Postmemorial Reflections and Mestiza Consciousness: Nimmo in Anita Rau Badami's *Can you Hear the Nightbird Call?*

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Abstract

This article extrapolates the ways through which female histories associated with the Partition of the Indian subcontinent are transmitted across generations and how through postmemorial reflections female protagonist in Anita Rau Badami's Can *You Hear the Nightbird Call?* struggles for re-awakening and self-exploration and negotiates her loss in the background of trauma and communal violence. Drawing on Marianne Hirch concept of postmemory and Gloria Anzaldua's concept of mestiza consciousness, we undertake to study how the protagonist-Nimmo's recollections bring to light substantial examples of historical trauma, the way postmemory continues to affect next generations, and her resilience in the face of all disasters. While much goes on detailing the traumas hapless women underwent during the Partition, our study aims to glorify resilient women like Nimmo who, despite caught in the interstices of trauma and postmemorial recalls, never lost grit for recuperation.

Keywords; Trauma, Postmemory, mestiza consciousness, recuperation

For the South Asians, 20th century marks traumatic happenings and reminisces of the atrocities, horror and ethnic genocide during the 1947 Partition, which is deemed as a horrific and unprecedented period of mass migration in the history of the world, especially, in terms of how millions of people switched homes between the two newly independent states in a very short period. Historians have their own versions of presenting events to the readers. They usually write with the objective of presenting background to current political and social issues or to influence the policy debates. This however stirs distrust among some historians for its (supposed) incapability to include dispassionate perspectives or its lack of

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archival sources. For that matter, history alone is deemed insufficient for complete and comprehensive understanding of partition of 1947, Dr. Asaduddin (2002) says:

The Partition of India, a momentous event in Indian history, continues to tantalize historians, haunt the Indian psyche and cast its shadow on our social and political life. It is closely linked with the chronicle of our freedom struggle that made the actual liberation of the country from foreign yoke an experience of violence, slaughter and exile for many. One of the most massive demographic dislocations in history, with its attendant human tragedy, it defies chroniclers to come to grips with it in all its dimensions. Tomes of analysis and exegesis by historians and bureaucrats have not led us anywhere closer to a definitive understanding of the phenomenon, even though the recent works of Bipin Chandra, Ian Talbot, Ayesha Jalal and Mushirul Hasan have brought fresh insights into the field. Historical accounts and of social documents, despite their apparent 'transparency' and 'factuality' can tell us only about the statistics - at least one million deaths, ten million refugees, and so on. (p. 312-313)

This gap is filled by responsible literary figures such as Bapsi Sidhwa, Saadat Hasan Manto, Anita Desai, Khushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar and Shauna Singh Baldwin. Anita Rau Badami's fictional narrative *Can you hear the Nightbird Call*? is also an ample proof of that. This novel conveys family histories associated with the Partition of 1947 and reveals the female protagonist Nimmo's process of confronting her inherited past and then her struggle for recuperation of fragmented self as she copes with and tries to heal the psychological trauma which she encountered during Partition of 1947. *Can you hear the Nightbird Call*? highlights the traumatic war events of 1947 in order to show the effects of past and repressed memories on the female protagonist which in turn haunts her life.

Drawing on Marianne Hirch concept of postmemory and Gloria Anzaldua's concept of mestiza consciousness, we argue that Nimmo's recollection of memories bring to light substantial examples of historical trauma, struggle for survival and show how postmemory continues to affect next generations. Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* and Cherrie Moraga's *Loving in the War Years*extrapolate inner journeys that the writers travelled to gain self-knowledge and discover their identities. Recollection of memories result in causing a rupture and breach in their

old selves and their internalized conventional ways of thinking. This ultimately gives way to a new selfhood. They embark on the process of healing internal wounds when they give meanings to their previous experiences. Postmemorial reflections enable them to reach a greater awareness of who they are (as individuals) and their place in society. Both writers share that struggle for transforming oneself and modifying consciousness are mutually related steps on the way of re-discovering identity. Keeping in line with Anzaldua and Morgan, we argue that Badami's protagonist Nimmo struggles through postmemorial reflections to recompose and recuperate her fragmented self into synergistic whole.

