

## A Case of Fiction as Testimony, Manto's Partition stories

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper explores the links between fiction and testimony. Fiction – though an imaginative medium still it can prove witness to the trauma of historical event. Taking Derrida's theory of testimony as an example this work discovers similar links between Manto's partition stories and the catastrophe of Partition. Partition is the traumatic time in the history of South Asian sub-continent, when India was divided to create an independent Pakistan. In such tormenting time period Manto is one such writer who holds witness to the trauma suffered by the general public and present to us neither Indian nor Pakistani but a neutral perspective of a common person. To prove the authenticity of this testimony Manto's biographical references are cited in the paper which serves to testify the credibility of his knowledge. Therefore this paper serves to draw relation between literature and testimony; and explores the role of fiction in keeping 'unexperienced experience' alive.*

**Keywords:** Trauma; Testimony; Demeure; witness; unexperienced experience; role of fiction

British historians show partition as an illustration of the failure of modernizing impact of colonial rule, and Indian historians present it as "the unfortunate outcome of sectarian and separatist politics" (Menon and Bhasin 1998, 3) But, ironically only fiction proves a powerful vehicle in describing the influence of partition on common human (Gilmartin p.608). Although Manto's works are classified as fiction, yet they testify to the non-fictional abuses suffered by people in the society. His work clearly deals with the practices such as murder, rape, abduction, alienation and separation which have victimized the characters in his short stories. A reading of Manto's partition stories under the guidance of theory of testimony proves that it is possible for literary fiction to testify as a "real experience" (Derrida 92). In this paper it is contended that Manto's partition works can be read as examples of testimony: as texts which, though set in imaginative medium, still provide testimonial proof of the trauma experienced by the characters and by the public during partition. At the same time the aim here is to study the relation between literature and testimony and between the act of witnessing and testifying. Moreover, this paper serves to prove the authenticity of Manto's testimony in the light of biographical and autobiographical references. To fulfill the purpose of this paper fiction is to be read in a calibrated manner. By calibration it is meant that work of literature is to be wrested

from the aesthetic domain for the analysis and better understanding of the social (Quayson, xv).

During study of Partition literature one commonly comes across such phrases as: *India's Partition on 15 August 1947 resulted in a holocaust*. Here the focus is on the term "holocaust", it is believed that choice of this word by every second analyzer to represent Partition is not by chance. *Holocaust* literally means "whole burnt" and "catastrophe" but historically it has come to be associated with Nazi's tyranny of World War II where millions of people were massacred, burnt, and exterminated under the hegemony of Adolf Hitler. This cataclysm falls in the duration of 1939 – 1942 in the historical calendar. In the same decade Indian subcontinent got its freedom from British rule resulting in the birth of two rival states India and Pakistan. As trauma of 20<sup>th</sup> century reminds European community of extermination plan, bloodshed and ghettos, similarly it reminds South Asian community of the horrors, atrocities and rampage of 1947 partition. The political and controversial nature of these two debacles makes their historical representation equally contentious, litigious and partial. Each historian has his/her own version to present and keeps the truth at bay from the upcoming generations. This deficiency of the field of history is overcome by responsible literary figures.

It is important to clear the concept of testimony and fiction before continuing with this endeavor of 'fiction as testimony.' The term testimony can be defined as something that claims to convey the truth and that can thus serve as evidence. In the legal context in the courtroom situation testimony is needed when things are obscure and facts are not clear to have a verdict, when historical accuracy is in doubt and when both the truth and its supporting elements of evidence are called into question (Felman, etl p.6). According to Qanune – e- Shahadat Order 1984 Article 2(1)(C) Evidence is defined as:

- All statements which the court permits or requires to be made before it by a witness in, relation to matters of fact under inquiry; such statements are called oral evidence.

All documents produced for inspection of the court; such documents are called documentary evidence.

In this regard testimony becomes a statement of truth and this concept of being an 'evidence', 'proof' or a 'witness' complicates the matter. Fiction, on the other hand, is a form of literature that is based on imagination and claims, not to deal with reality. This remoteness of fiction from reality appears not to have any connection with truth, history or specifically with testimony. But Derrida argues in *Demeure* that fiction and testimony are inherently linked (29). Taking a privilege of Derrida's theory the aspiration here is to explore if Manto's partition stories stand as a fictional testimony to 'transvaluate' the historical catastrophe for post-partition generations.

While examining Maurice Blanchot's fictional text *The Instant of My Death*, Derrida analyzes the implication of writing about an experience that is either not the experience of the author or that the author of the text does not wish to claim as a firsthand experience (Murray 4). *The Instant of My Death* is a story of almost three pages, set in 1944. In this story the protagonist along with the women of his family is lined up in front of a firing squad by a Nazi lieutenant. When he is about to be killed a distraction is caused by the surrounding battle and fortunately Russian soldier allows the young man "to disappear" (Blanchot, p.5). Nazi lieutenant and his subordinates search in the surrounding farms and chateau but they do not find him. A brief summary of this story makes it clear to the readers that the 'I' in the story of *The Instant of my Death*, is relating the experience of 'my' death which did not occur in reality. Therefore, Derrida in his analysis explains the difficulties

encountered by the one in narrating the experience that has not been experienced by the narrator in reality. This makes his work quite relevant to the topic of Manto's fiction where the writer has not suffered the trauma in body but in spirit. As Blanchot's text illuminates the socio-political environment of World War Two, Manto's work records and represents the socio-political realities of partition. Therefore, the repeated reference to Manto's work as testimony here is under the very classification of Derrida's argument.

