Navigating Oppression and Resistance: A Decolonial Exploration of Intergenerational Trauma and Silence in the Daily Life Experiences of Mumma and Myself

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Etee Sanghvi
(India)

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Members of the Examining Committee:

Prof. Dr Rosalba Icaza Garza
Prof. Dr Shyamika Jayasundara -Smits

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Inquiries:

International Institute of Social Studies
P.O. Box 29776
2502 LT The Hague
The Netherlands

t: +31 70 426 0460
e: info@iss.nl
w: www.iss.nl
fb: http://www.facebook.com/iss.nl
twitter: @issnl

Location:

Kortenaerkade 12
2518 AX The Hague
The Netherlands

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I dedicate this research to Mumma.

Abstract

This research paper is an engagement of memories, each of which entails and holds a different onto-epistemological position with my relationship with my mother as we navigate the traversing structures of colonialism and patriarchy in the Indian context. Through extensive dialogic engagement, memory work, and critical introspection, the research seeks to understand the myriad ways in which colonial and patriarchal oppression exhibits in the bodies and psyches of women. It delves into the veiled silences, the profound acts of resistance, and the intergenerational transference of trauma that distinguishes the mother-daughter relationship. The study undertakes the concept of rememory in bridging the personal, political, individual, and collective. In this way, it presents a deeper understanding of how women navigate, maintain, resist, and redefine the systems that seek to oppress them, by crossing threads of resistance, resilience, and solidarity across temporal spaces.

Relevance to Development Studies

According to Chaudhary & Valsiner (2017), there is a need to move beyond grand cultural narratives to travel through everyday interactions, where oppression and resistance are best observed and understood. The research begins with situating the personal with the political, providing micro-level insights into macro issues; the ones that are mainly dealt with in Development Studies. It starts from the critique of the idea of traditional research that produces knowledge about science, rationality, evidence, and colonialism which has in one or more ways done more harm than cure. It therefore becomes pertinent to move toward the need to connect research in Development Studies with the aspects of vulnerability, emotions, and being, to revisit the ideas of caring and healing. By formulating research with my mother to understand how patriarchy intertwined with colonialism affects us, I am orienting development research within a structure of confidential, intergenerational knowledge creation that questions traditional research prototypes. Recognizing the rejection of research as "a property of the modern science paradigm" (Rhee 2021, p. 12), the research endorses a more holistic, spiritually informed methodology that acknowledges the complicated relationship between personal history, cultural legacy, and social transformation. As a result, the research finds its position in the realm of different works of literature on postcolonial studies, decolonial, feminist, trauma studies, and autohistoria-teoría (Anzaldúa's 2015 in Rhee 2021).

Key words

Trauma, Veiled resistance, Patriarchy, Colonialism, Intergenerational trauma, Silence, World-travelling, Oppression, Healing, Rememory.

Dear reader,

Thank you for taking the time to read and engage with the words associated with my experiences with Mumma and allowing yourself to emerge with these experiences alongside me. I have intentionally chosen to address my mother as "Mumma" because it captures how I address her, miss her, and hold her in my thoughts. Moreover, this also reflects my desire for the journey of reading my research paper to flow gently, creating new imaginaries and experiences of your own to flow naturally.

There will be times when you will disagree with me or with Mumma and your disagreement is not just acceptable but also valued. It is okay for us to disagree because the research paper is for us to feel and create spaces for a knowledge otherwise, not be politically correct. So, I write, "To continue mothers' work. To speak, make it verbal, and share, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood" (Lorde, 1980, p. 19 in Rhee, 2021). This research journey has also taught me the revolutionary essence of the phrase- "it is okay." Moreover, I hope to open a space for your thoughts, feelings, and memories, if any, to emerge naturally and hope that this sets as a reminder for you to sit with them despite life's fast-moving nature.

Living with a brain and body that has seen abuse in varied forms has forced me to survive in different conditions than other individuals in society do. All my life, I have continued to learn and remember events, memories, and concepts through metaphors and stories. This aspect has led me to question the dominant narrative of understanding and grasping knowledge through reading, especially when it is backed by academic writing. I for one have realized that the mind learns and remembers better when there is a storyteller. And while I do not want to impose my sense of learning and being in the world through this research, I am compelled to write my research paper as a storyteller because stories have given me the space to be. My own stories have been welcomed by generous people and I hope to create a space for your stories through this research. Moving forward, I wish to write my research paper as a series of metaphors and stories. As Lederach & Lederach (2011) observe, "…we use metaphor we shift meaning and, through comparison, the framing of reality" (p. 43). And unlike most stories, this may not have a happy ending but that is also because this is not a fairytale. It is my life, it is Mumma's life and most importantly, it is our shared struggle.

Moving forward, this research paper stretches beyond its main goal to question traditional academic methodologies. While the changes I have made may appear to be simple in nature, their impact is meaningful and profound for me. Throughout my academic career, I have struggled with embodying joy into my work- a struggle that this research journey has given me the space to explore. By adopting unconventional approaches, from undertaking a different methodology to including candid pictures with Mumma, I have created a space to fulfil my desire to find joy in my research journey.

"Writing about love and family relationships, about care and community, is one way to decolonize the mind and spirit."

(hooks, 2004, p. 90)

Chapter 1: Roots and Routes: Unfolding the Research Journey

1.1 Background of the topic

"Can you write your mother without writing yourself especially when you complete her?"

(Rhee, 2021, p. 78)

I come from a family where the respectability of a woman lies in her indubitable duty to submit to the head of the family, her husband. My father's incessant desire for a son, to the torment of his wife, my mother, who endured the trauma to validate her position as a 'good' wife, deeply troubled me. As his third daughter, my gender was a disappointment to him, and this dissatisfaction drove him to rage at times. Since childhood, I have seen parental abuse being normalized in exchange for familial love, which is inherent and obligatory in its exploitation. Seeing my mother being abused made me wonder what my life would be like as I grew older. She silently endured the horrible events to maintain a happy family's facade. It took some time for me to realize that I, too, was a victim of my father's abuse. While I wanted to protect my mother from countless instances of abuse, I realized that my mother would always choose her husband and protect the family's honour, as society has taught her that the onus of protecting the marriage lies on the shoulders of the woman. I found myself grappling with profound questions about my own identity. Witnessing the challenges my mother endured in his pursuit of this goal has not only deeply troubled me but has also profoundly influenced my life. Reflecting on my experiences, this research paper evokes complex and intense emotions that have significantly influenced my life choices and personal development. One of the main narratives of my research is intricately linked to the cycle of violence endured by myself and my mother.[1]

What drew me to this topic is my intricate relationship with my mother. Our bond is woven with deep love, yet it is often overshadowed by her fear of my father. Analysing this through a broader lens reveals the prolonged influence of patriarchy—not only in shaping individual lives but also in distorting the relationships we cherish. This system forces us to negotiate our deepest affections within its constraints. I have long tried to research and engage with "more important issues," the systemic violence endured by women during the Indo-Pak partition, for instance. I have come to understand that my very breath, my core being, has always been about the violence faced by women- about their stories, their silenced voices. This is in no way an act of bravery, as some may suggest, but purely the essence of who I am. As Rhee (2021, p. 4) highlights, "Who I am is never separable from what I know and how I know or vice versa." The embodied personal has always been political for me. Yet, it has been hard to carry on research about my life as a feminist story particularly because my mother never identified as a feminist (Rhee, 2021). This realization has been a turning point in understanding my

[1] This paragraph has been derived from my Statement of Purpose for my admission at ISS.

stance in academia, where I can no longer separate my emotions and lived experiences from the academic work I do.

In accepting this merging, I find myself carving out the knowledge, the resistance, the very soul of the women in my life- Mumma, my grandmother, my female friendships, and the unknown foremothers whose stories have been erased. Their embodied knowledge, their everyday acts of dissent, their silenced experiences – these are the roots from which my research proceeds. As Rhee (2021) articulates, "connecting with feminists' epistemological stance on the personal as a site of knowledge production, I cross the boundary of what topics, questions, and methodologies would be counted as relevant, appropriate, and legitimate inquiry. I write to remember these connections as who we are as our ways of knowing as ways to notice through mothers' rememories. I will bridge them, or I am the bridge of them" (p. 5). Consequently, what you hold is more than a research paper; it is a fragment of my soul, confined in an academic form.

In accordance with this, I would like to propose my research question: How do Mumma and I, across two generations, navigate our everyday lives under colonial patriarchy in India?

1.2 Positionality

When engaging with the term "subaltern" in this context, I touch on its approach in the broader categorization of women as a marginalized group. As Spivak (1988) repeatedly puts it, the term subaltern is used loosely in the sense that it was first used by Gramsci to define the oppressed. Similarly, I intend to use the term subaltern to locate my mother's and my position within the subaltern category, to openly describe our experiences under the group of being oppressed in the familial context in India where women are often seen to have lesser power than men. The context of subalternity is not restricted to the continued action of marginalization and silencing of women's voices, but is reflective of contemporary times, like that of my mother and myself. My mother, who was born in Rajasthan and migrated to Mumbai four decades ago, has experienced social mobility in her lifetime, a phenomenon that I have not yet experienced in life. Despite sharing similar positionalities through a broader lens, our individual positions reveal distinct differences. Unlike my mother, who came from a middle-class family and married my father, who was also of a middle-class background, before achieving an upper-class status in society, I have not experienced such upward social mobility. This shift in social rank has unlocked plenty of opportunities for me, which my mother did not have access to. In contrast to my mother, who lacked the benefit of English proficiency and the freedom to choose her desired subjects of study, I possess a vantage in these regards, allowing me advantages that were not available to her.