Pakistan and India emerged as independent states on August 14 and 15, 1947 respectively. Millions of people switched homes and countries as Partition sets up the largest migration in human history. According to Anjali Gera Roy and Nandi Bhatia (2008) historians "agree that the Partition displaced and uprooted more than 12 million people. However, the experience of these displaced persons was not homogeneous but differentiated by class, caste, gender, occupation, family connections, time and region" (p. xv). Partition has left inerasable marks on individuals, families and communities in South Asia. Iftikhar Dadi shares that, "The experience then, is not only individual, or belonging only to those who witnessed it directly, but extends its effects collectively to society…across generations." (2012, p. 19). He opines that in this manner memories of partition transcend generations after generations and make up a collective history.

Marianne Hirsch (2012) shares that she came to postmemory "on the basis of her own autobiographical readings of works relating to the Holocaust by second-generation writers and visual artists" (p. 4). According to her, the survivors of the Holocaust share certain symptomsand qualities that made them "postgeneration". She elaborates further that postmemory is a relationship "that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories and images and behaviors among which they grew up" (p. A). Connected to traumatic historical past, people's remembrance of such histories can be incited through their present-day lived experiences as Nimmo's situation during Anti-Sikh riots of 1984 gets connected to her Mother- Kanwar's condition during partition of 1947. Hirsh shares that postmemory "is a structure of inter-and transgenerational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience;"

"it is a consequence of traumatic recall but… at a generational remove" (p. 106). This, we propose, is the situation of Nimmo in Anita Rau Badami's *Can you hear the Nightbird Call*?

Our impetus for this article lies in female history of intergenerational transmission of horrors of Partition. The accounts of trauma extrapolated violent disruptions but following Laura Brown's position in "Not Outside the Range: Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma," we argue that the older frameworks for assessing trauma had proved quite ineffective. Brown shared that melancholia, withdrawal, anxiety and other symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder are not only long-term, but they can also spread from generations to generations through witnessing, narratives and social transmissions. *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?*focuses the life of Nimmo-Nirmaljeet Kaur, her postmemorial reflections and her struggle for her synergistic whole. Nimmo faces physical displacement as a result of forced and involuntary migration following the 1947 Partition of British India into Pakistan and India. Nimmo's displacement as a result of forced migration leaves her with a deeper emotional scar. We shall extrapolate how Nimmo recollects memories of the past and negotiates trauma as a result of forced migration and violence during Partition of 1947 and her struggle for recuperation of fragmented self.

This article extrapolates personal memory and inter-generational transmission using postmemory as a key interpretive lens in Anita Rau Badami's *Can you hear the Nightbird Call?* This work explores the female histories before and after the 1947 partition. The protagonist approaches her own lived experiences which reveal memories in myriad ways. Focusing merely on the past, we argue that these stories, through postmemory, bring into the present substantial examples of historical trauma and show how this continues to affect generations after generations as Hirsch shares, "affliative postmemory is thus no more than an extension of the loosened familial structured occasioned by war and persecution" (p. 36). Historical and collective trauma, more explicitly, affect directly and indirectly, generations after generations. Badami examines conceptions of remembrance and the ways in which inherited traumatic memories are transmitted generations after generations. In this connection, Urvashi Butalia shares, "collections of memories, individual and collective, familial and historical, are what make up the reality of Partition. They illuminate what one might call the 'underside of its history.'" (2000, p. 8)

