

Knowing the Unknown: Exploring the inaccessible meaning through accessible past in Shahid Nadeem's *Aik Thi Nani*

*Asim Lodhi** & *Dr. Sobia Mubarak***

ABSTRACT: *This paper claims that the South Asian Drama reflects on the traumatic event in objective history to reveal those truths which may develop an understanding that can help people of South Asia to come out of the trauma of colonialism. The understanding of the traumatic event becomes possible when trauma reappears 'belatedly' through literary language. Through the lens of Trauma Theory propounded by Cathy Caruth, this research maintains that the primary task of literature being produced in the post-colonial context is to engage with and reflect on the past to develop understanding about the traumatic event, revealing the hidden or unknown dimensions which have been unspeakable otherwise. Drawing on the philosophies of phenomenology, trauma theory and post-structuralism, I intend to establish that by engaging with the phenomenon of the actual traumatic event through theater, it becomes possible to explore the inaccessible meaning or truth. This meaning becomes accessible only for the present and not for good. It is a product of present consciousness. A dramatist writing in the post-colonial context feels committed to writing about these themes because the subjectivity of South Asians is traumatized due to the colonial past. The existence of the phantoms of the past can be witnessed in the shape of contemporary realities such as the biased curriculum, the dearth of intellectual endeavors, misrepresentation of history, and the politics of religious identities and double consciousness. In the present post-colonial context, a mere representation of these issues cannot be of any use to de-traumatize the people of South Asia. This study analyses that Shahid Nadeem's play *Aik Thi Nani* does not simply highlight or represent the consequences of the traumatic event rather their texts seem to engage with the belated appearance of the trauma of colonization. Therefore, in the works of my primary dramatist, trauma is not dealt with as a clinical malady but a cultural trope which works as a vehicle of truth about the traumatic event in the past. This research concluded that the trauma of colonialism as a cultural trope is part of the individual and collective memory of the South Asian people and the solution lies in engaging with the past rather than eradicating it out of our lives.*

Keywords: trauma, post-structuralism, colonialism, South Asia, past.

* Email: aasimlodhi@gcu.edu.pk

** Email: sobiamubarak3@gmail.com

In *Aik thee Nani*, the significance of past is highlighted at the very beginning when Nani while giving her ghungroos to Sabeen, mentions that these ghungroos contain memories of her first performance. In this play, dancing is used both as a symbol of past and a tool to counter trauma of past. Through dancing or art, the trauma of past is faced in the present post-colonial world wherein new subject of South Asia takes shape. Nani says, "When I first performed in public, these were the ghungroos I wore. Forty years of my life are tied into those ghungroos. Each bell carries a story, but now these are yours." (Nadeem 96) The act of passing on these ghungroos to Sabeen, who is the next generation, shows how the present can never be seen in seclusion or devoid of its past. Comprehending Partition as the central cultural trauma of South Asia, writers and artists repeatedly return to its losses in their works. Shahid Nadeem incorporates trauma of partition in his artistic works to access its affective histories, and to circulate shared memories which shed light on the intimate everyday milieu. These shared memories become "almost like a common culture" (Caruth 190). In "Notes on Trauma and Community", Kai Erikson argues that trauma can "create social climates and moods" of loss, mistrust, fear, and depression (Erikson 190). These affective memories and social moods help us travel the complex post-partition trauma-scape. The way this dramatist has embodied the theme of love, separation and betrayal in his dramas mediate a longing for the unspeakable aspect that history otherwise keeps out of reach. They also become comments on the political exigencies of Partition. In this chapter, I want to examine how Shahid Nadeem, while writing in post-colonial South Asia, invoked memories of the past to reappear and galvanize the present post-colonial or post-Partition subjectivity of South Asians.