These distinct differences between my mother's and my circumstances impact the way we understand and respond to the oppressive forces that invade our daily lives. Adhering to the belief that even when we do not actively make a choice, we are innately choosing not to do so, I acknowledge that the ability to create options for oneself and act upon them stems from a certain level of awareness.

This awareness is a privilege that I hold, primarily due to my exposure to knowledge and discourse surrounding violence against women throughout the years, an opportunity that was not provided to my mother.

1.3 Methodology as Connectivity

1.3.1 Remembering together, forgetting together- "Doing my own shitwork"

To begin with, traditional research methodologies, rooted in white/western knowledge, proved to be inadequate in capturing the essence and complexity of my mother's and mine lived experiences. Rememory appeared to be my primary methodological framework as it emerged from my desire to articulate the intricate layers of relationships, trauma, and resistance that exist as we navigate our daily lives under colonial patriarchy. I turned to rememory as it provides the pathway to simultaneously hold "remembering and forgetting" (Rhee, 2021), inspiring me to trace the haunting experiences that shape our lives. Rememory, as Rhee (2021) puts it, surpasses conventional understandings of methodology as solely a systematic process of collecting and analysing data. Instead, it works as both a theoretical framework and methodology, acknowledging that our stories exist both within and outside our individual awareness, "floating in spaces that surpass conventional temporal boundaries" (Rhee, 2021). As Roy (2004) puts it, "There's really no such thing as the 'voiceless.' There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard," (para. 5 in Rhee, 2021, p. 35). I seek to delve into these silenced voices not just through words but through bodily understanding, memories, and the spaces between dialogue. This methodology helps me to understand how our memories of oppression and resistance exist in places even after bodily conversions and how trauma repeats through generations, and how resistance takes places in subtle yet profound ways. As Morrison (1987/2004) puts it, "Even if the whole farm, every tree, and grass blade of it dies. The picture is still there" (p. 43 in Rhee, 2021).

According to Rhee (2021, p. 20), "Who we are and become is the work of Rememory, a different way of being/ knowing/doing that recollects our ghostly connections, relations, and connectivity across geographies, culture, time, and language." This further pushes me to recognize moments where I failed to listen Mumma, categorizing her experiences as mere complaints or irrational demands. This understanding becomes a part of the methodology itself, pointing out how colonial and patriarchal structures affect our most affectionate relationships. This methodology prompts me to look at my research journey that goes beyond the traditional way of doing research, instead, I am being drawn to what Rhee (2021) calls "doing my own shitwork"- the chaotic, emotional, often difficult work of tracing connections between personal experience and structural oppression, between individual trauma and collective resistance (p. xv). This methodology helps me to feel my

way through understanding, acknowledging that knowing comes not just through intellectual analysis but through bodily experience, and the rooted understanding that exists in the spaces between words.

1.3.2 Writing from the Hyphen: Between Researcher and Daughter

"Sometimes, oftentimes, or always, life is more complicated than what our beloved theories, ways of knowing, and knowledge can explain."

(Rhee, 2021, p. 59)

In adopting Rememory as a methodological framework, I am resisting the limitations that academic training has implanted in me. This extends beyond the understandings of the self as more than what there is to know. Cruz (2001) asks an interesting question, "How does a brown body know?" and answers, "our production of knowledge begins in the bodies of our mothers and grandmothers, in the acknowledgement of the critical practices of women of colour before us" (p. 658 in Rhee, 2021, p. 5). Yet, I struggled to bring Mumma into my academic work. Even as someone who firmly believes that the personal is political, I was grappled with questions: Who wants to know what happened to you and your mother? "How can your particular, not universal, be a legitimate topic of study/writing?" (Bhattacharya, 2016 in Rhee, 2021, p. 53). The methodological framework proposed by Rhee (2021) intentionally exceeds these internalized academic limitations. By integrating mine and Mumma's experiences, I seek what Anzaldua (2015) calls "autohistoria-teoría - connecting writing as "a gesture of the body" (p. ix in Rhee, 2021, p. 12). It involves the process of doing "theory in flesh, soul, and life" (Ahmed, 2017; Darder, 2011; Dillard, 2000, 2006, 2012; Hurtado, 1989; Lugones, 2010; Villenas, 1996 in Rhee, 2021, p. 6). Rhee (2021) emphasizes her intention behind the term "m/other" as it acknowledges the complex relationship between the mother who gave her birth and the other whose life was hidden, dismissed, misunderstood, and silenced by her educated knowledge (p. 17). In a similar vein, this methodology allows me to work with this tension, rejecting the "violence of abstraction" that academic field often demands (Ibid, p.25). It acknowledges, as Coates (2015) articulates oppression as visceral- "it dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscle, extracts organs, cracks bones (Ibid). According to hooks (1994) "Any theory that cannot be shared in everyday conversation cannot be used to educate the public" (p.64). Considering this embodied knowing, the research acknowledges that patriarchy and colonialism are not solely theoretical establishments but lived experiences that leave physical and psychological impressions across generations.

The research acknowledges the limitations and contradictions of applying Rememory as a methodology as it refers to both, remembering and forgetting. Functioning through this paradox compels me to pursue "the limits of what is already understandable" (Gordon, 2008, p. 195 in Rhee, 2021, p. 6), forcing me to understand what we normally eliminate, banish, or fail to notice. Through

this approach, I seek to infer the veiled silences, the embodied traumas, and the subtle resistances that indicate the relationship between mothers and daughters under colonial and patriarchal structures. This methodology is precisely undertaken to also address academia's obsession with data, evidence, accountability, assessment, and efficiency, highlighting my engagement with academia as noticing and building connectivity as a way of being/doing in our fragmented realities, memories, and experiences. Employing this methodology in my research further blurs the lines between my position as a researcher and daughter. It blurs the boundaries between "I, you, and we, individual and collective self, and self and other in which we function, make sense, and relate are blurred, as recognizing mothers' haunting rememories exceed the modern scientific onto-epistemology" (Rhee, 2021, p. 3). Through this research I attempt to claim that "the personal, political, cultural, historical, and theoretical are intricately merged" (Ibid).

1.3.3 Finding Feminism in Mumma's Kitchen

Much of my conversations with Mumma about our embodied experiences have emerged in the kitchen. Cooking has always been a deeply intimate and relational practice for me, one that is delicately linked to the methodology of rememory. The recipes I learnt from Mumma which she in turn learnt from her mother, are a living legacy that I carry with me wherever I go. As Salim (2024) suggests, the kitchen has long been a safe space for women- a place where women feel at ease and open up about their experiences and build connections. For Mumma and myself, the kitchen is not limited as a site of nourishment but acts as a political space. It was here, just the two of us, that Mumma shared with me her life experiences, including the injustices she received from my father. Sometimes, Mumma would diverge and pass down cooking wisdoms, creating a rich fabric of embodied knowledge, and lived experiences. Furthermore, the kitchen became a space for travelling to each other's worlds (Lugones, 1987), a place that holds plural temporalities and relationalities, as Salim (2024) observes. It is a space of caring, listening, sharing, and most importantly bonding over the rituals of food preparation. In these moments, the divide between past and present, self and other, collapse. I am no longer just a daughter or a researcher, but a part of the heritage of women's ways of knowing and being. This experience made me realize the profound implication of practices that were taken for granted as disconnected from politics. Cooking food together, I realized then, is not just an Indian women's communal practice, but a relational methodology that allows me to trace the hauntings of my mother's and grandmother's lives. It is a method of remembering and forgetting simultaneously, a way of bridging the visible and invisible, the dead and the living, as is observed by Gordon (2008, p. 24 in Rhee, 2021, p. 5).

This methodological framework permits me to work with the foundational basis of feminism, which is, to make connections. It helps me to recognize my relationship with feminism, which has been complicated in its own way, just like my relationship with Mumma. However, doing this research with her has paved the way for a knowledge otherwise, one that questioned years of withholding white/western feminism as the basis to analyse experiences. Rememory acknowledges that

remembering brings silenced and suppressed herstories back, while connecting multiple pieces together, developing fragile connections between herstories. And "Fragility gives us responsibility: to take care" (Ahmed, 2017, p. 17 in Rhee, 2021, p. 20). In my research journey, I situate this kitchen rememory as a major pillar of my feminist methodology. Just as rememory helps me blur the boundaries between personal and academic, the kitchen presents as a space where I can execute this merging. Here, I am not solely an observer, but an active participant in the intergenerational transference of embodied knowledge, resistance, and ways of being. The conversations, the recipes, the rhythm of chopping and laughing- all of these have become a part of my methodological toolkit, where I retrieve the depths of Mumma's, and my grandmother's lives in ways that traditional academic approaches fail to capture. In the kitchen, with Mumma, I have found myself dangled between the personal and the political, the past and the present, and these, right here, quite literally, have become the flavours of my feminist practice.