To borrow Hirsch's term, Anita Rao Badami's protoganist -Nirmaljeet is part of "postgeneration" as she develops relationship with the powerful and traumatic experiences of her past (partition of 1947). This paper explores how depicting the stories of female bodies who undergo traumatic experiences of involuntary and forced migration and violence, a female writer contains the potential to expose the complex dispossessions which is both material and psychic. The pain, anguish, trauma and ambivalence that mark the experiences of female bodies during Partition of 1947 have been made visible and evident. Hirsh postulates that postmemorial works have categorized "aesthetic shapes that convey the mixture of ambivalence and desire, mourning andrecollection, presence and absence" (p. 6A9). We argue that Anita Rau Badami's *Can You hear the Nightbird Call?*employs postmemorial aesthetics that depict the complexity of navigating between the traumatic history inherited by the protagonist (Nimmo) and her own lived experiences when her happy marital life is disrupted during Anti-Sikh riots of 1984.

While Nimmo forms the center of thenarrative, the fiction also displays the traumatic experiences of other resilient female characters who also suffer in in their own ways: either by being psychological victims (by losing near and dear ones) or physical victims (by experiencing the violence physically). Gurpret, abandoned by her husband, has to fulfill her maternal obligation of marrying her daughters. Kanwar in the age of twenty- four was "plain as mud" (2006, p. 20), gets rejected by grooms who prefer Sharanjeet, "the one with skin like a sheet of moonlight, the one with eyes like the night sky, that's the one I will marry" (2006, p. 20). Kanwar is married to "a widower… with a young son and a few acres of land in a nearby village" (2006, p. 31). Sharanjeet, who later becomes Bibi-ji, marries Kushwant Singh who is blind in one eye and lives in Canada.She migrates to Canada and gets a chance to educate herself. She disliked the dust, heat and the smallness of Panjaur and was of the opinion that, "she was meant for better things" (2006, p. 21). After thirteen years in Vancouver, she became the respected personality, as Badami shares that "Bibi-ji had become a handsome young woman of twenty nine…..and her cheeks were taut and pink with good eating and better living …..her voice…..had grown deep and resonant as a temple bell, ringing solemnly out of the generous spread of her body" (2006, p. 40).

Through letters Bibi-ji remains in touch with her sister Kanwar who is now married and have two children. Thinking of her barren and issueless

state, she was of the opinion that it was, "Ooper-Wallah's punishment. She had stolen a life [the proposal of Pa-ji was for Kanwar but she snatched it due to her beauty] and she would not be allowed to give birth to another" (2006, p. 45). Kanwar shares through letters the political milieu in India and the possible devastation and fear of the approaching Partition of 1947. Kanwar who was Bibi-ji's "sturdy, loving, lost sister" (2006, p. 7) was the direct victim of the 1947 Partition violence. She was as "unassuming as her surroundings" (2006, p. 3) and "never did anything to stir her mother's anger" (2006, p. 8). She accepts her fate by marrying a widower farmer. She mothered three children and was living on a land that would soon be divided into two nations. Kanwar expresses her views in her letters to Sharanjeet about the impending Partition in the following words "ever since it was announced that there will be a division…..there has been unrest everywhere…..Punjab will be broken into two pieces….I do not know which piece we will end up in…." (2006, p. 44). She mentions further, "last week there was a big fight between the Mussalmans and the Sikhs in the northwest…. across our land hearts are filling with anger and hate….I too am becoming suspicious of every Mussulman in the village. Now I notice there are more of them than of us Sikhs. If there is a fight we will be outnumbered…..I have a bad feeling about this Partition business. I am afraid" (2006, p. A0).

