

ABSTRACT

The field of trauma studies is largely influenced by Western paradigms. Thus, quite often, we are made to believe that unspeakability is a fundamental characteristic of trauma. This understanding of trauma limits its scope of application, particularly in non-Western societies. Western scholars of trauma like Cathy Caruth and her contemporaries suggest that textual ruptures and inaccessibility can reveal the truth of a traumatic experience. However, relying solely on the formalistic aspects of literary narratives to access and interpret historical truths is questionable when we consider new advancements in the field of Literary Trauma Studies. This limitation becomes evident in the literary analysis of the fictional works carried out as part of this study.

Building upon the recent advancements in the realm of literary trauma studies, the researcher endeavours to examine how traumatic impacts are portrayed in fictional works centred on the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots that took place in different parts of India following the assassination of the then Prime Minister of India. The exploration of literary voices outside the canon of literature holds an important role in this context as it can bring to light unique perspectives on historical events. Here, the focus is on a diverse array of writers whose works may not be considered "canonical." But these literary works on the Anti-Sikh Riots of 1984 offer a multidimensional understanding of the history of the incident. They underscore the need to move beyond a singular narrative and acknowledge the diversity of experiences and motivations that contributed to the tragedy. The researcher focuses on the fact that the narratives discussed here stand out due to the authors' diverse and intense portrayal of their lived experiences. This departure from a singular narrative enhances the authenticity and depth of storytelling, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved.

The literary works that we have taken up for discussion here are deeply intertwined with the events of the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots and appear to serve as collective voices that address the profound societal impact caused by the incident. All the works addressing the incident demonstrate how individual traumatic memories can contribute to the formation of collective meaning-making and challenge established historical narratives. These works go beyond serving as testimonies of individuals in a fictional context; they play a broader role in healing psychological wounds, constructing meaning, and restoring the

pride of cultural identities. Literature in the context of the present study, is a socio-cultural process that is actively engaged in rewriting the history of the incident. Literature here becomes a medium for expressing and shaping the experiences of the victims and survivors of the traumatic incident.

Examining how traumatic experiences are portrayed in literature on the 1984 violence leads to a more nuanced understanding of the event itself. It illustrates that trauma cannot be easily confined to rigid definitions, and literature in this context embraces the varied ways in which trauma presents itself. The analysis highlights the inherent complexity of traumatic experiences. Literature becomes essential in capturing this complexity and diversity, providing a platform for voices to express themselves and for the profound impact of collective suffering to be recognized and comprehended. The researcher attempts to focus on various aspects specific to the victim community. It becomes apparent that literature constantly interacts with cultural, historical, religious, economic, and political factors, which were overlooked by dominant theorists in the field.

Together, these literary works contest the idea of a single truth regarding the Anti-Sikh Riots. In contrast to the prevailing official discourses that tend to create a dominant, uniform narrative, the texts under discussion present a diversity of viewpoints. They reveal various contexts and factors contributing to the riots, addressing economic interests, cultural identity, religion, politics, and individual concerns. By examining these texts, the research aims to reveal the complex relationship between personal narratives and the wider historical and political context, providing insight into how trauma is presented in these writings.

The research aims to adopt an inclusive perspective that encompasses diverse channels of traumatic expression, indicative of collective suffering. The emphasis here is on acknowledging that, in addition to traditional literary methods of depicting trauma, there are various approaches available for conveying the traumatic experience of the 1984 Anti- Sikh Riots.

The collective agony stemming from the incident is directly influenced by diverse traumatic experiences, and literature has adeptly captured these intricacies. The array of ways trauma is expressed, evident in these writings, goes beyond a literary language focused solely on silence and obliteration. It is important to consider various factors that

shape the expression of trauma when analyzing a text alongside the concept of the unspeakable. It posits that integrating such aspects is essential for gaining a deeper understanding of the traumatic experience and the factors influencing it. Traumatic experiences are multilayered, and their effects vary, influenced by a range of factors.

Keywords: 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots, Fictional works, Trauma, Representation, Unspeakability.