

Obedience and Resistance: Psychological Dimensions of Political Authority in Postcolonial English Literature

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Abstract

In this paper, the question is explored into how individuals think, feel and consider when they have to approach political authority in the postcolonial English literature covering Partition. The article explores the psychological processes of obedience and opposition to political power in English postcolonial literature about the Partition of India. Using the political psychology and the analysis of a literature the study examines how, in times of extreme political violence, individuals balance moral conscience, fear, and group pressure. As a focal example, the paper examines the conflict of non-violence and revolutionary struggle of Gandhian thought and principle using *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) by Manohar Malgonkar, and the characters of Gian and Debi. The theoretical framework combines the theory of obedience by Stanley Milgram (1974), studies on conformity by Solomon Asch, and theory of large-group identity by Vamik Volkan (2001) to explain how political behaviour of individuals are influenced by those in authority, and group norms and collective identity. The qualitative textual analysis and close reading followed in the paper is methodologically based on the interdisciplinary political-psychological approach. According to it, Partition literature serves as a psychological memory that documents the emergence of obedience, conformity and resistance in response to the pressure of nationalism, violence and moral crisis. By placing *A Bend in the Ganges* into more general discourses of political psychology and postcolonial studies, the article can be added to an interdisciplinary reading of the agency, authority, and ethical dilemma during the times of historical discontinuity.

Keywords: Partition literature; political authority; obedience; resistance; political psychology; postcolonial studies

1. Introduction

The Partitioning of India in 1947 is one of the most heinous political events that took place during the twentieth century, and which led to the unprecedented acts of communal violence, the displacement of approximately fifteen million people, and the prolonged psychological and emotional trauma. Being a historical break, Partition destroyed the established social order and compelled people to deal with the extreme moral and political decisions in the circumstances of fear, uncertainty, and mass murder. This phenomenon has continued to be a recurring theme in postcolonial English literature, as writers seek to inscribe the sense of loss, displacement and fragmentation of individual and communal identities (Pandey, 2001; Butalia, 1998). These literary activities are not only a reflection of historical misery but also a

perception domain in which one can reflect on the psychological outcomes of political power and a movement of masses. In critical scholarship of Partition literature, trauma, memory, nationalism and historiography have been the key areas of interest with the focus on the affective aftermath of violence and the ethics of representation (Das, 2007). Though these methods have played an invaluable role in revealing the human face of Partition, they tend to focus on group accounts of human suffering to the exclusion of the psychological processes that dictate the behaviour of individuals in the face of political catastrophe. Specifically, the issue of why people submit to some kinds of authority and revolt against others, sometimes at such a great personal cost has been given rather little enduring consideration. This gap has to be bridged interdisciplinarily by no longer focusing on textual thematics but by studying the functioning of authority, fear, conformity, and moral reasoning on the very level of the individual psyche. Political power during Partition was not based at one site but operated through overlapping and competing forms: the disintegrating apparatus of colonial power, nationalist political leadership figures who promoted moral discipline and sacrifice, revolutionary groups that advocated violence as a means of effective politics, and communal groupings on the basis of which loyalty was demanded in the name of religious or ethnic survival. People had to strike a compromise on these conflicting claims when the atmosphere was highly volatile and moral indecision might be viewed as a traitor and obedience might cause one to be involved in violence against their own moral beliefs. Political psychology is an applicable way of understanding this behaviour, especially in the way that it concentrates on the obedience to authority, conformity to group norms and identification with collective identities at risk (Milgram, 1963; Asch, 1955). This paper will argue that postcolonial Partition literature presents a distinctively useful source of information to analyze the psychology of obedience and resistance. The internal struggles, moral ambiguity and emotional upheaval, which can usually be beyond the reach of a historical or sociological explanation, are derived in literary texts. The narratives of fiction enable readers to enter the subjective lives of people who have to live between moral imperatives competing with each other and hence, show how obedience and resistance is not only formed by ideology but also by fear, guilt, loyalty and the need to belong. In this regard, Partition literature serves as a psychological account of political behaviour in situations of extreme pressure. Drawing on the relatively poorly researched, but politically intricate Partition novel, *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) by Manohar Malgonkar, this paper explores the ways in which people maneuver around competing types of political authority, though primarily between the Gandhian non-violent view of politics and militant revolutionary nationalism. The conflict between moral and ideological idealism and political pragmatism, as Malgonkar brings to the fore with the help of the characters of Gian and Debi, is an issue, which, in terms of personal insecurity, affiliation to a group and the confusion of moral principles reveals the power of political commitment in a person. The novel hence presents a rich base on delving into the psychological forces which constitute obedience and resistance. The article takes an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates literary criticism with political psychology. Using the obedience theory of Milgram, the author illustrates how people obeyed the power of the authority and conformity studies of Asch on the power of group influence (Asch, 1955), and theories on large-group identity of Vamik Volkan, who attributes how collective identities develop into emotionally charged states during a period of conflict (Volkan, 2001) the article addresses how obedience, conformity and collective identification influence political behaviour in Partition narratives. It maintains that obedience and resistance to Partition was not only an ideological decision making, but a psychologically complicated reaction, which arose in the focal point of the forces of authority, societal pressure, and moral crisis. With the location of *A Bend in the Ganges* in this interdisciplinary context, the