Kanwar's premonition and suspicions of the impending Partition come true as she falls prey to violence. The flow of letters stopped suddenly in July 1947. She came to know via BBC News of the ongoing fight between Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims. More stories of savagery and devastation that accompanied Partition trickled steadily into Vancouver. Villages had been burned, female had been killed by their own men to preserve their honour, or were raped, mutilated and killed, while millions of people lost their home, belongings, families and communities. Bibi-ji did not find any information or clue about Kanwar and her family. Bibi-ji's trauma is second-hand because it emerges from her helplessness and guilt that she is unable to save her sister. Here Van der Kolk and McFarlane's (1996) opinion delineates the situation of the witnesses like Bibi-ji who were not the direct victims but were "ashamed and disgusted" by their "failure to prevent" what has happened to their near and dear ones. In Bibi-ji's case, "a breach in expectations of [herself] and of [her] culture becomes part of the traumatic experience" (p. 27). She feels helpless as she is unable to help her family members, and this leads to a sense of perpetual guilt in her. In *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory* (1996), Antze

and Lambek assert that reminisces of violent acts against "individuals or entire groups" carry "additional burdens - as indictments or confessions, or as emblems of a victimized identity"(Preface vii). Here, recollection of memories has a "performative meaning within a charged field of contested moral and political claims" (ibid). Bibi-ji's perpetual guilt and additional burden emerges from the feelings that her family members are passing through tough time during partition of 1947, but she is leading a comfortable life in Vancouver with her husband (2006, p. 55). But out of this tumult and rumor came not a whisper about Kanwar or her family even by 1948. She promised to herself that one day she would find her sister and bring her family to Vancour. Kanwar mothers a son and later a daughter Nimmo- Nirmaljeet Kaur. Nirmaljeet, orphaned by the Partition violence, migrated involuntary to India. She was adopted by Sikh family, educated and then married to Satpal Singh. She like her mother prefers life of domesticity. She nurtures three children- two sons and a daughter, Kamal. Bibi-ji traces her niece- Nimmo by the help of her friend Leela after years of struggle. Bibi-ji then gets in touch with Nimmo first through letters and then arrives in India with her family to meet Nimmo. She gives Nimmo's family financial help and adopts her son (Jasbeer) with the promise to give him education and proper lifestyle that Nimmo cannot afford. But, the Anti- Sikh riots during 1984 that inflame the national capital after Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination destroy her life.

The blood curdling saga about partition that Nimmo recollects becomes the turning point of the novel. Nimmo's post memories were disjointed images of the tragic and traumatic incident of her mother's death. Nimmo faintly remembers her village which became a battleground during the Partition. She also remembers sudden disappearance of her father and brother, but it is her mother's hanging body that implants fear in her personality and that anxiety becomes her second nature. Kanwar becomes victim of partition violence when she was pregnant with her third child. She saves her daughter by hiding her in a bin of grain but unfortunately could not save herself from being raped by the marauders and later hangs herself. Girls are socialized and trained in India to save their family's honour. As custodians of its honour and reputation, they must be irreproachable, protecting themselves from shame or blame. This incident of rape and then suicide is a testimony that female body must strive to keep her honour inviolable, failing that suicide is the only recourse to wash off the shame and the stigma attached to such hapless women.

Nimmo needs an identity due to loss of her family, forced migration and physical displacement during partition of 1947. Nimmo's trauma grasps her identity as a Sikh pasted on a postcard she was holding: "What about that postcard you showed me? That is proof, is it not? It has the name of your parents, doesn't it?' [her husband's] voice rose in excitement. Nimmo was silent. She had never told him that the postcard might not be hers, that she might have picked it up on her journey to India during Partition, twenty years ago" (2006, p. 148). She does not talk about her misgivings about her Sikh identity to her spouse. She thinks that her identity has been a creation of her wish to bury her past, in order to make her present livable. She fights for her survival under the guilt of adopting religious identity that may not be her own. Nimmo reveals her inner confusion and disorder at her own doubts about her religious identity. Although she openly claims (on the basis of postcard) to be a Sikh, her religious practices point towards the religiousambiguity that she carries within herself.Nimmo is open-minded and shows tolerance towards other religions as she plants a tulasi plantin front of her house. While the Sikh community in general draws inspiration from the religious ideals of their Gurus in order to lessen their miseries and heal their wounded souls, she respected her Hindu neighbours' belief that the tulsi brought peace and prosperity to the house: "She wasn't one to scorn other people's beliefs, so she had taken [her neighbour's] advice and planted the bush the year [her second child] was born" (163).