The fragmentary time, the overflow of the victim's cognitive structures, and the impracticality of maintaining the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction are a few hurdles to mention in representation of trauma (Murray 3). Human mind when passes through inhuman and unreal situation cannot take cognizance of trauma. This is the pertinent reason that makes most of the critics skeptic of the possibility of representation of trauma. Articulation of traumatic experience is quite complicated and it is assumed that fiction provides opportunities to overcome difficulties faced in representing trauma. As Gyanendra Pandey explains, that 'fragmentary' point of view is important in resisting the drive of "shallow homogenization and struggles for other, potentially richer definitions of the 'nation' and future political community" (1991, 559).

In the case of the expression of trauma it should be remembered that any appearance of a conventional chronological progression is shattered by the cognitive and affective impact of the event (Murray 4). Every time one tries to testify a traumatic event, the problem of expressing an 'unexperienced experience,' as is the experience of the narrator of Blanchot's text, remains there. Such is the nature of trauma that it cannot be articulated into language so simply (ibid). Under the guidance of Derrida's view it can be said that as Manto's work deals with literary fiction so it also resides in the space of unexperienced experience as one's dealing with a false testimony or a lie (Derrida 92). When that experience has not been experienced, when the reality of trauma has not been spent on the narrator himself then his knowledge becomes questionable. But at the same time a testifier only testifies once he has survived the traumatic event and has passed through those tormenting times.

Thus, such a person no matter how conscious he/she remains to bear the witness can surely

lack in something though unintentionally. Maurice Blanchot in his endeavor to discover a relationship between writing and disaster states that "And how, in effect, is it possible to accept not to know? We read the books on Auschwitz. The vow of everybody there, the last vow: know what has happened, do not forget, and at the same time: you will never know" (Blanchot, 131). This knowing and not knowing blurs and at its threshold we have fiction of testimony. There are various references which assure the impossibility of representation of trauma with specific reference to holocaust and apply equally to partition violence. The encounter of death and the survival from this close contact with death is not an easy experience to be articulated as it shares many of the features of a traumatic experience that complicate the verbalization of such experiences.

The researcher here admits that here exists a paradoxical to and fro motion in the paper which relates directly to the very theme of testimony. To understand the complicated representation of truth in Manto's work, as per Derrida's suggestion, one should accept the paradoxical nature of testimony. In reading such texts, we "will study the meshes of the net formed by the limits between fiction and testimony, which are also interior each to the other. The net's texture remains loose, unstable permeable" (56). This use of net as a metaphor to refer to the interwoven nature of testimony is not accidental. Derrida aims to alert us to the complexity of his model that is needed by us to "catch" the meanings, diversity and ambiguity of testimonial fiction (Murray 17). 'Net' also indicates the dangers involved for getting ensnared while doing such a testimonial analysis.

The traumatic event is such a fake experience that it is both inside and outside. Still it is not possible to testify it either from inside or outside (Murray 13). Though the outsider has full empathy and sympathy for the trauma's victims but the truth of inside remains an exclusion to him (Felman, etl. P.232). It is not really possible to tell the truth, to testify, from either outside or inside. Felman is right in suggesting that an effort to present testimony in the form of fiction is neither inside nor outside rather both inside and outside. This paradoxical nature of testimony creates a connection that did not exist and sets them both in motion to communicate with each other (ibid).

"There is no such thing as a literature of the Holocaust, nor can there be," writes Elie Wiesel

(qtd in Rosenfeld, etl. 4). This statement can be equated to the literature for partition as well. But considering the fact that Elie Wiesel himself is the best known writer of the holocaust sharpens the paradox (Felman, etl 95). Similarly, Givoni quotes Primo Levi who is prominent witness writer but he says that "We, the survivors, are not the true witnesses... we are those who by their prevarications or abilities or good luck did not touch bottom" (qtd in Givoni, p.60).

In the light of these statements, if it is agreed that there cannot be a literature of partition then is it also agreed upon that Partition – the traumatic experience did not leave any impact on the writings of that time? This is not possible owing to the implicit responsibility owned by literature as being a 'mirror image' of life. As is the state of testimony so is the theme and narrative style of Manto's stories. Sense of uncertainty is all pervasive in his partition works. Stories are never fully brought to closure and this imbues his work with a disturbing sense of ambiguity. He conveys to us that in the madness of partition, in the midst of violent and desperate events, only death could convey finality (Alter 96). He writes that these "were the times when philosophy, argumentation or logic had lost their meaning; they were nothing but an exercise in futility" (Manto 103). In order to read representations of trauma in a responsible and comprehensive way, the value of what occurs in the spaces between the real and the unreal, and between the factual and the fictional, must be acknowledged and treated with as much respect and consideration as the experiences that can unproblematically be slotted into the category of factual reality (Derrida 91-92). The violence that followed India's partition in 1947 was of such viciousness and ferociousness that it had betrayed understanding. Writers of that time were bewildered how to express such extreme situations like the catastrophe of the Partition. These events were not only numbing experiences but they also laid bare; moral, political and intellectual contradictions, evident only in a crisis. The narrative strategies employed in mediating these traumatic events are connected with the changing possibilities of representation (Koves 2147).

There raised a question then who would be in a position to tell? The truth of the inside was even less accessible to an outsider. If it is indeed impossible to bear Witness to the trauma from inside, it is even more impossible to testify to it from the outside. The times of trauma are not

graspable for a normal human being due to the inhumanity of times. As one of outsiders of holocaust testifies:

It was not a world. There was not humanity . . . It wasn't humanity. It was some. . . some hell. . . They are not human. We left the ghetto. Frankly, I couldn't take it anymore. . . I was sick. Even now I don't want . . . I understand your role. I am here. I don't go back in my memory. I couldn't tell any more. But I reported what I saw. It was not a world. It was not a part of humanity. I was not part of it. I did not belong there. I never saw such things, I never . . . nobody wrote about this kind of reality. I never saw any theater, I never saw any movie . . . this was not the world, I was told that these were human beings—they didn't look like human beings [Karski qtd in Lanzmann 167, 173-174].