Chapter 2: Connecting Theory to Everyday Experiences

2.1 Theoretical Background

2.1.1 When the everyday hurts

Employing myself with the trauma-informed works of Gabor Maté and Bessel van der Kolk during the journey of my research in understanding how trauma shapes Mumma's and my everyday lives has confronted my emotional margins in significant ways. In the "Myth of Normal," Maté (2022) forms the basis of his argument around our conventional understanding of what we/society considers "normal." The book entwines together medical science, political critique, and live stories to highlight how the current modern society in many ways standardizes conditions that are significantly detrimental to the well-being of humans. According to Maté (2022, p. 43), "Trauma is not what happens to us, but what happens inside us as a result of what happened to us." This experience goes beyond the mere understanding of trauma to catastrophic events and extends to the aspect of how it is deeply entrenched in our everyday experiences. According to Schore (2001), unaddressed trauma often takes the route of passing down across generations through unspoken memories and unaddressed pain. This research paper is a call to meet my own "fragmented pieces" (Rhee, 2021) while exploring my relationship with Mumma, carrying the possibility of breaking free from "restrictive discourses and power structures" (Rhee, 2021). Maté (2022) integrates research from fields like neurobiology and psychology to exemplify the long-term effects of unaddressed trauma in conjunction with systemic oppression like patriarchy and colonialism. In societies like India, women's bodies often carry the weight of both personal and systemic oppression, leading to veiled forms of suffering that are normalized and silenced. In such systems, silence often serves as a survival mechanism, especially for women where silence is not merely passive but can serve as a form of resistance. They may choose silence to navigate patriarchal and colonial systems securely, and yet within that silence, there can be layers of resistance. In the context of India, where patriarchy often intersects with caste, religion, and colonial legacies, women's silence appears as a reflection of this deeper embodiment of trauma. According to van der Kolk (2014), "Trauma results in a fundamental reorganization of the way mind and body manage perceptions, with the brain filtering stimuli through the lens of danger and helplessness" (p. 86). He reemphasizes on how systemic oppression can be a chronic source of stress which is particularly relevant in a society like India, where women are exposed to daily micro and macro- aggressions that have a growing traumatic impact on their minds and bodies. Maté (2022) explains how trauma transfers across generations, emphasizing how a mother's unresolved trauma can lead to detrimental effects to the child's emotional and psychological development. In the context of colonial patriarchy, this generational trauma takes on an additional layer, as the trauma is passed down not only in a personal form but also the collective trauma of communities. Moreover, this dynamic involves the transmission of experiences of gender-based violence and the larger context of colonial subjugation that molds societal norms as Maté (2022) argues that the traumas we don't deal with don't just disappear—they are handed down like heirlooms, woven into the very fabric of our being.

2.1.2 World-travelling, Embodied Resistance, and everything in between

I have employed the concepts of 'world-travelling' (Lugones 1987), and 'loving perception' (Lugones 1987) to explore the complex dynamics between daughters (myself) and mothers (Mumma) to understand how we navigate intergenerational trauma and resistance. Incorporating the concept of "world-travelling" brings forth a critical framework for understanding how individuals move between different social and cultural worlds while challenging and resisting oppressive systems. In the words of Maté (2022), a society's cultural norms often serve to maintain existing power structures rather than encourage actual human prosperity. This statement extends to the question of whether complying with the established norms truly serves our community welfare. Considering this, Lugones (1987) argues that to truly understand another person, especially those who are marginalized because of dominant structures, requires travelling to their "world"- highlighting that we see their world as they see and experience it rather than maintaining our preconceived notions about them.

To navigate it in the context of mother-daughter relationships, where women often navigate between worlds of compliance and resistance, Lugones (1987) emphasizes incorporating the idea of "playfulness"- an openness to surprise, ambiguity, and multiple ways of being. Anderson (2014) further stresses the analysis of comfort in different worlds and how it reflects the way we feel in certain societal or familial roles. Lugones (2012) notes that "the sense of split, of schizophrenia that one feels.... when faced with the excision of gender and race becomes familiar" (Lugones 2012, p. 71). This multiplicity is not viewed as a weakness but as a form of resistance. Consequently, Spivak (1988) addresses the concept of "irretrievable consciousness" of the subaltern which provides a framework for understanding how bodily knowledge serves as an alternative to empowered ways of knowing. Anderson (2014) builds on this concept, scrutinizing how women navigate different social and academic worlds while maintaining their identity. However, resistance is not just overt opposition but, a complex bargaining of daily life. This allows for "resistant subjectivity" (Lugones 2012, p. 76), where women reclaim their identities by refusing to be fully defined by colonial and patriarchal norms.

The literature laid down by Lugones highlights the evidence of intergenerational trauma in understanding resistance to oppression, particularly in postcolonial contexts. Lugones (2012) emphasizes how colonialism enforced rigid gender roles that continue to impact women's lives across generations. Moreover, Lugones (1987) describes how travelling to her mother's world allowed her to see beyond patriarchal constructions: "I came to realize through travelling to her 'world' that she is not foldable and pliable, that she is not exhausted by the mainstream Argentinean patriarchal construction of her" (p. 18). To build on this, a recurring theme that Lugones (2012) emphasizes is building coalition and solidarity between women navigating oppressive systems. This involves creating spaces for different "herstories" (Rhee, 2021) and struggles while maintaining space for individual expression of resistance. The mother-daughter relationship becomes a potential space for this coalition to form and practice. According to Lugones (1987) through world-travelling and loving

perception, mothers and daughters can support each other's resistance while acknowledging their different positions within patriarchal structures.

Drawing on decolonial theory, feminist scholarship, and disability studies, Ureña's (2019) analysis of Fanon's work offers a critical framework for understanding how colonial trauma is expressed in the body across generations. The concept of "colonial wound" described as "the epistemic rupture enacted by the European encounter" (Ureña, 2019, p. 1649) is relevant in understanding how women are affected in postcolonial India. This further highlights how women's bodies become sights of resistance and knowledge transmission that manifests in the theorization of "embodied silence" (Motta, 2018). The wound reflects not just historical trauma, but finds a place in the everyday, highlighting the experiences of mothers and daughters in the context of this research.

2.1.3 Silence as a tool of Coloniality and Patriarchy

According to Motta (2018), the analysis of "Silence as Survival" (p. 28) provides a framework for understanding how silence as a strategy has been passed down through generations, a space for maintaining cultural knowledge and a form of embodied resistance that diverges from colonial classification. Anzaldua (2009) provides important insights into the transformative dormant of mother-daughter relationships, emphasizing accepting wounds as part of the healing process. According to Motta (2018), the body becomes a site of oppression and resistance. In the Indian context, this is parallel with the documented trauma of colonization combined with patriarchal repression which predates colonial times, where women's bodies were controlled, surveilled, and disciplined. Accordingly, Motta (2018) argues that the silence enforced on racialized and feminized subjects is part of a greater matter of colonial domination and modernity, where the voices are relinquished imperceptible and meaningless within hegemonic systems of knowledge. Motta (2018, p. 25) also draws on similar lines as Spivak (1988) wherein power speaks for the oppressed and further silences them in the process. Motta's (2018) exploration of silence as both an inflicted condition and a site of creative resistance deepens the aspect of veiled resistance, trauma, and the embodied everyday experiences of women, in the context of India. Spivak (1988) analyses the concepts of epistemic violence, subaltern voice, and gendered subalternity that elucidate the intergenerational navigation of oppression and resistance. This throws light on how "travelling to each other's worlds" (Lugones, 1987) enfolds ways of negotiating voice and silence. To build up on this, the concept of liminality in "Reading LP" (2009) helps to understand the space between different generations' experiences, as in this context, and the potential for metamorphosis in these in-between spaces. Considering this, Maté (2022) highlights the importance of relativist sharing which involves sharing similarities between pain and feeling better. A key concept that opens doors for vulnerability and our capacity to be wounded. Anzaldua (2009) expresses the role of embodied knowledge transmission and the role of shared physical experiences in maintaining cultural continuity. This delves deeper into understanding how "strategic navigation of oppression" (Anzaldua, 2009) plays in the development of alternative

communication systems between mothers and daughters and the ways women create spaces of agency within conforming systems. Ureña (2019) extends this framework through the concept of "decolonial love," which employs "from below" between those manifested other by hegemonic coercion.

2.2 Review of Literature

2.2.1 Can the Subaltern Speak?

The course of Patriarchy and colonialism in postcolonial India provides a multifaceted understanding of how these dual forces have shaped and continue to shape the lives of women in India. Mohanty (2003) provides a framework to display how colonial domination weaponized local patriarchies to develop control, categorizing Indian women as symbolic holders of cultural purity and national identity (p. 52). The cultural dominance forced upon women impacted how Indian society controlled and supervised women's agency and further limited their social mobility. Consequently, Mani (1989) highlights how colonial forces abused patriarchal practices such as Sati and child marriage, depicting Indian men as barbaric and incapable of governance, thereby defending colonial "civilizing" missions (p. 115). These dynamics eternalized a perception of Indian women as submissive, silent, and in need of rescue, perpetuating gendered expectations that extend into the postcolonial period. Furthermore, Spivak (1988) asserts the theme of "subaltern silence," elaborating that colonial and patriarchal authoritative structures silenced women by speaking on their behalf, thus abolishing their agency (p. 297). Subaltern is considered "an operative research concept through the work of the Italian Marxist leader, Antonio Gramsci" (Zaib, 2015, p. 213 in Shaikh et. al, 2023). According to Thomas (2018, p. 2 in Shaikh et. al, 2023), subaltern refers to "a figure of exclusion, representing the specular opposite of the citizen" who "represents a lack of access to the institution of rights and obligations." Spivak (1988) argues that subaltern men are less subjugated than subaltern women which further results in their double oppression, critiquing both Western and Indian intellectuals for their roles in perpetuating the silencing of subaltern women. Countries and communities that follow strict religious ideology place/position women as inferior beings, classifying them as 'others,' which is true in the case of India. The research therefore falls under the category of the following themes of oppression, marginalization, violence, and eventual resistance in the familial context of Indian societies. As a result, it becomes pertinent to explore the broader category of women and their issues from a postcolonial lens, which gives a broader understanding of the historical evolution of women's movements in India, emerging from the colonial era and continuing through post-independence (Kumar, 2011). She also elaborates on how these movements were fuelled by both Indian social conditions and global feminist ideologies, examining that while the legislative efforts in India aimed at promoting gender equality, such as dowry, domestic violence, etc, their implementation often fell short due to socio-cultural resistance (Kumar, 2011).