Nimmo fights against patriarchy and is an ardent supporter of female empowerment. Nimmo like Bibi-ji admirs Mrs. Gandhi. She defends her whenever her husband talks against her political moves. Satpal says that "Indira Gandhi is ordering Pakistan to stop massacring its citizens," He further adds, "Why is she poking her long nose into other's peoples' affairs?" (2006, p. 238-39). "She is doing the right thing, our Indira-ji," says Nimmo, "I am beginning to think that you don't like her because she is a woman!....I like Indira ji, she is smart and she gives woman courage. If we have a daughter, I want her to grow up into an Indira Gandhi"(2006, p. 239). She challenges the conventional and stereotypical ways in which the self is understood only through the rational mind/consciousness and questions the traditional dichotomies. She goes through a transformation process at the end of which she constructs her mestiza identity. Mestiza identity, according to Anzaldua, "[crosses] all borders and [effaces] all social constructions of identity, history, language, race, sexuality, and gender. Not only is this a figure of hope, it is also one of distinct political

potential, capable of identifying with other mestiza figures (hybrid identities) and oppressions" (Anzaldua qtd in Zalfa Feghali 2011, p. 62). By siding with Indra Gandhi, Nimmo like Chicanas have raised voice for all women within the various ethnic, cultural and political communities they belong to. Saldivar-Hull (2000) shares that Chicana feminism is a "feminism on the border" which "addresses a multiplicity of experiences" (p. 48). Chicana feminism is made and strengthened by this "multiplicity of experiences" and the mestiza consciousness of Chicanas enables them to accept and embrace all parts of their identities. Nimmo like Chicana struggles to heal her ruptured self as well as she advocates the liberty and freedom of women in general. She can be identified with the Aztec moon goddess Coyolxauhqui who was "severed into pieces in the war against her brother [the war god and the Sun, Huitzilopochtli]" (Moraga, p. iii). Coyolxauhqui got killed when she planned to kill Coatlicue (her mother and the Earth Goddess) who was pregnant with Huitzilopochti in order to prevent his birth instead of submitting to a world where war would reign.Huitzilopochtli wows to protect his mother as he is warned by hummingbird. At the moment of birth, he murders Coyolxauhqui, cutting off her head and completely dismembering her body. The myth reveals the advent of a warrior culture and of patriarchy. Nimmo like Coyolxauhqui is entrapped in conflicting cultural domains and the diverse oppressions tore her identity apart. She tries to fuse the fragmentary aspects of her selfhood within her mestiza body and consciousness.

Nimmo is leading a life of Sikh with Satpal and her children. She recollects memories of her traumatic past. Trauma is embedded in the subconscious minds of all those women who lost their family, homes and valuables during partition. In this connection Kathryn Robson shares that "trauma is something that is relived in the present through flashbacks and hallucinations" (2004, p. 39). The violence left inerasable marks as in Nimmo's case the memory of her mother's feet hanging in the room becomes a haunting image throughout her life. She still remembers and feels the chalky taste of grains that had blocked and clogged her throat. Nimmo overcomes this trauma that had imprisoned her life and tries to protect her daughter from the angry mob during Anti-Sikh riots but fails. Nirmaljeet's state can be described in the light of Farruk Khan's views on the trauma of partition.

Individual trauma, on the other hand, is most often suffered in silence, and whenever language is used to convey it to others' or even to self, time

after time, the pain somehow remains submerged, somehow imbedded within the injured self, and language fails to extricate the experience from the depths of the unconscious where it continues to reverberate, poisoning the daily existence of the survivor and thus paving the onset of victimization to the knowledge and burden of indescribable trauma.(p. 2)

The performance of memory, in Nimmo's case "is a set of acts, some embodied in speech, others in movement and gestures, others in art, others still in bodily form. The performative act rehearses and recharges the emotion which gave the initial memory or story imbedded in its sticking power, its resistance to erasure or oblivion" (Jay Winter, 2010, p. 12). Nimmo's memory "rehearses and recharges the emotion" engaged with the Partition of 1947. Nimmo's memories of victimization and suicide of her mother haunt her life and she struggle for survival amidst such intense moments.

