, only to face harassment and indifference when she sought help. Nazneem's narrative reveals how she copes with her traumatic experience by recounting her story to the narrator. "When I had time to think, I only thought about returning home to my family." (Murty, 2017, p. 49) This act of sharing memories can be seen as a coping mechanism to process and make sense of her trauma. Gracy, too, demonstrates resilience by seeking help from the shelter and making a decision to escape her abusive environment. Trauma can significantly impact one's sense of self and identity. Both Nazneem and Gracy undergo changes in their self-perception due to their traumatic experiences. Nazneem's sense of agency and independence are undermined by her exploitation, while Gracy's perception of herself as a capable teacher is challenged by the harassment she faces. The shelter represents a crucial aspect of community support for survivors of trauma. It serves as a safe space where women like Nazneem and Gracy can seek refuge, support, and assistance in rebuilding their lives. The women running the shelter play a vital role in facilitating healing and recovery for survivors.

The short story, "On Human Foibles" in Sudha Murty's *Wise & Otherwise: A Salute to Life* (2006) reveals a traumatic experience of deception for the protagonist. Upon probing the client's claim of securing a gold medal in 1972 from the same college as the protagonist, she uncovers the lie. "'Because,' I told him sadly, 'I secured that gold medal in 1972 and only one gold medal is awarded each year.'" (Murty, 2006, p. 6) This revelation likely triggers a sense of betrayal and disbelief for the protagonist, representing a form of psychological trauma inflicted by deceit. The protagonist's memory plays a crucial role in unravelling the deception. Her recollection of her own academic achievements and the realization that only one gold medal is awarded per year triggers a memory that contradicts the client's claims. This highlights the role of memory in recognizing inconsistencies and uncovering the truth, even after several years have passed since the protagonist's college days. The client's behaviour and reactions to the protagonist's inquiries suggest a defensive response triggered by the confrontation of his deceit. His initial hospitality and confidence give way to anger and discomfort as the protagonist persists in her questioning. "The click of the front door shutting behind me was the only reply I received." (Murty, 2006, p. 6) This behavioral shift underscores the emotional impact of trauma, causing defensive reactions and attempts to protect oneself from further scrutiny or exposure. Despite the trauma of deception, the protagonist demonstrates resilience and insight in her response to the situation. She confronts the client with compassion and empathy, questioning the motivations behind his lies and offering a gentle admonition about the futility of dishonesty. Her ability to navigate the situation with grace and integrity reflects her resilience in the face of betrayal.

Ghosts of Yesterday: Exploring the Intersections of Memory and Trauma in Select Children's Writings of Sudha Murty

The short story, "An Old Man's Ageless Wisdom" in Sudha Murty's *Wise & Otherwise: A Salute to Life* (2006) explores the lingering impact of colonial rule on Maurice Halbwachs' idea of the "collective memory" of the tribal people in Kalahandi. The old man's reference to the East India Company and the "fair queen" of England reflects a memory frozen in time, unaware of India's independence. "Nothing I said could convince him that the *goriwali rani*, or the 'fair queen' of England, no longer ruled India." (Murty, 2006, p. 17) This suggests that the trauma and memory of colonial oppression continue to shape the worldview of certain individuals within the community. The story explores the "cultural memory" and identity of the tribal community, particularly their connection to the land and their traditional way of life. The old man's resistance to the concept of currency and ownership reflects Aleida Assmann's idea of a deep-seated "cultural memory" rooted in their ancestral connection to the land. "For this paper, people fight, go away from our ancestral land, leave our forest and go to cities." (Murty, 2006, p. 17) This memory acts as a buffer against the encroachment of modernity and globalization, preserving their identity and values amidst changing times. While not explicitly stated, there is an underlying theme of inter-generational trauma stemming from colonialism and the subsequent socio-economic changes brought about by modernization. The old man's perspective on the impact of currency and modern transactions on their way of life hints at a sense of loss and displacement experienced by his generation and those before him. Despite the trauma and challenges faced by the tribal community, the story also highlights their resilience and wisdom. The old man's profound understanding of the natural world and his rejection of materialism underscore a different kind of knowledge - one rooted in centuries of lived experience and the other is the connection to the land. This wisdom challenges conventional notions of civilization and prompts reflection on the true meaning of progress and development.

In the short story, "Unwed Mothers" in Sudha Murty's *Wise & Otherwise: A Salute to Life* (2006) Kusuma experiences significant trauma due to becoming pregnant before marriage. This leads to immense pressure from her family and society, ultimately resulting in her tragic suicide. Her trauma is exacerbated by societal expectations and the fear of judgment. The trauma experienced by Kusuma highlights the consequences of societal stigma surrounding unwed mothers, especially in more conservative cultures where such situations are often met with shame and ostracization. The narrator, a counsellor, reflects on Kusuma's story as a memory that haunts them. "My thoughts drifted back to my student, Kusuma, and her death. Same situation, probably at a similar age, but the outcome was so different. Mary looks confident and happy whereas poor Kusuma is dead." (Murty, 2006, p. 95) This memory serves as a catalyst for their understanding of the broader societal issues surrounding unwed mothers. Conversely, the encounter with Mary and her family in Norway challenges the narrator's preconceived notions about unwed motherhood. Mary's story acts as a contrasting memory, showcasing a more accepting and supportive environment for unwed mothers. Martha's explanation of Mary's situation provides a counterpoint to Kusuma's tragic tale, emphasizing that Mary's decision to keep her child and continue her education was supported by her family and community. The story juxtaposes the fates of Kusuma and Mary, highlighting the stark differences in their experiences as unwed mothers. Kusuma's story represents the trauma and tragedy that can result from societal pressures and lack of support for unwed mothers. Mary's story, on the other hand, illustrates resilience and acceptance, demonstrating that alternative narratives are possible when unwed mothers are supported by their families and communities. The narrator's encounter with Mary's family prompts a shift in perspective, challenging their assumptions about unwed motherhood and prompting them to question the societal norms that contributed to Kusuma's tragedy. The contrasting memories of Kusuma and Mary serve as a catalyst for the narrator's reflection "I felt extremely sad and helpless. For the first time, I recognized the Problems of unwed mothers in our society. In real life, the pressure on the Girl and the family is enormous." (Murty, 2006, p. 94) on societal attitudes towards unwed mothers,

leading to a deeper understanding of the complexities and consequences of such situations.

Conclusion

Sudha Murty's stories often delve into the lives of ordinary individuals grappling with extraordinary circumstances. Whether it is the trauma of displacement during India's partition and the pain of lost love, or the scars left by familial discord, her characters bear witness to the enduring impact of past experiences on their present lives. Through their journeys, Murty illuminates how memories of trauma linger in the subconscious, shaping beliefs, behaviors, and relationships. Murty's narratives are deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of India, providing a lens through which to examine the intersection of "collective memory" and "cultural trauma". Historical events such as partition, communal riots, and social upheavals loom large in her stories, serving as backdrops against which the personal dramas of her characters unfold. Through her evocative storytelling, Murty invites readers to confront the painful legacies of the past and reckon with the ways in which they continue to shape the present. Through their inner monologues, memories, and reflections, Murty offers readers a window into the complex interplay between personal trauma and individual memory, highlighting the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. Despite the darkness that pervades many of Sudha Murty's narratives, there is also a thread of hope that runs through them. Her stories are punctuated by moments of healing, resilience, and redemption, as characters confront their demons, reconcile with their pasts, and find solace in the embrace of loved ones. Through these moments of catharsis, Murty offers readers a glimpse of the transformative power of memory, as well as the possibility of finding light in the midst of darkness.

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