When we locate trauma in the primary texts for this paper, it is crucial to note that human bodies or minds are constantly exposed to potential encounters with trauma. Unlike physical trauma, psychological trauma can constantly remain part of our memory. While representing traumatic experiences of the characters, these dramas exemplify that the human mind or body functions as an inventory of memories in which the subject constantly reinscribes the past. Our minds collect various kinds of memories. These memories might be formulated in different contexts and incidents. When victims of any traumatic event recollect their past memories, they cannot have control over what will emerge in the consciousness. Cathy Caruth deals with this idea of repeating mentality from the psychological point of view. She establishes that memories of traumatic event repeat itself belatedly. The purpose of this repetition is to

reestablish their past so that a better understanding or meaning of the traumatic event could be arrived at. Furthermore, it is important for the victims of the traumatic event to repeat their past memories because it helps them in getting rid of the traumatic effects. According to Freud, repeating the traumatic memories is "the most convenient way out and the one most agreeable to the pleasure principle" and also "the most harmless and socially tolerable solution" (474). In this sense, repeating traumatic memories is not always a psychopathological symptom but a healthful release of traumatic pain.

Shahid Nadeem's *Aik the Nani* deals with the same theme to highlight the horrors of partition which are still present in the post-colonial world of South Asia. Today the trauma of partition has become a phenomenon with which members of all the generations interact. In the second scene of the play, Tahira (Sabeen's Nani) reaches Pakistan from India and meets her sister Sabira (Sabeen's Dadi). They are sisters who could not live together after the partition of 1947. Tahira had to stay in India because she wanted to pursue her career in theater, which was not considered a very good profession in Pakistan. Sabira, who was a great actress and a dancer, had to go to Pakistan because her husband didn't have much liking for dancing in a theater. This is how the traumatic event of partition distanced even the blood relations from each other. Sabeen, who was never encouraged by her Dadi to take part in the performing art, was very keen to do something great in the field. She is a representative of the next generation who has to face the trauma of partition in her daily life because despite having a legacy of dancing from both her maternal and paternal grandmothers, she was unable to pursue her dream. Her Nani's visit to Pakistan is very significant in this context because she makes them realize the significance of theater and dancing which is their actual past. She plays a significant role in bringing change in their perspectives to look at their past and make them embrace their past which traumatic event of the partition of 1947 had distorted.

Sabeen has a "questioning attitude" (Nadeem 99) which her Nani deems wrong in the context of Pakistan. She raises questions about the history of Pakistan in response to the lessons of her tutor who maintains that whatever he is teaching is written in the syllabus book and not his own perspective. While the tutor discusses the history of the creation of Pakistan and credits Muhammad Bin Qasim as one of the founders, she disagrees with him by presenting an argument that Islamic history is different from Pakistan's history.

SABEEN: But what has Pakistan Studies got to do with Mohammad bin Qasim? That is Islamic history?

Tutor: No. He is also a part of Pakistan Studies. SABEEN: But why?

TUTOR: Because Pakistan was established the day the first Muslim set foot on the soil of India.

SABEEN: So it means Pakistan was created by outsiders and not through the efforts of the Muslims of India?

TUTOR: (confused) Yes... but I am only reading from the textbook and that is what it says.

DADI: (from a distance) This argument will get you nowhere.. just stick to what is written in your books and get ready for your exams which are only days away.

NANI: If she does not argue, how will she learn? It's good to ask questions.

DADI: But Tahira Apa, the exam questions are set by the Board of Education; the students should content themselves with preparing their answers. You have no idea where such a questioning attitude can land you here. (98-99)

The above-quoted conversation demonstrates the confusion that history books have imparted to the next generations, and the way society discourages to raise questions about the partition of Pakistan and India. Such an attitude reveals the trauma which has continued to exist in the present post-partition or post- colonial era. Generations living in this era have not been satiated by appropriate answers of the questions which are likely to be raised by a person who has a mind. The capacity to provide with sufficient answers to such logical minds of the society is desperately lacking in the state structured institution just like textbooks had no answer to Sabeen's narrative. The consequent confusion about the historical events becomes a cause behind the increasing trauma of the partition of 1947. In such dire circumstances, the playwrights like Shahid Nadeem have assumed this task of interacting with history impartially because Nani rightly says, "rewriting history is not easy." (100) This conversation about the history of the partition of the Pakistan and India convinces audiences to shatter the already set mindsets and interact with their past all over again, which is a good way to come out of the confusion that has been

causing trauma. When audiences are facilitated by these theater performances to interact with their past, they don't experience the traumatic event actually. It is not possible to relive past experiences again. The present generations converse with their past as it appears to them in the present, which consequently establishes the differential relationship between past and the present.