The morning had drifted by in silence, when Nimmo recalled it….there was a commotion at the far end of the mud lane….her mother came rushing inside the house and locked the door. She picked up Nimmo and lowered her gently into the large wooden bharoli of grain in the dark corner of the house….Nimmo heard fists pounding on their door….the sound of footsteps entering the house and insistent male voices. Her mother's voice grew higher and angrier. It altered and became pleading, and then abruptly she uttered a single scream, which turned into a sound like the one a stray dog had uttered when they found it dying in the gully behind their house. Then it ceased, that quivering animal whisper…..when her mother eventually opened the lid and lifted her out of the bin, Nimmo hardly recognized the dirty, bleeding woman who wept with a soundless, juddering agony……still in the dark her mother pushed her into an inner room, drew the door shut…" never to emerge (p.1A4-56).

She shares further
Time lost its shape and meaning as she sat hidden in the grain. She sucked on her fingers, consumed by a terrible thirst ….she crouched there until painful cramps overtook her legs…she tried chewing a few grains, but they tasted like chalk and made her even more thirsty. To her shame she felt her bladder open and the warm liquid spread around her bottom… what was her mother doing on the other side? Nimmo had wondered beginning to panic (p. 156).

Kanwar rescues Nimmo and hangs herself. Nimmo is now mature woman of three children but the chalky taste of fear in the wheat bin in which her mother hid her and which had blocked her throat remained with her throughout her life. Hirsch suggests the "visual figurations of trauma and transmission……can, however partially and imperfectly, be transferred across subjects and generations" (2008, p. 80). Nimmo is a psychological victim first as a child of Partition of 1947 and then as a physical victim of the Anti- Sikh riots of 1984. She "could not rid herself of the memory of a pair of feet dangling above a dusty floor, their clean pink soles smelling delicately of lavender soap" (2006, p. 1A9). Unfortunately, the same horrific event re-emerges during Anti-Sikh riots of 1984 when she hides her daughter in a steel cupboard in the same manner as her mother had hid her, but she fails unlike her mother.

After partition, "Nimmo was determined not to be a victim ever again" (2006, p. 225). Nimmo faces all the hardships bravely and struggles to survive. Nimmo like Anzaldúa is a border woman having raised up amidst clashes of diverse forms. Border in Nimmo's case refers to mental, spiritual, sexual, psychic and physical borderlands. She faces these diverse borders (both geographical and symbolic) during partition of 1947. Although, living in the borderlands necessitates to occupy an uncomfortable territory of contradictions, it instigates and enables the residents to discover a new way of life, and a new cultural space of existence. Thus, Anzaldúa's notion of the border, (as a representation of the mestiza consciousness) suggests a space which is conflictual as well as procreative, where mestiza's true identity blooms. Border for her, is the geographical and cultural location in which the mestiza can build "home" of her own, even though the struggle for survival in this home constitutes a painful process (p. 19).

During Anti-Sikh riots, Nimmo stayed awake all night because she was expecting violence to erupt out of darkness. She planned how to protect her daughter because memories of the grain bin were flashing back. In this connection Antonia Damasio's focuses on the relationship between a person's sense of self that emerges from the functions of memory: "The ability torecover memories in fact depends on the material body. There must be a somatic body that perceives and internalizes the images, sensations, and experiences of the external world. Subjectivity is impossible unless the subject recognizes her location in the materiality of an ever-present body" (1993, p. 239). The re-collection of memories runs

parallel with the representations of the self in its fragments. The fragmentation reveals not only the (socio-cultural) conflicts but also the array of oppressions transferred onto and felt by the female figures. Nimmo links the Anti-Sikh riots with partition of 1947 and shares that "could yet another division of the country heal the wounds that had been caused by the first one? (2006, p. 292). Reminiscences of the past generate pain and suffering and develop a feeling of being torn apart, yet they also trigger the process of self-awakening as she gathers her fragmented parts and struggles to save herself and her family during this turbulent time. This fictional narrative brings into limelight that how the protagonist re-members and gives meaning to her personal story and experiences in the struggle and process of self-awakening and self-transformation.