article adds to the further comprehension of agency, authority and the ethical conflict in the situations of historical disruption.

2. Literature Review

The critique on partition literature has produced a large and varied critical literature on the themes of trauma, violence, memory, displacement, and national identity. The interpretation of the role of Partition by literary critics and historians has focused on the breakdown of the social order and the violent reconstruction of community along religious and nationalistic lines. In the early research works, it is stressed that Partition was not only a geopolitical process but a psychological phenomenon that instilled the soul in daily social interactions and ethical principles (Pandey, 2001). Fictional accounts of Partition usually prefigure common people who are forced to face uncommon moral situations and discover the way violence makes neighbours enemies and victims unwilling killers. Trauma studies have had a fascinating role specifically in Partition criticism, in which they have concentrated on the psychic consequences of violence and the impossibility of telling the story of devastating loss. According to the scholars, Partition discourses are not linear historiographic, or rather, they utilize fragmentation, silence and repetition in order to communicate the legacy of trauma on individual and collective memory (Das, 2007). Feminist interventions also make this discussion more complex by preempting gendered experiences of both violence and displacement, emphasizing the way women bodies are violently inscribed on whose bodies communal honour and political power have been inscribed (Butalia, 1998). These works, combined along with others, make Partition literature a vital repository of agony and moral quandary.

Notwithstanding this valuable academic literature, the psychological issues of power, compliance, and rebellion in the story of Partition are relatively unexplored. Much of criticism, though, gives macro-level forms like nationalism, colonial power, or communal ideology much more privilege than individuals, who are then viewed as subject to historical forces, rather than as psychologically conflicted individuals. Though these strategies help to shed light on the ideological aspects of violence, they have a tendency of missing micro-level psychological processes, which are fear, conformity, moral disengagement, group loyalty, that influence individual decision-making in times of political disintegration. This is an important void that constrains our knowledge of authority operation at the day-to-day political behaviour level.

Political psychology provides an effective remedy to this shortcoming by preempting the way people react to authority in a crisis situation. The experiments of obedience conducted by Stanley Milgram still hold a central position in explaining how regular people obey commands issued by an authority despite the fact that such obedience directly suggests the violation of their moral principles (Milgram, 1963). His subsequent writing further stresses the situational aspect of obedience and stresses on how hierarchical arrangement and perceived legitimacy of the authority figures facilitates the moral disengagement (Milgram, 1974). The insights have found their place especially in Partition contexts where the authority was divided and was frequently imposed by force. In the same manner, the conformity experiments conducted by Solomon Asch show the influence of groupthink and social influence in the process of making decisions and influencing individuals to think and behave in a certain way, without direct coercion (Asch, 1955). Communal identity is often made to act as a pressure mechanism in Partition stories, where people are forced to act by their group norms to prevent being ostracized or even targeted by violence. The theory of large-group identity by Vamik Volkan further amplifies these findings by discussing how the collective identities tend to be heightened in times of conflict, and how the realization of the group

being sacrificed emotionally affects the individual psychological safety (Volkan, 2001). The model is especially pertinent to the discussion of the process of gaining moral urgency of nationalist and communal identities in Partition.

