

Tales of Trauma and Disability in Partition Narratives: A Study of Sunil Gangopadhyay's *Arjun* (1971)

Indian Partition narratives are widely recognized for their harrowing depictions of violence, loss, and psychological trauma, capturing the profound human cost of one of the most devastating historical ruptures of the twentieth century. While critical discourse has extensively engaged with trauma as a dominant thematic concern in Partition literature, its close and intricate relationship with disability studies has received comparatively less attention. Partition narratives not only foreground trauma that results from displacement and communal violence but also reveal how trauma itself produces conditions of disability—both physical and psychological. In this sense, these texts function as powerful examples of trauma-induced and violence-induced disability, thereby opening up fertile ground for interdisciplinary inquiry. The bodies and minds marked by Partition violence often become living archives of suffering, memory, and historical rupture, challenging conventional distinctions between trauma, disability, and survival.

A significant illustration of this intersection can be found in Sunil Gangopadhyay's novel *Arjun* (1971), which offers a nuanced portrayal of disability within the broader framework of Partition-induced dislocation and refugee experience. Characters such as Biswanath, Grandfather Nishi, and Biraj Thakur appear at crucial junctures in the narrative, and their disabled bodies and fractured subjectivities serve as symbolic sites through which the violence and aftermath of Partition are articulated. Importantly, their representation is not confined to notions of lack, deficiency, or incapacity. Instead, Gangopadhyay constructs their disabilities as layered and complex, imbued with metaphorical significance that reflects the trauma of communal violence, the precarious struggle for survival, and the continuous negotiation of identity in an unfamiliar and often hostile environment. These characters embody the scars of history, making visible the long-term consequences of displacement and loss that extend beyond immediate physical harm.

At the same time, the disabled figures in *Arjun* also gesture towards resilience, endurance, and the will to survive against overwhelming odds. Their presence complicates simplistic readings of disability as mere victimhood, as they simultaneously represent the battered souls of refugees and their determination to rebuild lives in adopted lands. Disability in the novel thus becomes a narrative strategy to articulate both vulnerability and resistance, revealing how fractured bodies and minds can still assert agency and meaning. The proposed paper seeks to study *Arjun* through the lens of disability representation, drawing critical connections between trauma narratives, Partition narratives, and disability narratives. By doing so, it aims to demonstrate how Gangopadhyay's novel contributes to a broader understanding of Partition literature as a space where historical trauma and disability intersect, offering deeper insights into the lived experiences of refugees and the enduring legacy of Partition violence.