In reality it is impossible to testify from inside otherness in much the same way as it is impossible to testify, precisely, from inside death. Inside has no voice, and it is unintelligible, it is not present to itself (Felman246). Philip Muller, who spent years working in the management of the dead bodies in the Auschwitz crematorium, testifies:

I couldn't understand any of it. It was like a blow on the head, as if I'd been stunned. I didn't even know where I was . . . I was in shock, as if I'd been hypnotized, ready to do whatever I was told. I was so mindless, so horrified . . . (p.59qtd in Felman 231)

This absence of the rationalistic understanding of the trauma makes inside inconceivable even to the ones who are in direct contact with reality. It gets impossible for them to tell or to recover the truth. There is a relation between truth and threshold of fiction and non-fiction. And it is this threshold that needs to be historically and philosophically crossed (Felman 246). At this brink the validity of testimony stems from the "capacity to speak solely in the name of incapacity to speak" (Agamben, qtd in Givoni, p.152). From inside we have in the Dutiful daughter (Manto, in BF 187) Bhagbhari's mother who has lost her voice, awareness, truth, the capacity to feel, the capacity to speak and finally her life. This loss and its truth present to us precisely how it is to be inside the trauma. This loss also defines that

it is impossible to testify from inside to the truth of that inside (Givoni, 152).

There are various others who question the representation of trauma based on the unreliability of the memory of testifier as well as of victim. Blanchot also refers to holocaust as an absolute event which swallowed up the meaning. He poses a question that how thought could be made "the keeper of the holocaust where all was lost, including guardian thought? (WD 47) Michael Bernard-Donals also contends that testimony cannot serve as evidence, neither in the form of fiction nor non – fiction. He explains,

[w]e cannot view testimony as a window into the past; at its most extreme—in memories of trauma—testimony marks the absence of events, since they did not register on, let alone become integrated into, the victim's consciousness. A testimony may be effective, and it may allow a reader to glimpse a trauma (though perhaps not the one that purportedly lies at the testimony's source). But it alone does not provide evidence of that event. (p.1302)

Even if we agree that testimony to trauma cannot be a window on the past still importance should be given to the "glimpse" of the trauma that such testimony can provide. This paper is structured in a way to prove literature as a vehicle for articulating testimonial evidence to and memories of trauma. What Felman has to say about holocaust testimony applies equally to the witness of partition violence. All the dimensions of the testimony whether it be historical, the clinical, and the poetical none of them truly captures the complexity of the testimony. But many of them try to achieve the basic structure. They try to grasp different facets of discovery and of advent. Their purpose is to get hold of the power of significance, and to check the impact of a true event in language. It's an event which can unwittingly resemble a poetic, or a literary act (Felman 41). When testifier himself has passed through horrendous events his memory becomes unreliable for the critics of testimony. It is said that his memory might be overwhelmed by dreadful incidents. Such events specifically, when they relate to unnatural happenings do not settle in mind as knowledge nor can be assimilated in full cognition (Felman 5). Such bits and pieces are presented by Manto in his first reaction to partition violence named Siyah Hashiyay (Black

Margins). These anecdotes do not have any proper beginning or ending. Apparently they are merely few comments but so deep and euphoric in structure that pages have been written on their interpretations.

The witnesses of partition bear witness to the horrors of partition considering it an illusory and unreal event, whose horrors are not easy to contemplate. This is the case because despite the reality of occurrence of traumatic event it remains outside the parameters of "normal reality." The inhumane behavior is neither normal nor a routine. The trauma is thus an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after. Owing to this timelessness and possessing this quality of "otherness" it becomes incomprehensible; unable to be recounted (ibid). Therefore, testimony becomes an instrument to bear witness to the witness's inability to witness. It shows the narrating subjects' inability to cross the bridge towards the Other's death or life. Just as Camus' novel *The Fall* shows the Holocaust as the impossible historical narrative of an event without a witness, similarly, Manto's *Open it* (khol do, also translated as *The Return*) occupies a space of extreme uncertainty and Manto, who offers the reader no clarification, accepts the need to demur in this undecidability and leaves it as an event eliminating its own witness (ibid 200). Derrida chose the term 'Demeure' for his theory of testimony. Borrowing different interpretations of this term from Murray it is intended that Derrida's choice of the term *demeure* (Demure) refers to the uncertainty, thus raising the idea of undecidability which is the very border at which the commonality of testimony and literary fiction emerges (Murray 6). This undecidability leads to paradox which becomes the integral part not only of testimony but also of Derrida's theory of *demeure*. Referring to testimony Derrida states that, It is "both infinitely secret and infinitely public" (41) because the singular experience of the testifier "must be universalizable; this is the testimonial condition" (41). In such situation the "I" of the narrator becomes a pendulum oscillating on the border of time and history. The trauma experienced by this "I" is "nothing less than the instant of an interruption of time and history, a second of interruption in which fiction and testimony find their common resource" (Derrida 73). To take *demeure* in terms of uncertainty and hesitation one can say that it is necessary to hesitate or demur before differentiating between

testimony and fiction precisely because such distinction is equally impossible.