This paper is based on these theoretical grounds as it uses political-psychological ideas to analyze the literary work of *A Bend in the Ganges* by Manohar Malgonkar. Although the political message and the historical coverage are critically discussed in the context of the novel, the aspect of obedience and conformity has seldom been discussed in the novel. This article puts the studies of Partition into an explicitly interdisciplinary framework by reading the narrative provided by Malgonkar in addition to theories of authority and group psychology. It shows that literary narratives shed light on the inner processes of obedience, resistance and moral conflict in a manner that completes and enhances empirical studies on the topic of political psychology. The proposed research is based on qualitative textual analysis approach that is based on close reading and interpretative analysis. *A Bend in the Ganges*, the main text, is examined through the political-psychological lens, i.e. the development of character, plot, and descriptions of the moral conflict. Instead of having the novel as a historical document, the analysis foreshadows the psychological aspects of authority, obedience and resistance as they unfold in the narrative. The interdisciplinary approach permits a discourse conversation between the interpretation of literature and political psychology. The psychological theories are not mechanically applied to the text; rather, they can be taken as an analytical prism that sheds light on the behaviour trends, internal struggle and moral reasoning in the fictional world.

3. Theoretical Framework

Three interrelated frameworks of political psychology the theory of obedience by Milgram, the conformity studies by Asch and the theory of major group identity by Volkan are used in this article to examine the issue of representation of the authorities, agency and ethical conflict through *A Bend in the Ganges* by Manohar Malgonkar. The study shows how the Malgonkar story dramatizes the functioning of these theories in the real lived psychological conditions of nationalist struggle and Partition violence, as opposed to considering them as abstract models. The revolutionary cells discussed in the novel, the Gandhian ideology, and communal polarization offer a especially fertile ground on how obedience and resistance take place under the competing authority.

A study on obedience to authority by Stanley Milgram has showed that an average person can cause harm to other people when he or she is ordered to do so by the authority perceived to be legitimate (Milgram, 1963). The main idea of the argument, which Milgram presents is the notion of agentic state, when people have lost the sense of being a moral agent, but rather they see their actions as effecting the will of authority (Milgram, 1974). Accountability is pushed upwards so that people can engage in violence with limited personal guilt feelings. This framework is especially applicable to *A Bend in the Ganges* where revolutionary nationalism is an authoritative force of legitimization. In other instances like Debi, characters are motivated into violent anticolonial movements not only with ideological belief but through moral power of the revolutionary leaders and organisations. Revolutionary violence is put in a way that it is not only necessary, heroic and historically justified but also allows people to supersede personal morality towards collective political goals. The way Debi is gradually turning into an idealistic nationalist and then into a part of a violent action can show how ideological narratives of sacrifice and duty in the maintenance of obedience can be used. The theory of Milgram can be used to understand why the characters are willing to follow the revolutionary orders even in the situation when they feel some conflict inside or moral

discomfort. Violence is not symbolized as a manifestation of the inborn mean streak but rather as a byproduct of obedience in hierarchical social order where weak or disloyalty is akin to weakness or betrayal. The novel therefore reflects the results of Milgram, in that legitimacy, being close to authority and ideological framing allows individuals to disengage morality in times of political crisis. In his Conformity Studies, Asch, Group Pressure, Revolutionary Cells, and Communal Loyalty, Asch examines how group pressure blindly shapes individuals.