The two sisters in *Aik Thee Nani* are representatives of two approaches towards past. Dadi believes that "things change with time and age" whereas Nani maintains that "one remains the same person inside. Age does not change one's needs or one's feelings" (108). Although the inevitability of change with the passage of time cannot be denied, memories of the traumatic past perpetuate to exist in the shape of the phenomenon of past. The memories of the historic events like that of the partition of 1947 continue to hold its space in the collective consciousness of the people. No matter how much a time has changed, the trauma of the past traumatic event continues to live in the present like a ghost, a demon or phenomenon of past. It is not possible to explore this phenomenon once for all. It demands a continuous interaction with the phenomenon or trauma of the past to develop an understanding of the traumatic event to avoid any such event in the future. Nani, in this play, is a significant character in this sense because she, time and again, brings past into the present and reminds Dadi of the past that cannot be forgotten or suppressed. It might remain unspeakable in the public history that has a tint of the state ideology or state narrative but the language of literature serves the purpose of unveiling the hidden truth. She is here to unpack memories of "the good old days" which may prove to be a cure for the trauma of partition. (106)

NANI: No, I will unpack, there are things there for Sabeen, and my own and some even yours.

DADI: Mine?

NANI: Yes from the good old days, old love letters, old pictures.

As for Nani, the most appropriate way to counter the trauma of past is not to avoid but embrace it, Shahid Nadeem, through their plays, interacts with the colonial history of Pakistan and India and highlight the hidden truths behind the traumas of partition. Through flashbacks, he triggers the memories of past in the minds of the audiences and reveals how the trauma of partition or colonialism has not ended. Theater becomes a significant

mode to communicate with the audience of the post-colonial world and enact in front of them the past events from the colonial history of partition which is riddled with traumatic incidents both at the level of individual and society. The apparently individual traumas in the play, *Aik Thee Nani*, are social or cultural trauma because the reason behind this trauma is historical. Partition, which is the bitter consequence of colonial era in South Asia, is taken as a major theme in both the plays to review the traumatic past or history and reveal the truth which otherwise remains unspoken and unknown.

Shahid Nadeem in this play particularly focuses on depicting the conservative environment of Pakistan in the post-colonial or post-partition era wherein there was the least acceptance for performing arts such as dancing and drama. It was deemed against the basic injunctions of Islamic teachings. The division between Muslim culture and Hindu culture was initiated by colonial masters. Since people of Pakistan are still suffering from the divisions introduced during colonialism, it becomes hard to say that theme of partition or colonialism is old now. The literature being written in the contemporary age has to deal with these themes because the spirit of colonialism is not over yet. The colonial era ended in 1947 but its ghost or trauma continued to haunt the memories of the people of South Asia. Shahid Nadeem, by highlighting this situation, intends to demonstrate the trauma of colonialism through his theatrical skills. Through stage, it becomes more convenient for the writer to seek the attention of the audience, and make them engage with their past. Through literary language, as Cathy Caruth maintains, the depiction of past and the present becomes possible. "If Freud turns to literature," writes Caruth in her introduction to her monograph, "to describe the traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing." (Caruth 3) Through an engagement with their past, audiences find themselves in a position to see past and present in a differential relationship.

In Scene IV of Act I, Behzad enters while Sabeen is rehearsing a dialogue from Hamlet. The way Behzad comments on her interest in acting depicts that it is not considered very appropriate for a woman to perform on stage rather it is more handy if she takes interest in "crocheting rather than acting." (Nadeem109) Behzad's discussion with Sabeen on acting is also very interesting because he thinks it is just pretence.