To question the memory of testifier appears as absurd to the researcher as it does to Laub. He quotes an experience of a meeting between a woman as a witness and the historians. Historians do not agree to her witness because she exclaims that four chimneys went on fire. But one should agree with Laub that "The woman was testifying not to the number of the chimneys blown up, but to something else, more radical, more crucial: the reality of an unimaginable occurrence" (Felman, etl. 60). Similarly one may criticize Manto's memory insisting that he might have exaggerated the violence but the fact remains that his task is not to present the numbers but the inconceivable incidences that occurred during partition. As for Laub the number mattered less than the fact of the occurrence. Similarly for Manto's readers the event itself was almost inconceivable. And his fiction testifies to the 'historical truth' of the chaos and inhumanity of the times of partition (ibid, 59 – 60).

Pandey negates the concept of violence being non-narratable. He claims that, it is here that Manto's stories score (23). The acceptance of the need to demur does not, however, mean that Manto surrenders to the difficulties of testifying to trauma. Rather, he creates a work that is an exceptionally powerful testimony to atrocity. The affective impact of the fiction can be read in terms of Derrida's argument that fiction is not only a structural component of testimony, but that it is, in fact, its truest possibility. The denial of testimonial status to works of fiction will thus in effect be a denial of the most powerful forms of testimony that are available. Innocent past, missing persons, and the lost peace can neither be recaptured nor restored. The aim of testimony is to seek and to evoke the truth which has been lost and reality that has vanished but this promise and aim of the testimony remains unfulfilled when it is fully realized (Felman, etl 91).

According to the French scholar Jean-Luc Nancy, the gravest and most painful testimony of the modern world, the one that possibly involves all other testimonies to which this epoch must answer, is the testimony of the dissolution, the dislocation, or the conflagration of community (1). This agonistic task is taken up by Manto and a number of his stories *Toba Tek Singh*, *The Last Salute*, *The Dog of Titwal* and *Essay on Shyam* are a few to mention

writings on the theme of displacement and disruption. Therefore, it is contested that Manto's tragic works are a true witness to the disastrous times of partition. How an imaginative work can be a true witness is the question to be addressed now.

The study of fiction as a testimony is a relatively intricate affair as it directly questions the very inherent notion of testimony to be an appeal to be believed upon. As Lanzmann puts it "The truth kills the possibility of fiction" (qtd in Felman, etl. 206). But the truth does not kill the possibility of art rather it relies on art for its transmission. It is only with the help of art that we as witnesses can realize the suffering of victims in our consciousness (ibid). Here one needs to understand that the reality of testimony is a complicated notion. Testimony is not a proof. It is, as per definition of testimony, to stand as a witness where things are obscure. If testimony would achieve certainty it will become a proof and will lose its status as testimony (Murray 8). According to Derrida, testimony "will always suffer both having, undecidably, a connection to fiction, perjury, or lie and never being able or obligated—without ceasing to testify—to become a proof" (28). In this context Derrida contends that each testimony contains the likelihood of lie and this opportunity makes fiction of testimony probable. For this reason Derrida argues that there is "no testimony that does not structurally imply in itself the possibility of fiction, simulacra, dissimulation, lie, and perjury" (29). These possibilities of fiction and lies thus enable testimony. If there was no such probability one would have proof and the term testimony would become superfluous. When evidence is available, then for evidence one does not contend to prove it true, since 'proof' or 'evidence' in itself acclaims that the given statement is veracious. (Murray 9).

Due to all these problems, Derrida reminds us that the hearer of testimony "would have to be certain of the distinction between a testimony and a fiction of testimony" (36). A fact that no rigid lines can be drawn between these scenarios is, according to Derrida, "a possibility that is always open—and which must remain open for better and for worse" (ibid). This puts the task, of proving Manto's fiction as a testimony to the atrocious past, in doldrums. When it is contested that Manto's fiction can serve as a witness to the atrocities of partition, the researcher ultimately becomes responsible to the victims who suffered those atrocities. This responsibility becomes

even more challenging when reading the fiction of trauma. Derrida differentiates between 'witness' and to 'bear witness' in his work *Demeure: Fiction and Testimony*. He postulates that one may witness something without bearing witness to it. If it is proclaimed that Manto's work testifies to Partition's cataclysm it is meant that the researcher "bears witness" as testimony "is always to render public" (Derrida 30). The fact also remains that when an author appoints himself to bear witness he cannot be relieved by any sort of substitution or representation. But the possibility of literary fiction being haunted by truthful, responsible and real testimony is its proper possibility (Derrida 73). In the argument of establishing a relation between fiction and testimony one would agree that Manto is not expressing his personal experience but of others, neither does the narrator of the Blanchot's text. Derrida discusses in detail that 'I' of the narrator in Blanchot's text is not necessarily Blanchot and secondly, the narrator is testifying to an event that remained incomplete. In that instant of his death the real 'death' never occurred. Had that instant been completed, had that 'I' been killed he could never bear witness to that experience. Manto writes fiction whereas Derrida is unsure of the genre of Blanchot's text. He is uncertain that *The Instant of my death* should be taken as literature, a testimony or an autobiography (26). Yet Derrida argues that it is possibility of fiction that specifically enables honest testimony. Such a work can thus be described as a "fiction of a testimony more than a testimony in which the witness swears to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" (72). When a fiction writer like Manto depicts truth and only truth in his work then that truth is not accepted by his critics and they label his work as filthy. Ismat Chughtai echoes Manto's words when she says in one of her essays: "If contemporary literature is filthy then one can assume that the modern era too is filthy because literature is a representation of its times" (15).