2.2.2 Colonialism, Patriarchy, and Indian Womanhood

In her book "Gender and Nation," Yuval-Davis (1997) argues how silence becomes a coping strategy as speaking out in a patriarchal society often results in violence or social ostracism. This notion is further elaborated by Tharu & Lalita (1993) who unveil how silence has been historically used by women to hold a sense of self and dignity under oppressive conditions (p. 241). Such acts of veiled resistance manifest through non-verbal cues, body gestures, and selective conformity—whereby women maintain a degree of autonomy while appearing to conform. The embodiment of trauma in a postcolonial context has been highlighted by Roy (2003) whereby the female body in India is both sexualized and stigmatized within cultural discourses, limiting their agency while exposing them to the burden of cultural expectations (p.178). Furthermore, Katrak (2006) provides a nuanced framework of how trauma inflicted by colonial patriarchy manifests physically, wherein, Indian women's bodies are controlled through strict dress codes and behaviours, limiting their ability to claim public spaces and reclaim autonomy (p.44). While the formal structures of colonial rule have ended, their influence is prevalent in social institutions, particularly in family dynamics, as Fernandes (2006) argues that modern Indian nationalism which was established in response to colonialism, often reshape patriarchal conduct in nationalistic terms, further binding women's roles within the domestic sphere (p. 111). Consequently, Sangari & Vaid (1990) highlight how women's participation in family and social structures represents everyday acts of resistance, with Indian women acquiring resilient strategies that subtly destabilize oppressive norms (p. 189). Fernandes (2006) adds that by implementing roles such as caregiving or passive submission, women exercise agency in selective ways, conserving their selfhood and resisting complete adaptation into patriarchal orders (p. 118). The entangled trauma of patriarchy and colonialism creates enduring effects on mother-daughter relationships, as mothers often pass down their own lived experiences and survival strategies to daughters. Rajan (2001) addresses how generational channelling of trauma moulds relational dynamics, as mothers strive to protect their daughters from similar struggles by preparing them to conform to social expectations (p. 53). However, such dynamics are sometimes met with tensions as daughters challenge these norms, seeking a different path while struggling with familial expectations rooted in patriarchal norms.

2.2.3 Silent Resistances in the Everyday

The essay "Anjani: Unspoken Resistance" by Sindhu (2017) illustrates complex layers of trauma, resistance, and unspoken suppression experienced by women in India. Sindhu's work aligns with the substantial research focusing on how patriarchy in India reinforces gender roles, restricting women's autonomy (Chakraborty, 2021). Works by Das (1996) and Menon (2012) support this notion, arguing that women in patriarchal societies often employ silence as a passive yet powerful tool for self-protection. Das (1996) takes a step further in investigating the impact of violence on women's lives, focusing on how trauma and violence are embedded in everyday acts and memories which are often expressed through silence.

"Across generations, women have responded to the boundaries set by social institutions with varying degrees of compliance and resistance" (Tuli, 2017, p. 307). According to Hollander & Einwohner (2004 in Tuli, 2017, p. 308), everyday resistance involves subtle, low-profile actions that

are either overt or covert but often go unrecognized as forms of resistance by those in power. Due to their routine nature, actions such as pretending to be ignorant, remaining silent, intentionally working slowly, falsely complying, or pilfering are less likely to be noticed and, consequently, less likely to provoke repressive responses. Moreover, Silence has historically served as a method of resistance. Mahatma Gandhi's mauna vrat (vow of silence) was a powerful tool he employed to express disagreement, distress, and dissent during the struggle for independence (Ibid, p. 311). In the domestic context, silence frequently functions as a form of resistance. Although it is often seen as passive compliance with others' beliefs and desires, silence can also be a potent way to express disagreement without confrontation (Ibid, p. 312). According to Tuli & Chaudhary (2010 in Tuli, 2017, p. 313), "In the hierarchy of power, a person can be both powerful and powerless depending on the position that is being called into use at any given time. It is also important to recognize that women may struggle with each other and against each other." They elaborate further on the concept of "elective interdependence" describing how mothers make choices for children's agency and how this further intersects with interpersonal interactions within families in India (Tuli & Chaudhary 2010 in Tuli, 2017, p. 313) As I advance with my research, I also intend to understand the shifting power dynamics, recognizing that our positions continuously evolve. Like in the case of my mother and me, we do not always remain powerless.

In her work on understanding women's progress beyond economic metrics, Nussbaum (2000) highlights the limitations of capabilities-based approach to gender justice and development, emphasizing that to measure the true progress of women, there should be a more inclusive framework that evaluates specific human capabilities such as bodily health, agency, education, and political freedom which allow them to lead their lives filled with dignity and choice (p. 72). Nussbaum (2000, p. 85) further critiques cultural relativism that justifies oppressive practices under the pretence of tradition, examining the ways in which social and political structures systematically disadvantage women, more than men, especially in developing countries (p. 98).

2.2.4 Voice and Vulnerability in the Aftermath of Violence

In their seminal work, "When Blood and Bones Cry Out" on trauma, violence, and healing, Lederach & Lederach (2011), underscore the deep-seated, often indefinable impact of violence, particularly on women in patriarchal and conflict-ridden societies. "Insecurity creates the permanency of feeling uncertain... Violence destroys what was understood and known. What was assumed, taken for granted as 'normal' daily, has disappeared" (Ibid, p. 18). Moreover, the need to find ways to express one's experiences is a significant component for locating self and place, yet women's voices remain fundamentally absent (Ibid, p. 179). In her discerning ethnographic study of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Ross (2021) realised that "the majority of women who testified never spoke of their own experiences of violation, but overwhelmingly of the violations of others, and in particular of their sons, husbands, and brothers" (4p. 254 in Lederach & Lederach, 2011, p. 179). Ross suggests that when violence is not a part of the everyday language, the experiences in turn become 'unrepresentable' (Ibid,). This "unrepresentable" nature of violence destroys one's sense of self and

expression, often assimilating survivors voiceless. In cases of unspeakable violence, the loss of "voice" becomes more than a metaphor—it reflects the disrupted nature of one's relationship with self, body, and community. "Women's bodies become the sites that both suffer then hold the violence" (Ibid,). Finding voice then becomes an act of reclaiming identity, reimposing power, and seeking healing. "The capacity to re-create expression gives rise to voice from within the sacred temple that was destroyed. The body that holds the violence now rumbles with the vibration and echo that touches deep within yet bounces out to join others" (Ibid, p. 184). The framework laid down by Lederach & Lederach (2011) powerfully captures the essence of trauma and its manifestation in silence and the body as a site of suffering and a prospective medium for reclaiming identity, especially in societies like India that have multiple layers of oppression.

2.2.5 Healing: Discovering Self, Place, and Voice

The process of healing as acknowledged by several authors suggests that "reconciliation and healing are not linear processes" (Lederach & Lederach, 2011, p. 55), highlighting that these processes are built on notions of change happening in "phases, stages, and sequential progression" (Ibid,). Lederach & Lederach (2011) provide a nuanced understanding of social healing in communities affected by continued conflict and trauma. They suggest that while traditional peacebuilding and reconciliation approaches are crucial, the often elusive, entrenched facets of trauma also require unique approaches. Hart (2008, p. viii, in Lederach & Lederach, 2011, p. 3) facilitates the culmination of experiences that link the wider approaches of conflict transformation with the demanding concerns about trauma, highlighting the importance of addressing the intangible elements of trauma below the surface which greatly affect healing and reconciliation (Ibid, 4). Social healing is formulated as a non-linear process, likened to "generative soil" (Ibid, p. 211), that strengthens resiliency within individuals and communities. Scholars like Hart (2008), Thompson (2005), and Yoder (2005) describe the importance of addressing trauma not only through conflict resolution but by centering on a collective attempt to rebuild trust, normalize life, and most importantly, restore hope (in Lederach & Lederach, 2011). In the words of Lederach & Lederach (2011, p. 68), "Resiliency describes the quality needed to survive extreme conditions yet retain the capacity to find a way back to expressing the defining quality of being and the essence of purpose." This healing proposal is not merely about closure or amnesty but engrosses communities in ongoing strength-building capacitates, regardless of whether the conflict has come to an end. By rehumanizing connections and reassuring meaningful conversations, individuals locate strength in community resilience and collective expression, even while the existence of past violence lingers (Ibid,). Yoder (2005) writes about trauma healing as the "ability of the human spirit to begin healing processes and act in ways beyond basic survival needs, even when complete physical safety is not assured" (p. 50, in Lederach & Lederach, 2011, p. 53). In other words, healing while simultaneously facing violence creates a complex reality, one where life is rarely experienced in a "neat, sequential order" (Ibid, 10).

The work of Lederach & Lederach (2011) closely connects to the role of veiled resistance and resistance amid oppression and the impact of trauma on bodies, particularly relevant under patriarchy

and colonial legacies in India. The concept of "social healing" and "resiliency" exemplifies how survival in repressive surroundings involves innovative acts of resistance and constant adjustment, even when complete safety remains unknown. This theoretical analysis highlights the intricate realities of healing, where trauma is not merely dealt with in seclusion but through a knitted social structure that cherishes hope and aspiration across generations.