Behzad: Sabeen, I am liberal minded person but I am not overly fond of drama. Anything based on pretence with people playing

what they are not; really, I have not time for it.

Sabeen: Brother Behzad, that is something you do every day.

Behzad: what?

Sabeen: Pretend to be what we are not. (109)

This conversation is significant from another very interesting dimension that is related to the depiction of the fictional world through drama or literary language. Through drama, fictional characters are presented on stage to enact the stories of real people. Through fictional characters and literary language, it becomes possible to engage with those dimensions of the traumatic event which remain unknown in public history. Otherwise, as Sabeen says, everybody is pretending to be what we are not because we are not aware of the hidden traumas of traumatic past. As far as people of South Asia don't get to talk about the unspoken part of the traumatic event, it is hardly possible for them to de-traumatize themselves because they would be devoid of their original self. Their subjectivity is dependent on their constant engagement with the realities of their past. The sort of engagement with the past, which may help them find their true self and come up with their Indian subjectivity, is possible through literary language or dramatic performances.

Through theater or stage of drama, audiences can have the experience of becoming one with their past. Reliving the past becomes a healing experience for them because the trauma of their past is present as one reality of the contemporary world. Audiences of Shahid Nadeem's *Aik Thee Nani* relive the experience of the trauma of partition or colonial trauma, realizing the past as a reality in the contemporary post-colonial or the post-partition world. Contemporary South Asian Drama, as a genre of literature, becomes a source for the people of South Asia to relive their traumatic past and establish with it a link to their present. Putting past and present in a differential relationship with each other helps them understand and reflect upon the colonialism as a traumatic event in the history of South Asia. Drama no doubt plays a key role in de-traumatizing the people of South Asia because it provides them with an opportunity to engage with their past as one of the realities of their present. Sabeen, while talking about the experience of acting, says: "When I act I become one with the role I am playing. I forget my own identity. When I am on stage, I feel as if I was floating in the air, with the cloud. I feel so light." (111) Similar is the experience of the audiences of this play. They feel light and healed after seeing the performance of this play because they become one with

their past. Sabeen's act of assuming the identity of the character exemplifies the role of theater in providing an opportunity for the audience to relive their past. Once she assumes the identity of her characters, she starts feeling light and satisfied. Theater, in this way, becomes a source of satisfaction because it is very significant in healing or de-traumatizing its audience. Shahid Nadeem's theater is doing a remarkable task of curing the trauma of South Asian people by engaging them with their past through his dramas. His play, *Aik Thee Nani*, is very pertinent to this theme of the thesis because it enacts the life of people who have undergone consequences of colonialism. The enactment of the traumatic past in the present post-colonial South Asia actually provides an opportunity to understand those dimensions of the traumatic event which have not been known yet. By knowing the unknown, it becomes possible for the South Asian audience to rid themselves of their colonial trauma and arrive at new meaning or truth about their traumatic past.

The lives of two sisters, in this play, are the representation of the lives of people who were partitioned at the end of the colonial era in the sub-continent. Despite the fact that both have been theater artists, Dadi is completely different from Nani because of the difference in the environment they have been living for about twenty-five years. Nani rightly says, "Twenty-five years ago, we went our separate ways and the distance between us has continued to increase." (112) Shahid Nadeem very appropriately depicts the atmosphere due to which the distance between two sisters has increased to the extent that Dadi seems to be against acting on the stage. Towards the end of this scene, Mullah's behavior with Rani depicts the extremist tendencies of the society in Pakistan.

RANI: What happened was that a mullah holding a bog stick got after me, he wanted to know why my head was partially bare....