Similarly, Manto's acceptance of reality and oath to speak only truth comes to us in the following words:

If you are unaware of the times in which we are living, read my short stories. If you cannot tolerate them, it means this age is intolerable. There is no fault in my writing. The fault which is attributed to my name is actually the fault of the current system. I do not want to agitate people's thoughts and emotions. How can

I disrobe civilization, culture and society when it is in fact already naked? (Manto, p.113 Trans by Flemming, p.32)

As defined earlier the very process of testimony holds out the promise of truth to bring that truth to sane normal and connected world. But because of this commitment to truth, the testimony is forced to lack in fulfilling this promise and has to make a partial breach of the commitment (Derrida 72). The testimony in its commitment to truth passes through a path of differences, its purpose is to explore difference rather than identity. Thus, testimony becomes as inassimilable as the experience (unexperienced death) it testifies to (ibid). To refer to real and to talk about the 'truth' of the testimony is next to impossible. As for Lacan, "The real is that which always comes back to the same place" (Lacan 42). But the reality of trauma continues to evade the subject who suffers from repetitions and reenactments as described in the case of woman bearing witness to Auschwitz (Felman, etl. 84). When the narrator is testifying about an experience, whether it is his own experience or the experience of another, he is doing so in a different space and time from where the event took place (66).

And we know that Manto's stories are dated as well as they refer directly to the times of Partition. He refers in his stories repeatedly the times of his writing as in the beginning of Yazid narrator narrates "The 1947 upheavals came and went, much like the few bad days you get in an otherwise sunny Punjabi winter" (Manto in Mottled Dawn p. 132). Similarly, Manto begins his story 'Sahay' by mentioning the death of one lakh Hindus and one lakh Muslims. These round figures also appear in historical writings which are based on FIRs and eyewitness accounts, where rumor, testimony and hearsay creep into official history-writing (Pandey's insight, chapter 2. 21-44). Referring to Manto one can exemplify how the writers serve their role of a witness to the catastrophic past. If it is said that the distinction between fiction and non-fiction remains undecidable then it does not mean that it invalidates the undecidability of the border that distinguishes fiction from non-fiction does not in the least terminate the demand of truthfulness, sincerity or objectivity. It only serves to create confusion between good faith and false testimony (Derrida 92) and it is only from this that a "reference to truth emerges or arises" (ibid). The truth is that only fiction is such a medium which can serve to understand the truth. No matter how paradoxical it appears

but the fact remains that whether it be holocaust or partition violence, no history book presents the reality as is done by fiction. It is through this reintegration of fiction into testimony that truth begins to get clearer (Murray 10).

One must agree that writers are not without their responsibilities. Literature of testimony is a presentation of its obligation as well as a statement to pay back the referential debt (Felman, 116). Elie Wiesel says: "This is why I write certain things rather than others, to remain faithful" (202). Of course, there are times of doubt for the survivor, times when one would long for comfort. In one such similar situation Wiesel refers to the debt the survivors of the holocaust owe (ibid). This memory of past does not haunt only the survivors of Holocaust but of every traumatic event including partition. In this paper the references of holocaust's testimonies, their intricacies and uncertainties are meant to elaborate upon the condition of the writer of testimony of Partition – Saadat Hasan Manto. Survivors of trauma bear this burden on their conscience to narrate the stories of those who are not there to testify to their traumatic deaths. As Wiesel narrates the feeling of the survivor of trauma:

One must make a choice; one must remain faithful . . . This sentiment moves all survivors: they owe nothing to anyone, but everything to the dead. I owe them my roots and memory. I am duty-bound to serve as their emissary, transmitting the history of their disappearance, even if it disturbs, even if it brings pain. Not to do so would be to betray them. . . And since I feel incapable of communicating their cry by shouting, I simply look at them. I see them and I write . . . All those children, those old people, I see them. I never stop seeing them. I belong to them.

But they, to whom they belong (203)?

Thus, when an author bears witness he commits himself to remain faithful and takes on the responsibility to speak truth. To testify before readers involves more than mere reporting the facts, it demands more than relating an experience. In this regard Derrida argues that

when a testifying witness, whether or not he is explicitly under oath, without being able or obligated to prove anything, appeals to the faith of the other by engaging himself to tell the truth—no judge will accept that he should shirk

his responsibility ironically by declaring or insinuating: what I am telling you here retains the status of literary fiction. (29)

Testifying is not merely a narration but a commitment. The commitment is to narrate the narrative to others and to take responsibility for history as well as for the truth of an occurrence. As Kofman tells that this is not a simple obligation to speak in order to witness but a duty to speak, and to speak for those who could not speak for themselves but wanted to protect true speech against disloyalty (36). This is not a personal narration rather it's something going beyond personal and having general implications (Felman 204). It is intended that Saadat Hassan Manto is one such name who took on this immense burden on his shoulders to present the real suffering of traumatized people at the time of partition through the tool of his fictional short-stories. He was neither unaffected by the horrible events of Partition nor could he avoid his agitation being expressed repeatedly in his works. In Manto's view it was not the task of the writer to deliver speeches, complain about the world's cruelty and indifference or attempt any solutions. For him, a writer was simply an observer. Flemming uses the most suitable simile for Manto's eye as a camera which is continuously observing events without blinking and recording them as they are. For this arduous task instead of appreciation Manto received opposition from everywhere. Whether it be his colleagues of Progressive Writers Movement or the opponent contemporaries. He was labeled as a reactionary obsessed with the abnormal and the obscene, as an artist without a commitment to the improvement of things. Manto's critics decried him as a tawdry purveyor of perversity and violence, but he always defended himself as an observer of India's days (Ispahani 190). His critics did not realize that it was his strategy to pen down choking realities to save him from suffocation. As Laub learned through his experience of his interaction with survivors that the survivors did not only need to survive so that they could tell their story; they also needed to tell their story in order to survive (Laub 78). The comfort that survivors of trauma yearn for has already been referred to, but they cannot achieve it unless they shed off the burden of testimony from their shoulders. In each survivor there exists an urgent need to tell. This telling of stories is one of the ways to come to terms with the abnormal unrealistic and chaotic traumatic times. In Laub's view this telling is mandatory for one to get rid of and to protect oneself from