Chapter 3: The sowing of Patriarchy: From seed to harvest?

3.1. The process of sowing: planting the seeds of Patriarchy

I refer to this as the process of sowing the seeds of patriarchy because much like many lessons in life, the lesson of patriarchy is embedded deep in our minds. Just as a seed is planted with the expectations that it will grow, similarly, the expectations and teachings of patriarchy are ingrained in us. One of my earliest realizations or rather an experience which I witnessed firsthand was the sowing of the seeds of "fear."

During the initial activities I conducted with Mumma, I began by explaining where I came from. Living across two generations, that have a gap of almost 30 years, results in different ways of describing notions and life experiences, even though they are similar in nature. As Ahmed (2004/2014) writes, "It is a hurt that refuses to keep us apart, but also does not bring us together" (p. 38 in Rhee, 2021).

Such was the case when I started articulating about patriarchy, not knowing if Mumma ever thought its basis to be unequal towards women. I extended this observation to include my father's behavior towards my family and amid it, Mumma interrupted me and said, "Yes, I know what you mean about him. If he claims that day is night, then we must agree that it is night and vice versa. We are supposed to do exactly what he says." [2]

The discussion centered heavily on how patriarchy has affected our lives and our ability to be. I tried to explain Mumma that these dominant structures are not only perpetuated by men but, in many ways, also by women- as in her case. As hooks (2004) writes, "Patriarchy has no gender. It does not only oppress women; it damages all those who participate in it, albeit in different ways. Patriarchy tells women that silence is survival" (p. 5). Mumma spoke about the role of fear and how it was instilled in her own mother that influenced her actions. She began to connect this to how often she has restricted us (my siblings and I) from doing certain things, attributing her actions to the same fear. I was surprised to learn that it was not me but my mother who introduced the concept of fear into the conversation. This is how she conceptualized patriarchy, relating it to her life by recounting how her mother prevented her from being a certain way because of fear of potential consequences. This underscores how fear plays in women's lives, serving as just one of the ways in which patriarchal structures maintain and exert control. Mumma refrained from generalizing about the experience as she elaborated how not every mother was like this. To which I asked her why she thought her mother was the way she described her to be.

"My mother was never like this..." and then Mumma broke down in tears.

[2] Throughout the research paper, I will be addressing my dad as "my father" because of our strained relationship. Words like "Dad," "Papa" provide a sense of attachment to the relation for me which is something I have never received from him.

I waited for her to feel okay and in the process, tears welled up in my eyes too. Perhaps for the first time in my life, I was crying with Mumma. We both did not say anything for some time and took up the space to cry, perhaps for different reasons. I asked her if she was missing her mother to which she nodded. And then she said something that I had never heard in my life before, despite listening to grandma's stories.

"मेरे में बहुत जान डालती थी." (She loved me with every fiber of her being.)

She then started talking about her mother, completely forgetting about the main purpose-

Mumma reflected on her mother's life and how patriarchy shaped her experiences and perspectives in life. It was riveting to discover how deeply patriarchal standards had been incorporated into their minds. According to Mumma, it was essential to be with a strong man. The definition of "strong" in this context was multifaceted, extending beyond mere physical aptitude to enclose mental toughness and assertiveness. She noted the versatility in her mother's assessment of strength. She acknowledged that while her mother possessed mental endurance, her father lacked this type of strength. However, the "strength" her mother prized in a man was neither physical nor mental, but rather the capability to assert oneself and establish a firm position in life. The adjectives Mumma used to describe her father was "dheela" which loosely translates to someone with a weak or malleable personality- an individual unable to stand up for themselves or engrave their own life path.

According to Mumma, it was unacceptable for men to be "dheela." Women, however, were expected to possess this trait to some level because of the underlying assumption that women should be submissive. [3]

Identifying Parallels between Oppressors

I was surprised the way Mumma drew intriguing parallels between her mother and my father. She compared her mother's actions and behaviors to that of my father, particularly in circumstances where things do not go as expected. And I could not help but agree to everything Mumma said about them. They both expressed extreme discomfort when faced with denial or dissent from their children because of the underlying belief that as parents who have provided their children with everything, the children have an unquestionable right to conformity. They grapple with the idea that their children might say "no" or choose to not do something immediately.

This scrutiny echoed through my body, as I identified the similarity between my grandmother's described behavior and my father's actions. The moment we as children, refuse to do something or postpone a task, we are met with a sense of entitlement and discomfort. Mumma's perception of this

[3] When Mumma and I first started with the activities, I often felt that the conversation was swerving off course, and for me, Mumma was not grasping the intended direction of the activities. However, as I reviewed the voice notes, I realized that I failed to acknowledge that this research is as much about and for my mother as it is about me. My initial approach did not create space for her perspective and experiences to shape our dialogue naturally. This realization taught me to maintain a more open and collaborative approach in our conversations, recognizing that both our voices are equally valuable to this research process.

behavioral pattern across generations made me understand how certain strands and facets of parental dominance and expectations can be deeply implanted and passed down through generations. It is a compound dynamic that consists of theories of respect, commitment, moral duty, and the boundaries between parents and children.

The seeds of fear

"What do you think would have happened if women came together to resist against the way in-laws would treat their daughters-in-law?"

"No, I don't think so. People lived differently. Right from the time a girl was born, throughout her growth, there was a particular type of ideology people would ingrain in her. It is almost like planting a seed. We sincerely followed what we saw. We were conditioned to believe that getting married and putting up with in-laws was the natural course of life."

Over the past few years, Mumma believes she came up with a profound realization about the way fear has manifested in her life. She revealed to me that fear had been her constant companion throughout her journey, molding her character and relationships in consequential ways. As a child, she said, she accepted her mother's behavior with compliance, driven by an ingrained fear of questioning authority. Spivak's (1988) conception of "Can the Subaltern Speak?" is crucial here, as she elaborates on how patriarchal colonialism has fabricated a system where the "other" is denied subjectivity.

This pattern has been further carried onto her adult life, embodying in her relationship with my father. She drew a direct connection between these experiences, highlighting that the fear she possesses in her marriage with my father stems from the fear instilled by her mother during her formative years. And based on this, she shared an insightful observation:

Mumma believes that women who grow up in households where their upbringing has not been hindered with the aspect of fear are less likely to be fearful in their marital relationships. This perspective reveals a deeper understanding of how trauma and fear, when introduced in early life, can have far reaching consequences on an individual's future relationships and mental and emotional well-being. Schore (2001) discusses the impact of trauma on the ability to regulate emotions. He posits that trauma leads to dysregulation and can result in various forms of psychopathology, particularly when experienced in early childhood (p. 278).

There was a moment of empathy in our conversation when Mumma expressed her understanding regarding her mother's behavior. She further acknowledged that her mother's actions were likely shaped by her own circumstances and experiences towards those circumstances, implying the cyclical nature of generational trauma. Lugones (2012) introduces "coalitional decolonial solidarity" (p. 72) based on shared experiences of resistance to colonialism and patriarchy. Furthermore, the result of the trauma becomes "embodied" (p, 84)- carried in physical and emotional ways that influence how women relate to themselves and others. As I listened to Mumma articulate about everything she had

to offer to our conversation about fear, I could not help but observe it as a complex interplay between personal history, familial dynamics, and the preservation of emotional patterns across generations.[4]

Echoes of Endurance

When Mumma chose to be silent about the issues in her first marriage, she submitted herself to a life of quiet endurance. According to Maté (2022), "For the oppressed, silence is both a cage and a shield, hiding trauma from sight but also guarding against further harm" (p. 71). The fear instilled in her had strengthened so much that she feared informing her mother about the issues. "It's fine," she thought, "This is how I'll live. No matter which house I am in, I'll have to work anyway." "It was explained, to be a dutiful daughter is to be a daughter-in-law who must forget that she is the daughter of her mother (Shin, 2008); forget, a lost connection" (in Rhee, 2021, p. 47). When she expressed this, I found myself questioning her standpoint. I told her, "When someone truly loves us and cares for our well-being, it does not mean we trust them blindly or follow their every command." Mumma's response was heart-wrenching: "You have no idea how I used to be. I had such a pure soul that even when people would fight me, I could not even utter a single word." This response disclosed how profoundly Mumma's nature had been shaped by what life threw at her. She had been transformed into a woman who did not know how to express pain or anger. It is a sharp expression of how societal constraint often silences women, convincing them to remain quiet even in times of extreme pain and suffering.

When life does not go as planned, many women, like my mother and grandmother before her, often turned toward blaming destiny. This made me wonder: Is the concept of destiny yet another tool used to keep women in check? What struck me the most is how Mumma, despite everything that she went through, never chose to lash out or abuse who had wronged her. I could not help but think how her body must have coped with these experiences? In what ways did the unexpressed anger and pain find a place within her? According to Maté (2022), emotional repression is one of the impacts of childhood trauma. The repression of healthy anger disrupts the immune system. The silence that lasted across generations- from my grandmother to my mother, and now to me- is not just an absence of words. It is perhaps a complex legacy of trauma, resilience, and unspoken pain that raises questions about how we can break this cycle, supporting expression and healing across generations of women.

Bargaining Respect under Patriarchy?