The experiments of conformity by Solomon Asch proved that people tend to follow the opinion of the group despite the fact that such opinion was in a conflict with personal perceptions or beliefs (Asch, 1955). Asch made it very clear that fear of being socially isolated and aspiration to be accepted have a strong impact on human behaviour. It is not that conformity is always brought about by persuasion but the psychological cost of being on the wrong side in comparison to the group. Conformity is applied in *A Bend in the Ganges* to both revolutionary organizations as well as larger groupings in the community. Revolutionary cells are also tightly structured bodies in which loyalty, secrecy and ideological conformity are continuously enforced. The show of bravery in a crowd, involvement with violent activities, and the verbal acceptance of nationalistic principles are the indicators of belongingness. In that case, dissent is a psychological threat, since it may face social ostracism and cowardice. The need to fit in is evident through the moral vacillation of Gian. Despite his constant doubts about the effectiveness and morality of violence, the fact that he remains engaged in this support is the indicator of pressure of group norms and not of theoretical conviction. This model by Asch explains the ways in which group pressure kills the moral judgment of the individual person and the obedience is not an issue of faith anymore, rather a reaction to the social pressure. The novel therefore goes to show that conformity can keep the violence alive even without an intense commitment to the ideology. This is further enhanced by community conformity at Partition. With the polarization of neighbourhoods and communities along religious lines, people are forced to take a collective stand with the communal stances to safeguard their existence. The lack of voice, the middle ground, or non-participation is suspect. The theory developed by Asch can be used to explain why such environments can change moral hesitation into perceived deviance, thus contributing to the cycles of violence.

According to the large-group identity theory by Vamik Volkan, people feel belonging to a group of a specific ethnicity, religion, and/or nationality, especially at the time of political instability (Volkan, 2001). Volkan maintains that big-group identities are maintained by emotionally charged stories of collective trauma and the collective glory that is chosen, to which individual selfhood is attached to the anticipated outcome of the group. Threats to the self-experience is realized during crises to the group.

This framework is particularly enlightening towards the explanation of the violence of Partition in *A Bend in the Ganges*. The closer the colonial withdrawal and the higher the tensions among the communities, the stronger the religious and national identities are. The characters are not considered as such individuals, but as the embodiment of shared identity. The evaluation of moral action is based on the loyalty to the group, and not on the ethical principle. The theory of Volkan says that the refusal to commit violence can be seen as treachery as opposed to restraint which is moral. The novel depicts the way in which the identity of large groups destabilizes the ethical autonomy. Group discourses of historical trauma and future danger produce an emotional climate where violence is justified and needed. Even those characters who disbelieve in communal hatred at an intellectual level are psychologically confined in group norms. The idea of the chosen trauma by Volkan can be used to understand how recollection of oppression by the past is

marshalled to excuse violence in the present and the historical victimization is turned into moral right to act.

Combining the Frameworks Authority, Conformity and Identity.

Collectively, the three frameworks demonstrate how obedience and resistance in *A Bend in the Ganges* are created at the nexus between authority, conformity and collective identity. Milgram describes obedience to the higher authority; Asch clarifies the force of groupthink and Volkan describes the emotional strength of belonging to the group. The novel by Malgonkar shows that resistance, especially, Gandhian non-violence is psychologically challenging specifically because it involves people denying all three forces at the same time. With a combination of political psychology and the literary analysis, this paper demonstrates that the violence of Partition cannot be explained only in the terms of ideological collision and historical necessity. Rather, it becomes a psyche organized phenomenon whereby common people find themselves struggling in authority, societal pressure and identity amid extreme moral pressure. *A Bend in the Ganges* is therefore a literary case study of the psychological circumstances in which compliance is normal and defiance is extraordinary.

4. Analysis:

The psychological fullness of *A Bend in the Ganges* by Manohar Malgonkar provides an overview of the nationalist struggle throughout the years preceding Partition that prefigures the internal struggle that is part of the political action. Instead of making nationalism a coherent moral power, the novel reveals the inconsistencies of nationalism by following the negotiations of power, loyalty and conscience that take place under the circumstances of ideological polarization and political violence. Malgonkar is opposed to simplistic heroism and villainy but rather portrays characters whose behaviors are based on fear, humiliation, anger, and unsuccessful attempts to find moral certainties. Based on this subtle characterization, the novel emerges as a potent location to study the concepts of obedience and resistance in its psychological mediations other than as an ideology of choice.