The combination of memory and history coincides with the past and present lived experiences of Nimmo. As Winter shares in this regard, "the key point is that the effort to recapture the past in such trans-national times is almost always framed in an act of memory which takes on the contours of history. Where memory stops and history starts is almost impossible to say" (2010, p.21) The collocation of history with memory achieved theoretical legitimacy when at the beginning of the twentieth century Maurice Halbwachs defined collective memory by way of contrast to history (Halbwachs 1997, p. 131-5). Keeping in line with Olick and Suleiman, we argue that history is a mode of remembrance as a mnemonic practice (Olick 2007, p. 10; Olick & Robbins 1998; Suleiman 2006, p. 48). Jan Assmann shares that "mnemohistory is concerned not with the past as such, but only with the past as it is remembered" (Assmann 1997, p. 9). He further sharesthat "Mnemohistory is reception theory applied to history", 'but ''reception'' here is not merely understood in the sense of receiving and transmitting. The present not only receives the past, but it is also hunted by the past and the past is invented, modelled, reconstructed and reinvented by the present" (Assmann 1997, p. 9).*Can you hear the Nightbird Call*? captures the ways Nimmo recollects her memories of turmoil and violence of Partition of 1947 as her reception is an active process and her present is haunted by her past and her past is reinvented and reconstructed by her present. Nimmo's negotiations with her inherited memories initiate a dialogue about Partition of 1947 that works across generations. Nirmaljeet, recollects memories of her childhood of similar attack. "Unlike her mother, she was prepared" (2006, p. 3A7), as she arms herself with an iron rod and hides her daughter in a steel cupboard, locks it and places the key into a "bowl full of other keys" (2006, p. 3A7). She

attacks and injures one of the rioters who arrives and asks for men in the house. She hides her daughter in a steel cupboard. According to her the steel cupboard is the safest place. "Inside the steel cupboard, the safest place- she is there, my little daughter", wailed Nimmo. Nobody can touch her there" (2006, p. 362). But After sometimes, she noticed that smoke was emerging out of her house. She ran back into the house and saw that her house was set on fire and in the center of fire was steel cupboard. Nimmo was crying, "A high pitched stream of sound that seemed to belong to somebody else" (2006, p. 362). She tried to put out the fire but in vain. The fire devastated the whole house including the steel cupboard having her daughter inside. Although, Nimmo was left alive but she is a "A woman damaged in places too private to see." (2006, p.399). Nimmo's efforts to save her daughter's life proves futile unlike her mother "Kanwar, who saved Nimmo's life at the cost of her own life" (2006, p. 401). Badami, in the end, "reward[s]" Nimmo with the return of her son (Jasbeer), this return also lessons Bibi-ji's guilt for having taken Nimmo's son away from her. (2006, p. 401-402).

Badami does a great job by highlighting the history of women's experiences during partition of 1947. This paper argues that this fictional narrative does not focus merely the violence on women, but its repercussions and then struggle for survival and recuperation of fragmented self. The novel also encompasses the violence that was exercised during Anti-Sikh riots of 1984. *Can You hear the Nightbird Call?* is a postmemorial work as it "strives to reactivate and re-embody more distant political and cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression" (Hirsch 2012, p. 33). This article has argued that female figures became the worst sufferers whenever the condition of society is turbulent, but they have the capability to cope with the situation and to struggle for survival. This article has also displayed that Anita Rau Badami- as member of a post-Partition generation, has extrapolated deep connection with female postmemorial recall of partition.

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