In one of our conversations about Mumma's relationship with my father, she revealed feelings of dissatisfaction and inequality. She explained how my father got everything that he wanted from life. Right from someone to take care of his newborn baby by marrying my mother to his desire for having a male child, he got it all. This came after he had pressured Mumma tremendously to have a second

[4] One of the reasons I can't seem to call my mother's mother my grandmother is because I had never met her in my life. I was born years later after she died and therefore can't seem to address her that way. Everything I know about her is through stories shared by Mumma.

child, which resulted in their fourth child overall. With a heavy feeling of sadness, Mumma said, "Your father got everything he wanted from me. But I didn't get what I needed."

"What did you want from him?"

"Basic things, Etee. Some value. Some respect. Some love. That's all."

Mumma's response was simple yet profound. She then touched upon her status as a second wife to my father, a fact she was entirely aware of, but one she felt should not recede her worth and value.

"I know I am his second wife, but I'm still entitled to respect from him."

Her final words carried the burden of years of unrequited effort and loyalty: "I did everything, respected everyone, but what about my needs and dignity?

As we were exploring these issues, my father walked in the room. Neither Mumma nor I had the courage to ask him to leave. Perhaps if we did this, we did not know the repercussions we would face despite my father knowing I came back for fieldwork. As Motta (2018) writes, "When we dare to speak the truth of the violence, when we speak through the vulnerability and pain of our enfleshed experiences, we feel the full force of the Law and the Rational Truth" (p. 31). We waited for him to leave. He started making conversations, we did not add anything because we wanted him to leave. My father started talking about his upset stomach and asked Mumma to make okra the next day and in between he said, "Bhindi agar taazi nahi banayi toh thaali uthake phek dunga." (If you don't prepare fresh okra, I will throw away the plate). None of us said anything and he eventually left. Mumma and I continued with the activity, but this experience found a place at the back of my mind like a nagging child.

Later that night, before sleeping, I started writing about my first activity with Mumma. Those harsh words haunted me yet again and I sobbed my heart out. It was not the first time that I heard such ruthless statements. In fact, if anything, I have seen and heard him do and say things that are much more violent in nature. Then why did it stay with me? Perhaps because for the first time Mumma revealed that all she wanted from a marriage was "some love and some respect." According to Lederach & Lederach (2011), the persistent search for safety and security in a violent context distorts one's sense of "home" (p. 63), dismantling fundamental feelings of trust, love, and a sense of belonging. [5]

[5] My father knew about my coming back to India for fieldwork purposes, but he did not know what I was researching about. Later that night I also questioned myself for not asking him to leave. Upon pondering over this question, I realized that if I would, he would ask me questions about my research and that is something that I wanted to keep only between Mumma and myself.

Figure 1: Mumma and I eating street food on the streets of Mumbai as we shop for my sister's wedding.

3.2. The Sprouting of the Seed: Emergence of Trauma

This chapter has been truly enlightening, shedding light on my experiences living in a body that society does not recognize as "normal." Trauma, whether splurging from childhood events or broader societal issues, alters and hinders one's view of the world, leading to persistent feelings of loneliness and a lack of attachment (Maté, 2022). The emotional charge of trauma has left Mumma and me with lifelong pain, designating in various symptoms and reactions. Motta (2018) writes about "collective soul wounds" (p. 36) where trauma is not only psychological but deeply physical affecting posture, gait, and the overall experience of being in the world. This journey of comprehending the different ways in how trauma impacts one's body was challenging: there were times when the tears would refuse to stop. However, there were also moments when I practiced extra self-care, as acquiring about trauma reminded me to be kinder and gentler with myself. Most importantly, studying about trauma improved my relationship with Mumma.

Finding where our bodies fit in: Traumatic Bodies and Spaces

To engage with conversations about Trauma and the body, I wanted to understand if Mumma ever looked at her body being affected a certain way because of living in such harsh conditions. I asked Mumma if she thinks the constant issues with my father and the recurring issues at home have taken a toll on her physical health. According to Maté (2022), "When oppression and subjugation are normalized, so are the wounds they inflict, buried deep in the recesses of the body" (p. 35).

"Undoubtedly. I can sense the impact because I live with it. There are still times at night when sleep evades me, leaving me feeling extremely restless. Initially, I used to feel guilty about sleeping separately because of your father's snoring issues and as a light sleeper, the snores make the body more restless. I would think, "All couple sleep on the same bed but us." But what other option do I have? This seems to be my lot in life. While some women can adjust sleeping next to their snoring partners, I simply cannot. Even when I try, it causes so much discomfort in my head that I feel like my nerves start hurting. I am aware of this issue, but I am at a loss for what to do about it."[6]

This conversation with Mumma triggered memories of my own challenges in explaining my heightened sensitivity to people around me, especially the effects of it on my body at night. Conversing these topics to people is significantly difficult, not because of any sort of an attached shame to it but because of the complexity in explaining how these experiences differ from how an ideal or normal body functions. Maté (2022) emphasizes how trauma imprints itself on the body, leading to the disruption of the body's equilibrium and increasing the risk of disease. "Emotional repression, imposed by trauma, forces the body to bear the burden. Over time, the body's suppressed emotions may manifest as physical symptoms like pain, fatigue, or illness" (Ibid, p. 143). For instance, while some people might barely notice a casual door slam, the same sound can trigger an intense reaction in me, triggering my heartbeat. Lederach & Lederach (2011) highlight how violence intensifies individuals

[6] My parents don't sleep together because my father's snoring issues deeply triggers Mumma and her ability to sleep at night.

to survive in a state of hyper-vigilance, permanently on alert due to insecurity in both internal and external realities. In my case, the minutes that follow such experiences are met with efforts to regain composure and calm my accelerated heartbeat. Moreover, in this conversation with Mumma, I could not help but notice how women, more often than men, are expected to be the ones who should accommodate. Living in a body that has been through trauma has compelled me to look at being able to adapt to easily as a privilege. The ability to adapt, in itself, is a privilege. On the contrary, having the means to fulfill one's needs is also a privilege, based on the conditions of having enough space and financial resources. As it happens to be in mine and Mumma's case. Mumma has another room to sleep in, which of course raises other space issues in the house. While in my case, I moved to an entirely different country to find a place for my body where it feels at ease if not at peace. It is staggering how the burden of adjustment always falls on the shoulders of those who are "supposed" to adapt, rather than inducing effort from those who have "normal" functioning bodies. For instance, in the above case, Mumma felt guilty but did my father ever try to seek out help for his snoring issues? No.

Bodies at Rest, Minds on Patrol

As Mumma and I were gossiping, my father called Mumma to inform her he was going out, expecting her to attend to the house. As he announced his departure, Mumma and I breathed a collective sigh of relief and continued gossiping about things here and there. Van der Kolk (2014) highlights how trauma survivors often grapple with articulating their experiences and instead, the body communicates what the mind cannot. When I listened to the voice note, that sigh of relief took me back to the experience of how our bodies feel in the absence of my father, which is similar to that of a prey when a predator leaves to hunt elsewhere. It is the same feeling of serenity that washes over us—Mumma, Palak, Heet, and I. When my father goes out of the town for a few days, during these brief periods, we can finally be our true authentic selves, without thinking about the feeling of constant alertness in the presence of my father. These are days without cursing or shouting, yet they are tinted with an underlying fear of his unavoidable return. This impending threat hinders our ability to truly feel at ease and live in the moment, haunting the ability to enjoy our relationship with each other.

After my father's departure, I noticed a remarkable change in Mumma's behavior. She began to sing more often during the activity. According to Lederach & Lederach (2011), people begin to feel and heal through creative expression in the absence of violence. It is a vital aspect of resilience that connects deeply with community and self. This experience made me reflect on how intensely the body responds to the absence of a source of stress or threat. It is phenomenal how one's entire body can move in the absence of constant anxiety of anticipating the next confrontation of the next battle. In my father's presence, there has always been an undertone of stress- a timeless state of alertness and stiffness, expecting for the next outburst or conflict. It was almost as if his absence lifted an invisible coat of stress that Mumma carries with her, that I carried when I lived in that house. Moreover, his absence created space for Mumma's expressiveness to resurface. This change highlighted for me the tremendous impact that living with a strained person can have on a person's ability to merely exist and

breathe freely. Mumma's increased singing was an indication of the physical manifestation of safety and security in her own space which would otherwise be impeded by my father's presence.

As I reflected on this experience, I started analyzing how we have all lived or rather survived in that house, which robbed us of the capacity to be present, to be at ease. According to van der Kolk (2014) "The body keeps the score: what happens to your neurophysiology when you're traumatized doesn't just go away by itself when the threat is over" (p. 21). Living with a parent or partner who instigates trauma does not only diminish your self-confidence, making you feel inadequate, but it in an absurd way also sharpens your survival skills. As Lederach & Lederach (2011) observe, "Survival in settings of harsh conditions always involves an act of creativity and innovation" (p. 53). You develop an unnatural ability to adapt, feeling as though you could survive anywhere. Moreover, you find yourself willing to live anywhere but around them.

From Sakhiyas to Psyche: Women and Mental Health

Figure 2: My Design

Figure 3: Mumma's Design

Figure 4: Our Shared Design

I wanted to connect with Mumma over activities that she held closely to her heart. One of these happen to be Sakhiya; an activity that Jains perform in the temples using grains of rice to create religious designs to devote them to God. Growing up, I have seen Mumma perform Sakhiyas as a hobby and when I was thinking about how to bond with Mumma, it struck me, "I have not seen Mumma perform it in such a long time." That was my breakthrough. Over the years, I have found myself to be more on the agnostic side, but I believe, to travel the worlds of people who are radically different from us, we try. We try to meet somewhere, and this is where I let my guard down because I did not know when I would be able to do this otherwise. As Anderson (2014) notes, "World-travelling involves experiencing discomfort... is not always a negative thing. Uncomfortable encounters... foster new ways of seeing self and others" (p. 648).