The course of Gian is a good example of the psychology of obedience in the revolutionary nationalism. Gian, however, does not become a political radical out of any long-term ideological contemplation but because of personal humiliation and resentment, and because of hurt masculine ego and need of a self-esteem boost. The politiquing psychology has continuously shown that people with identity threat tend to yield to the authoritarian orders that offer significance and identification (Kelman, 1973). To duke it out in the case of Gian, revolutionary nationalism plays the role of a legitimizing authority which serves as a source of moral clarity and emotional compensation. With the progress of Gian in relation to being integrated in revolutionary networks, his involvement in violence is indicative of what Milgram referred to as the decentralization of moral responsibility to an external authority. Nonetheless, the story of Malgonkar makes this model more complex, as obedience is supported not only by the orders of a higher authority, but also with the help of emotional attachment to revolutionary ideology. Violence is re-ethicalized as duty, sacrifice and historical necessity: which agrees closely with the theory of moral disengagement formulated by Bandura, which describes how people restructure cognitively harmful behavior to make it seem morally justifiable (Bandura, 1999). Gian does not feel himself to be the one who decides to be violent, he feels violence to be something the history, the nation, and the collective destiny require. Routinization of violence is what perpetuates this moral disengagement. It is the constant exposure to brutality that weakens the emotional resistance of Gian that tempers him to accept as normal the acts that would have raised ethical reservations in him. According to the psychological research of

political violence, the repetitive aspect decreases moral sensitivity and increases compliance with group rules (Fiske and Rai, 2014). Malgonkar portrays this diminishing of moral autonomy by the emotional coldness that becomes evident in the character of Gian as the obedience does not happen in one time and is, instead, a process of psychic development. Debi is an opposite psychological orientation, which is based on the ethical reflection and Gandhian non-violence. However, Debi is not as moral as Malgonkar idolizes her to be. Rather, Debi is the psychological pressure of opposition in a world where violence is accepted, and restraints are seen as a sign of weakness. His commitment to non-violence also puts him in direct contradiction with the revolutionary authority as well as communal expectations and he is socially marginalized.

Such resistance has an emotional cost which is explained by political psychology. Students of disobedience prove that the opposition to the majority group of norms leads to the increase of anxiety, alienation, and identity insecurity, especially in very polarized conditions (Jetten and Hornsey, 2014). The uneasiness that Debi experiences is not only ideological but also very psychological; his inability to be an ordinary person upsets his belongingness. Compared to Gian, who remedies his anxiety with obedience, Debi has to live with the psychological responsibility of moral autonomy. The inner conflict of Debi shows what Kelman and Hamilton refer to as the moralization of authority whereby obedience is associated with the virtue of ethics (Kelman and Hamilton, 1989). By denying revolutionary violence, Debi is implicitly questioning the existence of nationalist authority as a morally legitimate institution. This rejection puts him in an awkward situation because, the political movements usually view moral opposition as a betrayal. Malgonkar therefore shows that resistance is psychologically expensive as it involves one to tolerate social and emotional vulnerability. In addition to personal submissiveness to authority, *A Bend in the Ganges* is a vivid picture of conformity and pressure of groups in influencing political behaviour. Revolutionary cells, nationalist meetings, or communal mobs should be seen as psychologically coercive settings where the consensus is made by both expressing explicit threats and implicit expectations. Modern social psychology underlines that conformity results not always by belief but by fear of being excluded (Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004). Malgonkar demonstrates that the conformity is strengthened by those slogans of public rituals, public marches, symbolic acts and how they change political participation as the explicit test of loyalty. Hesitant characters are labeled as suspicious, which goes along with what Janis had theorised as groupthink, where the need to be in unison overrides critical thinking (Janis, 1972). Even though Janis created this idea within the organizational framework, the psychological reasoning of this idea is also very vividly applied to revolutionary and communal structures in the novel. This relationship is particularly intense in the run up to Partition. Social identities become stiffer and political loyalty cannot be separated with religious affiliation. According to social identity theory, when they are faced with an intergroup conflict, people inflate in-group and out-group animosity in order to ensure psychological safety (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Although Malgonkar does not visualize communal violence as pre-determined, he brings out the pressures of conformity and how they are causing increasing diminution of the area of ethical choice.

