

Feminist Storytelling and Healing: Trauma, Voice, and Testimony in Postcolonial Literature

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ABSTRACT

The paper is essentially an inquiry into historical literature which is not just about unearthing the untold histories but about digging at the silent histories which are submerged beneath people's traumas and have got caught in our memory as a collective. I will also research such feminine narrative voices as Toni Morrison, Bama, and Githa Hariharan to understand how their voices strive to introduce such suppressed voices into the discourse. Their writings are not just a record of torment, but a survival strategy, an intergenerational recovery and strength. Based on the theory of trauma and feminist epistemology, the current argument is that narrative is a significant site of identity reconstruction, past historical reconciliation, and pain agency.

Keywords: *Trauma, Postcolonial Literature, Toni Morrison, Bama, Githa Hariharan.*

Introduction: Storytelling as Feminist Praxis

As an active reader and scholar, I have always wondered about a specific immediacy of the narratives of women who speak of postcolonial societies. To these writers, narrative is not merely a self-performance, it is a well calculated manoeuvre of opposition to the interplay of the patriarchal, caste-based, and colonial hegemonies. By expression of lived experience they recreate a world that has long since denied them agency and hence place narrative itself as a political tool and as one of the most fundamental terms of being.

The desperate scream of Cixous about the way women inscribe their bodies (1976) is heard on both sides of a cultural border, but especially it is heard in the Indian scenario. Silence in Morrison, Bama and Hariharan is not an empty space but a territory which is occupied by the echoes of pain that cannot be measured. Such authors deconstruct the layers of grief and

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possibly hidden in silence in a systematic manner and turn it into a bright field where collective memory and resistance develop a dialectical game.

A notable aspect that needs to be mentioned is the non-linear arrangement that these accounts take since they can stop and then resume once again and that is an excellent way of understanding how trauma is disrupted and that a community of care is still able to salvage it. This wave of a movement breaks down the conventional narrative of the stories and compels the readers to consider several time frames and to acknowledge the role everyone plays in the process of restorative practice.

Theoretical Framework: Trauma, Memory, and Feminist Narrative

Trauma theory is the cornerstone of my scholarly endeavour; however, it is much more robust when it is complemented by the intersectional feminist approaches. The author regards trauma as an unclaimed experience and a prerequisite in coming to sense and emotionally connect to it (Caruth, 1996). LaCapra (2001) differentiates between acting out and working through, which are the dichotomies that define the change of female testimonies as they shift between unstructured chaos towards structured structures of order. Feminist scholarship, though, is more than an abstraction, moving theory back into an urgent lived practice. By voicing their trauma, women usurp agency of both time and significance and renounce the position of passive victimhood and claim themselves as creators and witnesses. Through the expansion of the intersectionality model created by Crenshaw (1989) and subaltern theory created by Spivak (1988), the idea of feminist narrative can be described as a kind of insurgent politics that not only encourages psychological recovery but also results into group empowerment.

Toni Morrison: Memory as Resistance in *Beloved*

After every reading of *Beloved* (1987) by Morrison, the main question recurs, which is: Can memory really heal? Morrison describes memory as an inefaceable specter; the trauma in the fragmented narrative of Sethe and the peripheral effect thereof, does not seek closure, but certainty of the risk of exposure. The tension can be felt throughout: these stories should not be told, but life requires expression. The cyclic flow of action and nonlinear dramaturgy of Morrison recreates the fabric of trauma itself. The story becomes a real wound which is a location where the testimony causes solidarity and ritual healing. The phenomenon is further explained by Hirsch (1997) construct of post memory which attributes it as an inherited legacy and a moral responsibility. Remembrance is a rebellion of the literary economy by Morrison.

Bama: Testimony and Collective Healing in Karukku and Sangati

Bama, in *Karukku* (1992) and *Sangati* (1994) is bold in the way she presents her stories, which are marginal in nature. Dalit women have been doubly muted; still, Bama intends to live experience, the authentic source of testimony, to live before the textualization. *Sangati* is a community ritual, and oral narration is not just a survival strategy. The breaks of amusement, wit, and mutual resistance are beyond coping, they are everyday resistances and group restorations. The concept of testimonial narratives by Rege (2006) comes in very handy in the context of examining the ways through which Bama blends autobiography with collective witness, thus transforming oppression into political action.

Githa Hariharan: Myth and Narrative Therapy in *The Thousand Faces of Night*

A different paradigm of myth efficacy is given by Githa Hariharan in *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992). Having become trapped by the inherited narratives, the main character, Devi, gradually develops a critical ability, rejecting all the tales that do not allow healing her, but instead continue to hurt her. These mythological rewritings serve as metaphors of individual and intergenerational trauma - an analysis which I make in reference to Cixous concept of *écriture féminine* - the approach to storytelling as a bodily, fluid act. Hariharan does not stand by rupture and instead seeks to revitalize through reinterpretation and transformation of his narratives, which makes this position consistent with modern realities in Indian literature and socio-cultural context.

Storytelling as Ritual: The Aesthetics of Healing

In these passages, there is a ritualistic tone that comes out. Storytelling creates a shared space of recovery, be it through the polyphonic memory of Morrison, oral testimony of Bama or mythic therapy of Hariharan. Pieces, non-linear rhythms, repetitions echo the formalities of trauma. However, sharing, even the pieces and incomplete stories, offers the promised chance of ethical witnessing, which eventually leads to the shared healing. Language no longer serves as a document of suffering to these authors; it is also a site where pain is re-configured into the process of liberation itself.

Conclusion

The feminist narrative axis of post-colonial literature is very transformative as it does not provide some neat, happy endings or a painless illusion of forgetting, that is it literally drags

identities out of this arduous agonizing pain of the soul. Ghost memories that Morrison evokes, the collective survival of Bama work, the mythical re-evaluation of Hariharan all demonstrate that writing can be a sort of propaganda of the injured ones making it possible to establish the agency and vision. Grief is transformed into knowledge through narratives and silence is a rich area to solidarity. At the personal level- and the broader context of society - narrating wounds plant the path to healing which is beneficial to people, communities and history in general.

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