As Mumma and I were creating different designs, I asked her about our shared favorite song, 'Mere Mehboob.' When I explored the reasons for it, Mumma replied, "It speaks of pain. My life has been a series of unfulfilled yearnings." According to Lederach & Lederach (2011), "Sound penetrates to a deeper level and can create the sensation of feeling held. In essence, music permits feeling things not always easily conveyed through the spoken word "(p. 120).

I then took a dig at Mumma and asked, "Then why do you always encourage me to be happy and not cry so much?"

"Because I have shed enough tears to know that it is not worth it. The tears may have their worth, but the oppressor does not. Nothing changed, it only left me with dark circles and ill health.

That's why I advise you not to cry and be stressed all the time. I have experienced its toll on my body and when you are unwell, you are often met with solitude."

Initially I wondered why Mumma spoke of Solitude, but her words made me reflect on my father's approach to her health. Throughout my childhood and now in adulthood, I have observed my father as someone who would procure medicines, instruct Mumma on their usage and then leave. However, I later realized that I have never noticed or heard my father ask Mumma, "How are you feeling?" or "Is there anything you need?" or offer, "I could stay home today to take care of you." If this is not enough, then he would wait for Mumma to get well soon so his routine would stop being affected by her ill health. These are gestures that personify the essence of being human. As Lederach & Lederach (2011) observe, "These are human experiences, and they validate our humanness" (p. xii). We are who we are today because someone cared for us when we were born. It only makes sense why Mumma would find solace in songs that convey and express pain and feelings of betrayal. The man and family she dedicated her life to caring for never took care of her when she was ill. I thought to myself, "When did we normalize such ungratefulness?" The absence of reciprocal care is a basic human need, and it was heartbreaking to learn that it was being normalized in certain societal structures.

As Mumma was singing and preparing sakhiyas, I gently approached the topic of our previous discussion based on autoimmune diseases. I explained to Mumma about the possibility of her bladder and stomach issues stemming from stress-related histories, delicately trying to understand her resistance to addressing mental health issues. She expressed hesitation about potentially needing medication to treat it from a different angle: autoimmune disease. According to Maté (2022), cultural pressures suppress emotional needs that lead to physical manifestations in the form of autoimmune diseases that disrupt the connection of the mind-body relationship. I pointed out that she was already taking medication for treating her recurrent UTIs and constipation issues and that this might treat the root cause of the problem. Although Mumma acknowledged my explanation with a nod, she remained unwilling to undergo the tests to detect if her body was responding to an autoimmune disease.

Later when I went on the bench to write about my reflections from this conversation, I could not help but think about the prolonged stigma attached to mental health, especially its impact on women. The interconnectedness between issues of society's stance, gender norms, and resistance to mental health care all pointed out to women's struggles in such everyday exchanges. Mumma's hesitance to undergo medical tests in this context highlights a broader cultural hesitance to recognize and address mental health issues, especially in women, highlighting how deeply ingrained these acts of reluctance can be in everyday life.

The Biology of Loss

In one of the activities with Mumma, I decided to do embroidery with her. When I was in school, I would stay up till late for Mumma to teach me designs because she would be busy in the day due to household chores. As we sat together, quietly embroidering, my father barged into the room and

demanded that Mumma come outside because he needed her help with something. In that moment, I teared up a little as I realized something that I had never thought about before. I could not recall a single time, in 24 years of my life when Mumma had said "no" to my father. Not because she had her own things to get to or simply because she was not in the mood to-- she never refused my father. I believe my tears were not because of Mumma's inability to exert her agency but because I understood all too well the consequences she would face if she did. I know this because I have experienced it myself. And then it made me wonder: does the inability to say "no" to your perpetrator ultimately result in an inability to say "no" to anyone?

In the words of Maté (2022), if you do not know how to say no when you need to, your body will say it for you in the form of an illness. In both Mumma's case and my own, this holds true. This pattern does not just affect our relationship with my father; it subtly seeps into every interaction, every relationship. The concept of "decolonial embodiment" (Ureña 2019) offers insights into how Indian women's bodies carry and transmit knowledge of survival across generations. As Ureña (2019) argues, this perspective "accounts not only for the historical consequences of colonialism and coloniality but also the very real and embodied suffering of those subjects who bear these wounds." (p. 1642). In Mumma's case, it started with my grandmother, the inability to say her no resulted in her inevitably doing the same with my father and others. In social gatherings, Mumma never refuses a request for help despite having a body that causes her distress daily. I sometimes feel the inability to say no or to take a stand for herself has become a defining feature of her personality, a silent battle that echoes through every aspect of her life. Moreover, I can observe these patterns beginning to take up space in my own life, an inheritance I am consciously trying to break.

3.3. The Growth of the Seed: Reinforcement and Resistance

"When will mothers stop having to pray, God, please make my daughter stronger than me?"

(Chisala, 2017, p. 60)

While cultures and traditions prepare the soil for making it fertile for patriarchal norms to flow, the growth of the seed takes place in diverse conditions. This section in the research paper, I leave it up to you to decide if you would like to address it as strengthening of patriarchal systems or the birth of resistance to patriarchal standards. Regardless of what you decide, it is inevitable that internal conflict is a part of both sides of this coin.

Where is a Woman's Belonging?

One of the conversations with Mumma, she took me back to her life when she had married my father. Mumma revealed a profound truth about her experience highlighting that despite being married to my father and living in that house, she never felt a sense of belonging and acceptance. She elaborated how in the first two years of her marriage, when she married my father, she felt more like a caretaker—an "ayah" for someone else's children rather than a faithful member of the family. It was not until I was born that Mumma started to slowly feel like she could take up space in the house. Before that, she perceived my father considered her as someone who might not be taking proper care of "his" children. The birth of her own child—me—marked as a landmark in her life.

This moment of attachment did not only establish a sense of belonging within her; it also ignited a change in her behavior. Mumma began to claim ownership in small ways, discovering her voice instead of remaining silent. According to hooks (1999) "When we can feel in our bodies the price, we pay for living under conditions of domination, we begin to wake up to the need for change" (p. 78). However, it revealed a poignant question for me: should there be a requirement for agency for women to feel belonged? In Mumma's case, a sense of belonging seems to be a prerequisite for asserting power. Moreover, as I pondered over this realization of mine, I also felt that it is often also internalized by women themselves. It raises intriguing questions about the relationship between belonging, sense of identity, and the ability to reclaim oneself in patriarchal patterns.

Reflecting over our conversations, I shared with Mumma how despite the risk of punishment from my father, we children still discovered ways to live life on our own terms while resorting to lying. I wanted to understand if Mumma does the same and to my surprise, she confessed that she too had begun to lie, addressing that it is something she had never done before in their marriage or her life in general.

"I have learned the hard way that the man I am married to will only understand things the way he wants to. No amount of truth will convince him that I am loyal to him. My honesty means nothing to him. All that matters is that his desires are fulfilled. So, I have found a way to do things my way while appearing to adhere to his expectations."

The manifestation of this resistance leads to "infrapolitics"- the everyday acts of resistance that might be unnoticeable to dominant perspectives (Lugones 2012, p. 76). As I listened to the voice notes, I could sense her weariness. She mentioned why she started lying in the first place: my father expected her to live life entirely according to his terms and his will. Mumma wasn't allowed to go out as often as she would like or do things for herself because often, they would not align with his wishes. To engrave a bit of freedom and fulfill her own desires, Mumma took the support of occasional lies and omissions.

"Have you ever hidden anything from Dad"

"Not really. But I have chosen to not share certain things with him. I've learned that sometimes it is better to keep things to myself because it could lead to unwanted consequences. I'm saying this because your father has sometimes later used the information against me." This connects to what Motta (2018) observes, "If secrecy fails, the perpetrator attacks the credibility of his victim... he tries to make sure that no one listens" (p. 36).

"The essence of a good marriage is open communication, instead I have stopped sharing my thoughts and emotions. Even when he speaks, I nod to avoid conflicts because my heart no longer wants to listen."

Echoes of Silence: Our hidden pain

In one of my conversations with Mumma, I gathered the courage to ask a question I was not completely prepared for: "Has dad ever hit you?" Mumma hesitated initially but then replied, "Maybe once. It was a long time ago. I think it was when you were not born, and I forgot to give Palak her medicines. She was very sick when she was born."

I nudged further. "Wasn't there a time when he hit you when I was in your womb?"

Mumma's eyes squinted as she was trying to recall. "Yes, that was the only time. I left the room right after he hit me. I thought to myself, 'Am I supposed to just sit there and let him hit me?' I was very naive back then."

This took me back to what hooks (1999) said about silence, she notes "Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited... a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible" (p.9). Mumma continued with a hint of frustration, "Later, he told me, 'Today you went out, but next time if you do then I won't open the door.' Can you believe it? He can fight and raise his hand, but I cannot protect myself by leaving the room. Am I supposed to sit there and get beaten? No." Later Mumma said with a dissatisfied tone, "That's why he could never get an unmarried woman to marry. Because an unmarried woman will never suffer like I do. Women who remarry often feel they must adjust and suffer instead of walking away from the marriage."

When Mumma said this, I could feel the burden of years of unexpressed pain and anger in her words. I was left with extreme feelings of sadness and anger. It paved the way for understanding deeper complexities in my parents' relationship.