The Numbing to Violence and Moral Disengagement:

Apart of the most disturbing successes that the novel has made is the way violence comes to be morally justified. Brutality is justified by characters that include the stories of revenge, historical resentment, and survival. The framework of moral disengagement by Bandura can be applied in a helpful manner to explain this process especially the processes of moral justification, diffusion of responsibility and dehumanization of victims (Bandura, 1999). Malgonkar shows how these mechanisms are in work both at the level of

individuals and at the level of collective making violence an ethical issue into a political requirement. According to psychological studies of mass violence, normalization can only be achieved through social validation; people tend to do harm when violence is widely supported (Staub, 2011). Collective approval in *A Bend in the Ganges* serves as moral protection, in which characters are able to avoid guilt. The novel, therefore, reveals how moral conscience can be weakened due to the constant ideological and social pressure. The resistance in the novel especially non-violence of Gandhian kind is not a passive idealism but a form of psychological breakthrough. The anti-violence principles include rejection of authoritative orders, opposition to the group conformity, and disconnection between personal identity and the group discourse. The political psychologists claim that this kind of resistance requires extraordinary mental and emotional assets, such as moral clarity, endurance, and intolerance to solitude (Monroe, 2008). Malgonkar highlights this challenge by documenting non-violence as a stressful experience, and not a victory of morality. Ethically restraining characters have to negotiate with fear, doubt and social rejection all the time. By so doing, the novel destabilizes romantic versions of resistance by prefiguring the psychological expense of resistance. Malgonkar is of the opinion that resistance is not maintained by moral conviction alone but by readiness to live psychologically vulnerable.

Ethical Uncertainty and lack of the moral closure:

More importantly, *A Bend in the Ganges* does not provide moral closure. Following the orders results in erosion of morals, but the fight does not promise any form of redemption or historical victory. This moral gray area concurs with the view expressed by Hannah Arendt that political evil may not always be caused by fanaticism but on many occasions by mindless obedience which she described as the banality of evil. Although, Arendt formulation is more philosophical than psychological, Malgonkar narrative is more complementary to the formulation as it demonstrates how a regular citizen turns into violence due to obedience and assimilation. Placing the principles of obedience and resistance in the context of everyday emotional existence, Malgonkar discloses the psychological processes that convert the principles of political ideals into the weapons of destruction. The novel is therefore a literary laboratory on understanding the power of authority based not just on coercion but identity, belonging and even moral rationalization. Cumulatively, the obedience of Gian, the opposition of Debi and the atmosphere of conformity around them, shows how political behaviour in Partition is the product of the interplay between power, the pressure of the group and moral psychology. *A Bend in the Ganges* proves that obedience is psychologically simpler than resistance not because people are less ethical, but obedience helps them emotionally to be relieved of the fears of uncertainty and loneliness. Resistance, in its turn, requires the long-term effort of the psyche and the ability to accept the moral loneliness. This reading contributes to confirming that Partition literature serves as a psychological archive and that this is a form of writing that does not only document what people did, but also how they thought, how they felt, and why they did what they did, as they did. The novel by Malgonkar, therefore, contributes to an interdisciplinary insight into the political power, ethical contradiction, and human agency at times of historical discontinuity.

Conclusion:

The paper has discussed the psychology of obedience and resistance to political authority in postcolonial English literature by looking at *A Bend in the Ganges* by Manohar Malgonkar in detail. Through the combination of political psychology and literary analysis this paper has shown that the partitions narratives are not only a historical witness but also a moral commentary, but also a psychological catalogue as they document the manner in which people think, feel and behave in the face of extreme political circumstances.