the ghosts of the past. One has to excavate the buried truth in order to survive and to spend one's life in peace (ibid). As Camus's fiction *The Plague* is taken as a testimony of holocaust by Felman, similarly Manto's detached, unbiased and fair depiction of partition's violence forces one to acknowledge his stories as testimony to partition wreckage. Camus puts the responsibility of author (testifier) in the following words in his novel *The Plague* and it is believed that Manto stood by them:

His business is only to say: "This is what happened," when he knows that it actually did happen, that it closely affected the life of a whole populace, and that there are thousands of eyewitnesses who can appraise in their hearts the truth of what he writes. (6)

The depiction of violence in Manto's fiction may appear overwrought to some of his readers but the fact remains that he does not portray anything stranger than the fact. The shroud of nonsense that fell upon the sub-continent is well explained by Manto in his stories especially through the metaphor of madness. One cannot help but agree with Ispahani when he says: "In his partition stories Manto conveys, as no historian could, as no politician would ..." (190). This statement by Ispahani is very important in establishing Manto's non-political ideology. Manto's job was to show 'what happened,' he did not care about the impact of his works on his readers. If his work was hard to read, he argued, the crime was not of his imagination but of the world he witnessed. He contests that he "came to accept this nightmarish reality without self-pity or despair" (Manto 1951, Preface. Intro MD xxi).

One must agree that fiction is the most suited genre to present the horrors of partition. Horrors of historical experience can only be maintained in the testimony as an evasive memory remote from reality. The shock of violence make a testimony appear, not as a reality but as a distortion of reality (Laub, etl. 76). Since Partition was such an unnatural perverted inhuman experience that it is very difficult to put it in proper language. To avoid political histories of the traumas of historical event one may urge for a new language. To refer to the horrors of partition one may say that for Manto each person, his sufferings, his traumas and his tragedies is a short story each one sees in the other not only the difference of community but the rapist, and the murderer (Vishvanathan 266).



Manto's positive point is that his black satire shows him as a member of the same society he is criticizing. Aijaz Ahmed is right in pointing out that despite British's divide and rule policy they could not succeed if we did not have willingness to break the civilizational unity, to kill our neighbors, to forgo that local culture, that moral tie with each other, without which human community is impossible" (119; see also Gopal 82). Thus, a change can only be expected when one realizes one's follies and mistakes. Manto could hold a mirror up to society to depict reality much more loyally and devotedly than many of his contemporaries. As Manto wrote:

I am a human being, the same human being who raped mankind, who indulged in killing and destruction as if that was what constituted man's natural condition ... I bear in my person all those weaknesses and qualities other human beings have (Manto 656).

Such a man could understand the Partition for what it was. In his stories it is not Hindu or Muslim, but the human being who kills and rapes (Visvanathan 266). Thus, Manto's work is truly journalistic and not mere referential as compared to Camus. Manto's fiction achieves that structure of occurrence. His characters are not fictional but exist in the form of every second survivor of Partition. Ispahani refers to a British documentary "Division of hearts" in his essay. One eyed middle aged woman narrated the loot, plunder, murder and rape that she had witnessed at the time of division of India. She appears to be right out of Manto's fiction (188). It's an established fact that Manto took no sides in the religious and political wars being fought around him. Such an unbiased fiction cannot be denied the right of testimony no matter how complicated the matter sounds. Through Manto's fiction we get to know that all visible and invisible communities suffered during partition. He talks of the people who were hardheartedly slaughtered, forcibly displaced, incurably injured, and eternally scarred by the loss, pain and trauma of Partition. Unfortunately, their only fault lay in belonging to the wrong community on the wrong side of the line dividing India and Pakistan (Ahmed intro ix).

Moreover, there are various biographical strings in his work that help one in realizing the truth of his fiction of testimony. Manto was wracked by grief when he had to leave Bombay and had to

come to Pakistan (Vishvanathan, p. 271). His family had left for Lahore, while he remained in India unable to decide what to do (Walker, etl. P.144). He claims, 'I found it impossible to decide which of the two countries was my homeland - India or Pakistan' (Manto in Bitter Fruit p.500) Thus, Manto faced the similar dilemma as was faced by Toba Tek Singh as well as by Subedar Rab Nawaz in Manto's Story The Last salute. Subedar Rab Nawaz remained confused by his divided loyalties as did Manto. Rab Nawaz puts his predicament in the following words: his 'homeland is a place whose water he had never even tasted' (ibid 199). And while referring to Pakistan Manto says, 'that piece of land had a new name and I did not know what the new name had done to it' (Manto in BF 500). The sense of loss, alienation and separation which Manto suffered during partition are all evident in his fictional writings. While writing about Shyam he refers to the loss of friends which he suffered during his migration and never recovered from. When it was time for him to leave Shyam hugged him and said "Swine." He (narrator) tried to control his tears. "Pakistani swine", he said. "Zindabad Pakistan", Shyam shouted sincerely. "Zindabad Bharat," Narrator replied' (Manto in BF, p.502).

