Introduction: Memory and Storytelling

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Everything that we see on this earth is an imitation, be it a human being, animal, or plant; each of them is a memory of something/someone who already existed. Memory studies is a multidisciplinary field of knowledge that engages in understanding the ability to use memory as a tool in remembering/forgetting the past. Memory studies as a branch of knowledge began its presence by forging concepts of cultural memory to demand special focus from scholars of anthropology, education, literature, history, philosophy, psychology, and sociology, among others. Discussing the way memory studies began growing, Roediger and Wertsch write, "Over the past few decades, collective memory has become a topic of renewed interest in the humanities and social sciences and is now a key part of emerging interdisciplinary activity in ''memory studies'' (Roediger & Wertsch, 2008). French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1925, 1941) contributed immensely to this field of knowledge and his significant work "Social Frameworks of Memory" in 1925 holds great importance. For a long time until Maurice Halbwachs published his notable work "On Collective Memory" (1925), in which he analysed that ownership of memory need not be an individual but the individuals as a collective unit, be it family, society or community and the memory is operated thus by a community. He distinguished between autobiographical memory – memory of those events we ourselves experience; historical memory – memory that reaches us only through historical records; history – as the remembered past which is no longer important to our lives; and collective memory – the active past that forms our identities. Also, Halbwachs characterised shared memories as effective markers of social differentiation. "Collective memory is not history, though it is sometimes made from similar material. It is a collective phenomenon but only manifests itself in the actions and statements of individuals […] it often privileges the interests of the contemporary" (Kansteiner 2002)). Cultural memory conserves the heritage that involves an act of remembering.

This act of remembering involves narration, which in turn contributes to the identity of an individual, a society, and a nation. Such stories are narrated in various ways – written, oral, performance, painting, digital technologies, etc. For managing this inexhaustible inquiry, we can provisionally specify two distinct techniques of materialising memory: lithic and alithic (Venkat Rao). Both these modes are effective in materialising memory. But they open very different cultural and civilisational trajectories. The basic difference is that alithic memories are perennially carried forward in a complex and intertwined form of speech and gesture/performance – it prefers to kindle, succour, enhance and disseminate its articulations only through the organic body. Discussing this, Venkat D. writes, "Lithic or glyphic technologies make possible the objectification and archivation of the memory. In contrast to that, the a-lithic 'technologies' (of gesture and speech) articulate the work of the face and the body. The lithic mode preserves memories externally, outside the body in material substrates and structures. The a-lithic mode does not quantify and objectually externalize memories; it brings forth memories through embodied articulations" (Venkat 2014).

Oral storytelling is one of the popularly known alithic strategies. It is an old and probably one of the primary traditions in many cultures. Along with imagination, individual memory and cultural memory take a primary position in storytelling of any kind, forming a strong connection between storytelling and memory. Communities and societies practice the collective remembering/forgetting to pass on the legacy of the past to the next generation (Wang). According to Wang, this happens through various forms of narratives like dramatization, art, rituals, and other popular forms of communication unique to that community. She writes that "to understand the processes, practices, and outcomes of social sharing of memory, or collective remembering, one must consider the characteristics of the community in which a significant event occurred and in which memory of the event was subsequently formed, shared, transmitted, and transformed. In other words, one must

investigate the social- cultural-historical context where the remembering takes place" (Wang 2017).

Narrative techniques and narratology occupy greater significance in studying what and how is it remembered by a particular stratum of society. Such a study of memory through the mnemonics of storytelling can assume a vital strategy of Memory Studies. Along with storytelling, many other fields of knowledge converge to make memory studies stronger, and a much-revered interdisciplinary field. Therefore, memory studies is an increasingly diverse, multidisciplinary, and dynamic field that requires consistent inquiry into the concepts and their application, to provide a theoretical, conceptual, and methodological framework for this new field of study. Cultural memory conserves the heritage that involves an act of remembering/forgetting.

The present issue, "A Critical Study of Memory through the Mnemonics of Storytelling", shortened as "Memory and Storytelling: An Interface" draws upon research papers presented at the International Conference on Interdisciplinary Study of Memory Studies, Storytelling and the Impact of Digital Technologies. (IMS2IDT) organised by Vallurupalli Nageswara Rao Vignana Jyothi Institute of Engineering and Technology, Hyderabad, in association with Storytelling Academy of Loughborough, UK, on the 24th and 25th of November 2022. They engage with the above topics in distinct ways. "Analysing the Role of Memory in Oral History with respect to Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence*" discusses partition historiography of India based on oral narratives and has tried to break the silence of affirmation created by the History of India. By adding plurality to the voices of the narrator, Urvashi Butalia, through her book *The Other Side of Silence* (published in 1998), shatters the authoritarian voice of a single historian. The memories of the survivors and the witnesses of the 'great' partition of 1947 are used as the sole defence to prove that history is a dialogue between the past and the progressively emerging future. The essay discusses in detail the reliability of memory as a source of information. Ironically, it also helps to prove that historiography is just another method of storytelling embedding within itself opinions, individual interests, and preferences.