The novel unveils that obedience and opposition in the nationalist struggle was not an ideological stand but a complicated psychological reaction influenced by power, compliance and group identity. It has been revealed in the analysis that obedience in *A Bend in the Ganges* is maintained by legitimizing power and displacing the moral responsibility. The paper has used the idea of agentic state as postulated by Milgram to demonstrate how characters like Gian end up feeling as a tool of revolutionary or nationalist will as opposed to moral agency. Violence in this sense is not initially accepted as an ethical good but is normalized over time by ideological discourses of sacrifice, duty and historical need. Malgonkar disrupts triumphant histories of nationalist militancy, revealing the psychological duties of obedience such as the moral disengagement, emotional numbing, and the loss of ethical independence. Meanwhile, the paper has also stressed the fact that obedience is hardly an individual phenomenon. The studies of conformity adopted by Asch shed light on how group pressure and fear of social isolation discourage dissent and maintains violent politics. Revolutionary cells and communal organization are the spaces of forced agreement, in which loyalty is constantly put to the test and doubt is the synonym of betrayal. Malgonkar establishes that conformity always runs ahead of conviction: people behave not because they believe in violent ideology entirely, but because non-conformity can make them socially perish. This observation complicates those prevailing accounts of violence in Partition that only blame ideology or communal hatred, and what is revealed is the strong force of the psychological everyday coercion.

In the novel, resistance, especially in its Gandhian form, comes out as a psychologically challenging, but not morally easy task. Malgonkar predicts the emotional and social losses of ethical dissent through such characters as Debi. Political psychology assists in understanding the reasons why resistance is extraordinary: to oppose authority, to be against conformity and ethical independence, one needs to suffer isolation, uncertainty, and vulnerability. The novel thereby disrupts romantic discourses of non-violence as it reveals that ethical resistance is maintained not just by having moral conviction but also by being prepared to live in the state of psychological unease. In *A Bend in the Ganges*, resistance is not a victorious moral principle but a weak and never ceasing bargain. The large-group identity proposed by Volkan also explains why obedience and violence are heightened by collective belonging in Partition. Individual identity is getting more and more inseparable with the group loyalty as communal and national identities are hardening under the onslaught of the division. The story of Malgonkar shows how the mobilization of collective trauma and historical vengeance is used to justify existing violence and how ethical action is a challenge of communal loyalty. There will be no moral restraint, but a risk to group survival, in such contexts where the subjects of non-violence are viewed. The novel thus reveals the psychological processes under which collective identity undermines moral judgment at an individual level.

Collectively, these results indicate that ideological and historical explanations cannot be sufficient to explain Partition violence. *A Bend in the Ganges* shows that political violence is a result of the interplay between the structures of authority, forces to conform and forces to rebel against in a situation that is emotionally charged over collective identities. In this sensu, literature supplements political psychology by offering entry to inner states: fear, doubt, shame, and moral conflict that are frequently hard to detect by the application of empirical studies. Through the novel, Malgonkar enables the reader to observe the process of erosion of morals which takes place through the insignificant actions of obedience and rationalization as opposed to a moral catastrophe. This interdisciplinary methodology is important to postcolonial studies because it re-interprets Partition literature as a venue of political behaviour and ethical decision-making. Although the current body of knowledge has been justified to focus on the aspect of trauma, memory, and historiography, the work predicts the psychological mechanisms through which past

impacts are mediated by individual behaviour. It therefore goes beyond the area of Partition studies which has traditionally been limited to representation and remembrance to examine the forces of obedience and resistance as lived psychological reality. The significance of this reading is not limited to the historical background of Partition. The same psychological processes that were described in *A Bend in the Ganges*—obedience to legitimized authority, conformity to social pressure, and identity-driven moral polarization—are all too familiar in the modern political world that is full of authoritarianism, populist nationalism, and ideological fanaticism. Malgonkar makes it clear, through his novel, that political violence is never committed by monstrous characters; it is committed by people who have to wade through the darkness of fear, fidelity and ethical doubt. These mechanisms are thus vital in not just explaining the past but also knowing the circumstances under which ethical disintegration could take place as of today. Reading the novel in the perspective of political psychology, this article has revealed that obedience and resistance throughout the Partition were not some moral absolutes but rather the compound psychological reactions to the crisis. The timeless merit of literature is that it can help us to see these complications and remind the readers that the dilemma of obedience versus conscience is not a feature of the past but one of the main issues of political life.

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