The universally acknowledged unbiased writer Saadat Hasan Manto was accused of favoring Muslims when he remained in India in 1947. He had to face infinite criticism and was subject to biased satire, even from those who had previously thought to like him. He had to migrate to Pakistan but he was never happy. These are the traumatic experiences narrated by Manto which must be familiar to other migrants. His experiences and the tragedies that he had witnessed around were turned into great literature ('Remembering Manto', Jan 13, 2012, in Counterpunch.org).

Quite Similarly, Derrida also acknowledges the autobiographical references in Blanchot's text and he himself introduces biographical evidences for Blanchot's fictional work. He quotes a sentence from a letter Blanchot wrote to him that "testifies to the reality of the event that seems to form the referent of this literary narrative entitled The Instant of My Death and published as literary fiction" (52). In his analysis he argues that fiction and non-fiction are unavoidably intertwined, Derrida rhetorically keeps open the explicit possibility of a biographical reading of the text, allowing researcher to provide for certain biographical references of Manto, as discussed above,

proving his first hand knowledge of the trauma of partition. He was among the survivors of partition. He lived during those chaotic times and penned down his observation of the sufferings of those close to him. His stories also echo biographical strings. As for his story Toba Tek Singh (BF 9) in which we come across the legendary character of Bhishan Singh urging to stay in his home town Toba Tek Singh passes away on No-Man's land, it is commented that Manto himself was admitted to a mental institution for a brief period in 1952, as a treatment for his alcoholism (Flemming, p.18). It could be that he drew on his experience from this asylum when he wrote Toba Tek Singh. Manto takes an unusually pragmatic view of madness in this story. He parallels the world outside asylum and that of inside. For him it is a fact of life, a symptom not only of the individual character's fear but of a kind of mass schizophrenia brought on by Partition (ibid). Similarly, in his memoir of his dear friend, the actor Ashok Kumar, he describes his fears when they were driving home. And then how Manto was victimized by his colleagues and he had to decide that there was no way out for him in India ( aage rasta — nahin milega) and he therefore took a by-lane (baju ki gali), or a narrow — diversion, to Pakistan (BF 460). This narration if taken as a short story appears incoherent but it is not a story rather a factual account of the circumstances in which Manto took one of the most crucial decisions of his life, it must be judged to be an attempt not at explanation but rather at obfuscation.

Thus there are various such strings of autobiography in Manto's fiction. And this brings one back to the inherently paradoxical nature of testimony. When Derrida evaluates the "distinction between fiction and autobiography" (16) he notes that one "finds oneself in a double impossibility". He articulates this conundrum as the "impossibility of deciding, but the impossibility of remaining [demeurer] in the undecidable" (16). It is in this impossible conjunction that one encounters the true nature of testimony.

Testimony becomes possible when one renders it to public, and to deliver truth to the public it is mandatory that one should involve at least one other person who hears it or puts it down in the written form where there is a possibility of its being read (Murray 6). Derrida highlights the importance of this probable audience as "an essence of testimony" (35). That is why the fact of fiction being used as a tool by Manto to help

us witness what had passed and to 'remain faithful' to the past catastrophe, has been elucidated here. Derrida emphasizes on this point by saying that without "we" there "would be no testimony" (34). This notion makes it clear that, for Derrida, testimony is only evident when it serves posterity (Murray 9). And therefore Manto fulfils the criteria of testimony by putting his observation in black and white. Once author has bore witness to the trauma the completion of the process of testimony relies on its audiences - readers. Derrida notes that, when we are "inferring 'we'" (35), matter of proportion becomes important.

Here raises a question whether the recipient in the communication of testimony can fully understand and comprehend testimony or not. This understanding surely relies on the "sharing of the idiom and co-responsibility for linguistic competence" (Derrida 35). But at the same time the understanding that is required demands more than just simply speaking the same language as the testifier. This is all the more difficult when we are dealing with a testimony to trauma, as trauma resists and challenges representation in language (Murray 6). When a writer puts his observation in deficient language he needs a searcher of reality to analyze and comprehend it. To search for reality involves the risk of being injured by that reality to make one turn back or to incite one to infiltrate that state of being wounded and to suffer from reality (Celan, 25). This seeker of reality is the 'other', the 'listener', the 'reader' and the 'witness' to the trauma - being presented in the literary work. The testifier requires an empathic listener, and an addressable other, an 'other' who can hear, who can sustain the pain of one's memories but when this other is not found or refuses to listen his anguished memories his story gets annihilated (Felman, etl. p.83). Felman puts this experience of not being heard through an example of a film by Chaim Guri's, *The Eighty-first Blow*. In this film, the story of a survivor is narrated. He narrates his sufferings in the camps but unfortunately his hearers do not believe him, rather they claim: "All this cannot be true, it could not have happened. You must have made it up." (qtd in Felman 68) This reference to the film in Felman's work is basically to establish the importance of the role of witness (the hearer). Thus, the burden of the witness is a radically unique, non interchangeable and a solitary burden. "No one bears witness for the witness," writes the poet Paul Celan. To bear witness is to be alone and the purpose is to take

on the responsibility of that solitude (ibid). Thus when the narrator bears witness to the event of the past, he makes a statement and by reading, understanding and agreeing to that very statement reader also becomes a witness. This role of the narrator in bringing the belief of the reader is of utmost value in testimony. That's why Derrida sympathizes and salutes those who risk their lives to bear witness (Derrida 22).