SABEEN: This is what things have come to here, Nani. People like that mullah have the run of this place. If you are out by yourself, the looks they give you are terrifying. (113)

The purpose behind depicting this situation and its aftermath is to sensitize the audience that several patterns of thinking, that we strictly follow, are the products of the colonial era. Just because Dadi came to Pakistan, her attitude toward acting has undergone a major transformation. This is how South Asian dramatists, by putting past and present in contrast with each other, convey this message to their audiences that this is how the trauma of colonialism has continued to exist and influence the lives of people living in the present post-colonial context.

Act Two, Scene I begins in a living room where Sabeen is preparing for her music lesson from her tutor whereas they pose it to Nani that they were reading the chapter on invasions of Mahmood Ghaznazi. The very beginning of the scene establishes the paradoxical nature of life that Sabeen, the next generation, had to live because Dadi was bent upon ignoring past and following the conservative characteristics of the present society. This act of ignoring past makes their life more traumatic. Nani, as mentioned earlier, had a completely different approach towards past, making life in this house less traumatic, and she was aware of the fact that to cure the traumas of past, it is essential to face it.

As Scene-I shows how everybody in the house is trying to conceal from Dadi that Sabeen is learning music lesson, the inner grief of Dadi is also depicted towards the end of the scene. While going to visit somebody in the neighborhood, which was a good opportunity for Sabeen to learn music from her tutor, Dadi could notice the expressions of amusement on everybody's face. It makes her weep. Before leaving, she says, "I understand everything, everything. I know why you are all bursting with happiness. (*Goes out crying*)

(127) Dadi's act of weeping shows her internal trauma that she is facing. This scene fades away as Dadi leaves but raises questions in the minds of the audiences about the inner state of Dadi. Has she transformed herself internally or it is just the mask that she has worn to survive in the conservative environment? We will find answers in the later scenes.

The very next scene shows Dadi sleepwalking and speaking "dialogues from an old play by Agha Hashar Kashmiri." (128) Rani and Sabeen got terrified and failed to understand why Dadi was doing all this. Shahid Nadeem has used the theatrical technique of sleepwalking to establish Dadi's relationship with her past. Nani's presence has actually made her connect with her past. Through her dreams, she was able to fulfill her desire to perform on stage. Her sleepwalk and dream shows her past. This reappearance of her past is very significant in a sense that it shows how past continues to live in the unconscious of human beings and reappears belatedly. In the light of the conceptions of Freud and Cathy Caruth, it becomes clear that man's connection with past is never over. The reappearance of the trauma of past is an opportunity to relive the past and connect with it. This connection, Caruth perceives, provides an opportunity to reflect upon the traumatic event so that a better understanding of the event could be grasped by unveiling the unknown

and hidden dimensions of the event. In Caruth's opinion, the reappearance of trauma becomes a source of healing only when it appears through literary language. Like Dattani, Shahid Nadeem has also given significance to art as a medium of connecting with past and getting over its trauma. In the later scenes of this play, Nani highlights the significance of dance and theater to convince Dadi to interact and face her past. Only by facing the traumatic past can one de-traumatize himself. Shahid Nadeem, in his capacity as a dramatist, does the same by engaging with the colonial past through his characters and plots. His theater makes audiences of South Asia to connect with their traumatic past, and realize how colonial trauma is still not over. Life of a common man is depicted in his plays to show that colonial past is still playing a prodigious role in the lives of the people of South Asia. Through his plays, he makes it possible for the audience to come out of the trauma of their past. Without having interaction with the past, it does not become possible to come out of the influence of the traumatic event because its trauma continues to live in the present as a phenomenon. The conservative atmosphere and denigration of art depicted in this play actually shows the kind of life people are living in the post-colonial world because the division like that of Muslims and Hindus were introduced in the colonial period.

In the next scene again Sabeen is shown rehearsing by singing verses from Iqbal's initial and later poetry, which shows a major transformation in Iqbal's thought. Dadi notices Sabeen's interest in singing and asks Nani if any plot is being hatched to create a gap between her and Sabeen. Dadi thinks that Nani intends to distance Sabeen from her due to her decision of coming to Pakistan because of which Nani failed to live with Sabeen.

NANI: Sabira, do you realize what you are saying? Why are you digging up the past?