Oral stories do take different forms to remain in the memory of the community. For centuries, patachitras have dispersed mythical oral narratives in villages and towns of Bengal and have played an essential part in creating Bengal's cultural identity. Just like other Indian knowledge systems, the narration as a part of the performance is retained in memory and passed over generations. Patachitra of Pingla had chronicled the religious as well as the political and social happenings throughout the history and thus occasioned the remembrance of cultural memories. The paper 'Art as Storyteller: Scroll Paintings of Naya Village as Mnemonics of Cultural Memory and the Changing Modes in Digital Proliferation' analyses how Pingla patachitra has survived the Western cultural invasion and has been carried to the future as symbolic of cultural identity through digital proliferation. In the digital age, devoid of performance, patachitras have got new meanings as standalone painting pieces, yet they function as agents of cultural memory that represent the culture itself. The essay aims to achieve a holistic understanding of the modes of storytelling and cultural preservation by Naya village patachitra through the lens of Memory Studies.

Considering a literary text for transdisciplinary study and analysing it from a memory studies perspective holds a significant aspect for understanding the human psyche, identity, and human relations. The article, "In Search of Fragments of Narrative takes Recollection: Cultural Memory and Identity in Tahir Shah's Travel" analyses *The Caliph's House* and *In Arabian Nights* written by the travel-writer Tahir Shah. It scrutinises the connection between cultural memory and cultural identity as presented in the selected works from two levels. Firstly, it studies how the author reaffirms the cultural identity of Morocco by exploring the art of storytelling, and secondly, how he ascertains his personal identity through his explorations and experiences as a traveller.

Collective memory also appears in the essay, "'Stories to stay, Stories to subvert': The Role of Collective Communal Memory in the Native-Canadian Struggle for Resistance against Colonisation". The ethos of this work is Canada and the attempt of the Indigenous communities of Canada to protect their identity and transmit this memory to the future generations. The late twentieth century has seen the literary productions of these communities' strife to reclaim their cultural and, thereby, political autonomy by inscribing the 'oral' within the 'written' and reworking the semiotics of the 'foreign tongue' imposed upon them to incorporate the specific nuances of their traditional language-culture within it. The literary works in focus are *Ravensong* (1993) and *Whispering in Shadows* (2000), penned by writer-activists Lee Maracle (Salish) and Jeannette Armstrong (Okanagan), respectively. This essay aims to explore the subversive potential of this collective cultural memory in resisting the colonial atrocities, the erosion of identity, and the political disempowerment that has plagued the Native-Canadian existence for centuries. "The Aspect of Memory in Oonya Kempadoo's *All Decent Animals* and *Buxton Spice*' studies in *All Decent Animals (2013)* and *Buxton Spice (1998)*" follows this up with Caribbean cultural identity. Existing at the intersection of diverse, melismatic ethnic groups, the novels under consideration pulsate with dynamic portrayals of characters, experiences, and events. The microcosmic representation of multiculturalism, as observed in the novels, is examined through the lens of memory studies while also exploring the ways in which memory manifests itself as a palpable construct.

Ever since digital technologies began their presence, it is equally necessary to comprehend how the intertwining of human and non-human, digital and analog, impacts our memories and thus impacts the memory and storytelling strategies. "The Popular Tale: A Study on Retention and Deconstruction of Collective Memory in Popular Culture Entertainment" seeks to interrogate the role played by the integration of cultural memory in the popular American science fiction web series *Stranger Things* and the latest production of Marvel Cinematic Universe, *Ms Marvel. The Stranger Things* series, written and directed by the Duffer brothers, is set in the mid-1980s. The age is recreated through certain elements that constitute cultural memory. They are placed within the context of the Ukraine crisis, which urgently necessitates anti-Russian narratives in American popular entertainment. *Ms Marvel* appeared as a fresh wind in the MCU, questioning the collective mistrust towards the Pakistani Muslim community and addressing the scars of partition as well as migration in third-generation Pakistani-Americans. The two web series featured on Netflix and Disney Hotstar are compared and contrasted with elucidating how popular entertainment can act as a soft power for the retention and deconstruction of cultural memory. Therefore, all these essays attempt to scrutinise the memory and the role of memory in shaping identities through various mnemonics of storytelling. They not only show the intrinsic connection between storytelling and memory but also bring about the significance of using the tool called storytelling by communities and writers to safeguard the memory.

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