Manto's short stories transform the reader from a distant to at least a participant observer to avoid obscurity of controlled observation (Jauch 190). In Manto's text the role of the author is not as a father nor does it take the reader as a consumer (Barthes 72). "Open It" is very short and very dramatic in its violence. The story begins innocuously enough: "The special train left Amritsar at two in the afternoon and reached Mughalpur eight hours later" (Manto [1948] 1999, 358). But as Veena Das and Ashis Nandy (2000) has pointed out, to the reader who knows that this distance is about thirty-five miles and can be covered in less than an hour, this is a chilling detail. We know that something awful must have happened en route from Amritsar in India to Mughalpur in Pakistan (190). Manto forces the reader to participate, to infer from the few details that he does give and from the details that he doesn't. Therefore, In Manto's fiction the boundaries between 'writer', 'reader', and 'suffering subject' are shifting constantly (Jauch 191).

Being a part of second generation after partition we are not well aware of the violence of that time. But Manto's fiction serves to bring their trauma to us in true spirit. Writing or reading a text is different from encountering violence in the field therefore, the common body of witnesses in the context of literary discourse is shown by the absence of those signs of violence which are inscribed on the skins of sufferers. Otherwise the reader the writer and the victim all pass through similar psychological trauma (ibid). Manto achieves this impact through various devices. His stories are notoriously ironical, satirical and sarcastic. The very title of his short stories translated into English *Bitter Fruit* stands as a witness to the bitterness of his work. It is the author's attempt "to affect a loss in the reader that is neither fully lost (unrecognized) nor gained as profitable experience" (Irons, 91). It should be realized that fiction being an imagination does not dilute the importance of the sufferings of the victims of partition in reality. When we put a condition that testimony is only possible by bearing

witness for others and to the others then it can be made possible only by transcending the medium of testimony. Similarly, when we say that an appointment to bear witness is to speak for other and to others then witness's speech has to be the one that transcends the medium of realization of the testimony (Felman 3). Levinas writes that 'The witness testifies to what has been said through him. Because the witness has; said 'here I am' before the other" (115 also qtd in Critchley). Under the guidance of the established fact that the testimony is addressed to others, the witness, becomes a vehicle of realizing reality of an occurrence and sees the stance. And Manto's partition stories become one such fiction that help us see beyond ourselves and our history into the actuality of Partition trauma.

Derrida postulates that the one who testifies must necessarily have outlived the event. Having outlived the event brings us to the notion of 'unexperienced experience'. Such is the experience of the young man in *The Instant of my death* that is both experienced as well as unexperienced. This refers to a different frame of reference that has exceeded the opposition of "real and unreal," of "actual and virtual" and "factual and fictional" (91). As discussed earlier the autobiographical references found in Manto's fiction leads to a hodgepodge of fiction and autobiography and this blurring of genres make the possibility for fiction to testify for the historical experience. As Derrida puts it:

".. here that false testimony and literary fiction can in truth still testify, at least as symptom, from the moment that the possibility of fiction has structured—but with a fracture—what is called real experience"(92).

When this unexperienced experience is transmitted to the audiences then it appeals to the listener to believe the testifier's experience – an experience that was never experienced literally makes the testimony. In this respect it makes no difference whether the testimony is presented as fictional or non-fictional. One needs to be a survivor to testify (Derrida 45). He puts it in the following words

I am the only one who can testify to my death—on the condition that I survive it. But at this instant, the same instant, good common sense reminds us: from the viewpoint of common sense, I certainly cannot testify to my death—by definition (46).

This is most challenging for testifying to the death without experiencing it and puts the testifier on the borderline of real and unreal making language deficient to express the virtual in actual. This inability of language to comprehend brings forth Manto's first shocked reaction of two to three lines anecdotes, which are not only paradoxical, blunt, and ironical but are also precise and short showing the inability of the language to narrate those experiences in detail. These parables are highly unemotional, without any character development, even in few cases completely without communal reference. Here actions are depicted in as little as a single sentence, the little anecdotes, with their grim themes, produce a chilling effect indeed. The irony is at its bloom in these anecdotes and irony lies in the contrast between the character's understanding of the events and our deeper understanding of the absurdities of horrors of their acts (Flemming 100). Daruwala is right in calling Manto's vignettes as "existential belle letters." Manto's brilliant and controversial nature of his writing shocked people. And may be this was the purpose of Manto's work. May be he considered that it was demand of those times to show the awful astonishing reality to the ignorant public (118).

The divided nature of the testifier and the paradox inherent in the concept of the unexperienced experience make it all the more understandable that texts that testify to trauma can be "abyssal, elliptical, paradoxical, and, for that matter... undecidable" (53). This is certainly an apt description of Manto's work. By reading his work through the lens of Derrida's theorization of the unexperienced experience, it is proven that his style is not only justified, but works to reflect the themes and content of his work in the structure of his writing. Manto's Partition stories are important sources for historians in the search of reality. To satisfy the enquiring minds eager to understand the past Manto's partition stories are an excellent entry point. He unsettles the dominant communitarian mode of analyzing partition violence. It is said that he knew how to sting and rankle. But then reality was pinching and annoying. Manto is sure that the partition is neither a result of some recognizable ethical impulse nor of some profound religious need. Indeed, the traitor – Manto takes up the risk of asserting, that a whole civilization was shredded for something extremely insignificant and absurd-- that the only way of distinguishing a 'true Muslim' from a 'true Hindu' was a man's foreskin (Bhalla 25).

What the testimony does not offer is, however, a completed statement, a totalizable account of those events. In the testimony the language is in process and in trial, it does not possess itself as a conclusion, as the constation of a verdict or the self-transparency of knowledge. Testimony is in other words, a discursive practice, as opposed to a pure theory (Felman 5). But it must be admitted that physical proximity is not a condition to be fulfilled to bear witness. The right and the obligation to bear witness falls equally on eyewitnesses as well as on indirect ones (Givoni p.152).

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