DADI: Nothing was ever buried that it would have to be dug up.

NANI: All right, this can be settled right away, Rani, bring that album. (130)

Dadi's constant reluctance to bring album is significant because it carries secrets of her past. Initially, she says that past has never been buried but as Nani talk of the album, she says, "What lies buried should remain buried." (131) here again, she avoids bringing past in her present. Her reluctance to face her past has made her life traumatic. The traumatic life of the people of South Asia is what makes colonialism a traumatic event because it, as Caruth holds, has neither any beginning nor any end. No

matter how much one tries to avoid it, the colonial trauma continues to exist in the present because past never dies as Nani rightly points out, "what was buried was not dead: it was alive." (131) Colonial trauma can be buried in the unconscious but not dead for good. It exists as phenomena between past and present. The phenomena of colonial past exist in the post-colonial world where people are suffering from several issues such as tags of identity, conservative society, denigration of theater and art.

The significance of art or literature is a very important aspect of this thesis because it plays a role of catharsis and healing people of South Asia from the trauma of colonialism. In all the primary texts of this thesis, a prodigious significance is given to dance. The characters who are suffering due to the traumas of past, dancing becomes a source of satisfaction for them. It means performing arts has a very significant role to play in de-traumatizing the people of South Asia. Shahid Nadeem's perspective regarding performing arts becomes clear in one of the dialogues of Nani.

Nani: Dance. All the beauty that exists in the world, all that is proportionate, all that is poignant is found in dance. When I danced, the entire universe danced with me. Flowers, flowing brooks, birds, they all danced with me, unmindful of all else. Dance my child, is a complete performing art. It has everything: theater, music, sculpture, pain, pleasure. (*Gets up and dance*) (133)

In this dialogue, Nani wants Sabeen to understand the significance of performing art because it has the ability to move the whole universe. This is what I want to establish in this thesis that we have to understand the significance of art which includes theater, literature, and dance. Through drama, we can rid ourselves of the trauma of colonialism because it allows us to perceive history from an angle which has otherwise remained unspeakable, unknown and inaccessible. The only medium to access the inaccessible meaning or truth about the traumatic event in the history is possible through theater that is being produced in the contemporary post-colonial world of South Asia. In *Unclaimed Experience-Trauma, Narrative and History*, Cathy Caruth maintains, "For history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs, or to put it somewhat differently, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence" (Caruth 17-18). The colonial history of South Asia is traumatic because its understanding comes later on when trauma appears through literature or

any other form of performing art. When the traumatic memory of the colonial past, that remains in the collective unconscious of the people of South Asia, and exists as a cultural trauma, gets its appearance through theatrical performances, it jogs the memories of the audiences. This sort of re-appearance refers back to the past. They find their past as a reality of their present. This relationship between past and present is what makes possible for the audience to access the inaccessible, to know the unknown. Shahid Nadeem's appropriately signifies this relationship between the post-colonial subjectivity of the people of South Asia and the trauma of colonialism. Through characters like Dadi who, just like people of South Asia does not know how to face their past, Nadeem establishes that until you stop avoiding your past, the trauma of colonialism would not be over, and true subjectivity of South Asians or independent narrative would start assuming its shape.

Scene 4 of Act-Two is very significant in this sense because Dadi finally accepts to face her past. The moment she leaves her stubborn attitude of never reliving the memories of her past, the whole environment of the house becomes marry. Although Nani and Dadi had to remember a few harsh memories of their past it is a kind of catharsis. Reference to history makes it possible for them to perceive it from a different angle. During their discussion, Dadi blames her sister for being self-centered to have chosen for her career, leaving everybody of her family to stay back in India. Nani's response to this blame, though apparently emotional, is very logical and appeals to the audiences because everybody shares the same history. It was due to partition that she had taken decision of staying in India while her family was coming to Pakistan.

Nani: (emotionally) Yes, I chose to my career but this choice was foisted on me, Sabira. Why was I forced to choose between career and family? Can't a performer, a dancer, be a good mother, a good wife at the same time? Had I come away with you people, I would have been strangled; the artist in me would have died a painful, lingering death. But don't think that I forgot you people. Not a day passed when I did not think of you. There was never a performance when I did not look for a familiar face among the audience. I felt as if a limb of mine had been severed from me. And the pain is just as great as it was the day you people decided to go away, leaving me behind. (Nadeem137)

This long dialogue of Nani encompasses, not just her individual pains and traumas, but the traumas of South Asians who were partitioned in 1947 because of the policies of colonial bosses. Through lives of Nani and Dadi,

Shahid Nadeem intends to touch the wounds of the people who suffered traumas of colonialism in the shape of the partition. Through his drama, he wants to heal these wounds in the traumatic memories of the people of South Asia as Nani says, "All I want is that... I should become whole, and that my wounds would heal" (137). And she wants to convey this to the next generation that they should choose to become whatever they wish to become. "All I want is that she (Sabeen) should become what she wants to become. I do not wish her to suffer as I did, nor live the lie that you have been living for the past twenty-five years" (137-138). Dadi once again denies having lived life with a lie that she has been a theater artist. Nani convinces her to face the reality. "Face it Sabira, how long will you lead this double life? How long will you live this lie? (138) Dadi repeatedly denies,

Dandi: There is only one Sabira who is here in front of you.

Nani: is it true? Where is the Sabira Saba we knew? Where is my sister, my friend, my companion? You tried to kill her but you could not. She is there, inside, which is why you try to suppress her voice so brutally. That Sabira is alive and I can hear her heartbeat. (138)

This conversation demonstrates that original Sabira Saba has not died because past never eliminates completely. It exists in as a phenomenon. It just needs a medium to come to the fore. Nani's visit, in this play, becomes a source to reveal the Sabira Saba hidden inside her. This is how she can come out of the traumas of her past and look at her past from a different perspective. Sabeen, who was listening to this whole conversation, wants to know the actual reality of her Dadi. In the very next scene, Dadi enters with an album in her hand and shows her pictures as a theater artist and a dancer. After seeing album, Sabeen came to know that her Dadi was a famous Sabira Saba. Then Sabira narrates her whole story of coming to Pakistan and drawing "a curtain across her past and even convinced herself that she old Sabira Saba never existed" (139). What made her take this decision was the partition of 1947 which I deem is a consequence of colonialism. After coming to Pakistan she did not want to show her past she thought it would be considered "a blot, a scandal, a matter of shame" for her and her survival would be difficult in this "bigoted society" (139-140). No matter whether she was right in disassociating herself from her past or not, my question here is that it was due to the partition that she felt bound to take such a decision. Same was the case with Nani. This is how

the families got distanced due to partition. Shahid Nadeem, by enacting this story, aims to depict the incomplete lives of people living in South Asia. Through his plays, he brings them close to their past so that they, by referring back to their history, can draw different understanding or meaning according to their present context.

In the last scene, Nani is going back to India very satisfied because she has been able to unload the baggage of past by convincing Sabira to stop living a lie and face her past and conveying to Sabeen the significance of art which her actual legacy. Nani came in Pakistan "carrying a heavy baggage from the past. That I have now shed and am going back feeling lighter and at peace." (142). This is what audiences feel after seeing Shahid Nadeem's plays because it allows them to shed their baggage of traumatic history and look at it from a different angle so that they can arrive at a meaning which is valid for the present they are living their life in.

Works Cited

Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience-Trauma, Narrative and History*.

Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins U P, 1996. Print

---. *Unclaimed Experience-Trauma, Narrative and History*. Baltimore
and London: The John Hopkins U P, 1996. Print.

Erikson, Kai. "Notes on Trauma and Community". *American Imago*,
Vol. 48, No. 4, (Winter, 1919), pp. 455-472. PDF

Nadeem, Shahid. *Selected Plays*. Karachi, 2008. Oxford University
Press. Print.