In one of the bonding activities with Mumma, our moment was unexpectedly interrupted by the obtrusive sound of my father's videos which were being played at an extremely high volume. Despite my efforts to connect with Mumma, to simply do the bonding activity with her, I found myself being majorly distracted and triggered by the noise. – a result of trauma. According to Maté (2022), the trauma-affected body experiences a heightened state of alertness, making it more sensitive to stimuli like sound, light, or touch, and reacting intensely to perceived threats, even when none exist. This experience is not detached; it is an everyday battle for Mumma and me.

Mumma then expressed, "At night, I sometimes forget about it when I am also busy watching videos. But when I try to sleep and your father is watching videos in his room, sleep seems like a far-fetched dream."

I did not suggest Mumma confront him about lowering the volume, despite it affecting everyone in the house. According to Motta (2018), the notion of the "Silence Cycle," (p. 24) involving grief, rage, desperation, and stillness, acts as a protective strategy. This illuminates how Mumma, and I use silence not merely as a submission but as a complex interplay of survival and resistance. The unwillingness stems from my childhood experiences, particularly during exams when the noise would overwhelm me and make it difficult for me to focus. The times I have asked him to lower the volume were only met with anger and redundancy. I was treated as a mere object of frustration where my needs were ignored. The message was crystal clear to me: I wasn't allowing my father the leisure time he deserved to enjoy the videos at his preferred volume after a long day of work. In my current life, I have started tracking down the aspects of my body that create a hinderance for me to lead a normal life. One of these happens to be getting startled easily when there is a sudden unexpected sound. This sensitivity to noise, the constant negotiation of asking for space and consideration, has become a determining factor of not only my life but of my household dynamics as well. It is a daily reminder of the unvoiced anxiety and the struggle for personal boundaries within our family.

Challenging the Roots: Resistance to Patriarchy

While Mumma and I were doing the activity together, my father called her because he wanted to eat something. Mumma went out and served him. As she started to leave to come back and resume the activity, Dad asked for some salt. It was interesting to know how in small ways Mumma's mind asserted itself. When my father asked her to bring some salt, she responded by returning to our shared activity and telling him, "You can get the salt yourself, you are capable of that," while my father stared at her. It was a little surprising for me to see Mumma resist in small ways because growing up, I have never observed her do so. According to Lugones (2012), Women of Color, particularly those affected by colonialism, often live with "multiple consciousnesses," this means they must navigate different worlds—one defined by colonial oppression and another by their cultural roots and resistance to this oppression.

Later when I was reflecting on what happened, I realized that the experience resonated with me. Living in a house where you are expected to always be on your toes and be present at my father's

command has made the body feel tired. I believe that because Mumma has endured prolonged stress and that she constantly suppressed the urge to resist, there comes a point where the body reaches a boiling point. And sometimes, in moments like these the body becomes too tired to suppress resistance and instead chooses to defy the norm, even if that means risking one's life not knowing what the consequences would be. There is an underlying fear in asserting one's position, the fear that if we are fortunate, he will listen and comply. However, if we are unfortunate, we might regret asking him to perform a simple, reasonable act— as in this case, something that even strangers would ask of one another when they find someone's behavior disruptive.

Figure 5: Mumma and I waiting for Maasi to watch a movie which turned out to be one of the worst movies of our lives.

3.4. The Process of Flowering: Women's Relationships and Bonding

"We do not have to be bound together for good. Sometimes, these temporary and fleeting connections we can do appropriately and well together can become a name of our future and what can eventually heal and transform us."

(Rhee, 2021, p. 82)

I felt a strong desire in my heart to include this chapter because it in many ways brings me back to the beginning of my research topic. I clearly remember my supervisor posing a significant question: "Sure, there is trauma and patriarchy, but what beyond that?" This question has poked me throughout my research journey. Initially, I struggled with this question. My upbringing and education had trained me to always have the answers to everything. Moreover, it had trained me to critique and perceive things from alternative perspectives. But what happens when we move past these familiar analytical frameworks? What is positioned beyond the forces that shape and maintain the relationship of a daughter and her mother?

Threads of Love & Bonding: Stitching Memories with Mumma

Figures 6 & 7: Mumma's embroidery cloth. Designed by me keeping in mind her favorite drink - green tea :)

As Mumma and I began to insert the thread into the needle, Mumma revealed an intriguing and longstanding realization about her relationship with my Maasi (her sister). She spoke of a sharp

contrast she had experienced throughout a marriage life—a discernible tension between the wants of the family as an institution and the bond she shares with Maasi, my aunt. Mumma rigidly shared her conviction, shared by my maasi, that the family had actively and persistently tried to drive a chock between the two sisters. Although Mumma did not provide reasons for this belief, the firmness in her voice was very distinctive. This confession made by Mumma really made me consider about the nature of family dynamics, especially the evident threat posed by strong female relationships within familial structures. It, in fact, raises significant questions about the insecurities that family as an institution holds, regarding the union of women even for leisure activities. What is it about the union of two sisters that seems to provoke such a hostile response?[7]

That lack of precise motivation for this discern attempt for separation adds another layer of complexity to the situation, one that leaves room for suppositions about the underlying intentions—whether they stem from deep rooted patriarchal beliefs, or fear of losing control and exerting power. Eventually, this confession by Mumma highlights the often delicate yet powerful forces at play within family structures, especially in how they form and strain relationships between women.

"You never felt like the society you are living in is deeply problematic and unjust towards women?"

"We never stepped outside this bubble. Growing up, we did not even go to hotels."

"It's not about hotels Mumma--

(continuing) "Etee, for any kind of exposure in life, you need friends, and we did not have any. We did what we saw. Remember this: the knowledge most children have nowadays is because of their exposure and the kind of friends they have. You do not get exposure within the four walls of your home. Maybe in some cases you do but it is minimal."

My first instinct was to argue with Mumma but eventually I understood where she came from. In most cases, awareness and revolutions are not created in a vacuum. This conversation with Mumma changed the way I perceive her sometimes: the absence of exposure in her life does not mean that she lacked the potential to be a knowledge holder.

Can Love Co-exist with Patriarchy?

As Mumma and I were sewing the designs I created, I asked her if she ever tried to question her mother's love towards her, given that she would treat her with such strictness. I even pondered if Mumma thought it was acceptable for people to claim that they love someone despite treating them poorly. Mumma expressed that her strictness was only present when they lived together. After she got married, my grandmother would act in ways that would suggest that she would miss Mumma, despite not explicitly stating it.

[7] I choose to use the term "Maasi" instead of my aunt because after Mumma, it is only my Maasi who has taken care of me and treated me like I was her own child. There are not many family members in my life who have loved me unconditionally, my Maasi happens to be one person from my Maternal side who has always looked out for me. Calling her an "aunt" in my Research paper does not do justice to what she has done for me. Maasi ("Ma" means mother in Hindi) and Maasi translates to "like mother."

This made me realize a common phenomenon: why do we express love only when we are separated from those we care about? This also further highlights Mumma's and her mother's complicated relationship with each other, which are derived heavily from patriarchal values. The very same values sought to prevent them from wholeheartedly embracing love and care beyond the restrictions of traditional expectations. Interestingly, I can see similar patterns in my relationship with Mumma. Mumma has never taken the initiative to hug me or tell me that she loves me, despite knowing that she holds these things in her heart for me. She has, however, demonstrated it in various ways. This seems like a pattern of intriguing cycle of how women express love for other women, how they hold them in their thoughts, but most importantly, how little we understand about each other's ways of being in relationships. I believe these dynamics are sometimes formed by patriarchy but sometimes, even apathy. As Lugones (1987) notes, "Only when we have travelled to each other's 'worlds' are we fully subjects to each other" (p. 18).

Perhaps it was not absolute resistance but rather the extreme disappointment that Mumma felt towards her own mother. She expressed questions like "Why can't my mother be like other mothers?" frequently lingered in her thoughts. I reckoned that there must also be an underlying sense of betrayal—a feeling that her mother failed her by not standing up for her daughter. While there may not have been an awareness or resilience towards her mother, there was certainly a deep-seated dissatisfaction and a tireless question of "Why me?" The answer often came in the form of destiny. Mumma often relies on destiny, a concept that sometimes provides her comfort by ascribing the situation to forces beyond one's control. I believe this was perhaps easier than revolting against a system where she would have found herself standing alone.

Mumma sometimes questioned my grandmother's love because it was overshadowed by fear. A classic "tough love" approach that people, especially mothers opt for their daughters which is sometimes driven by anxiety about how society will treat them. Mumma did admit to saying 'no' to my grandmother a few times. However, these attempts were met with intense conflicts as my grandmother could not tolerate her children confronting her. Interestingly, Mumma noted that her father's humbleness and simplicity balance out her mother's strictness—a dynamic she linked to my current family situation, where she views herself as the softer one to counter my father's authoritative nature.

But then I thought to myself: "What happens to the parent who tries to balance the dynamic?" "How does it impact their body, emotions, and stress levels?" as in the case of Mumma. It is poignant to consider the fact that my grandmother died at the age of 49, and the cause of death was blood pressure- caused by stress.

Travelling to Each Other's Worlds? Or Finding a Common Ground?

"To be loving we willingly hear the other's truth, and most importantly we affirm the value of that truth."

(hooks, 1999, p. 28)

In one of my activities with Mumma where we created Sakhiya, Mumma taught me various designs and we frequently dispersed and gathered grains of rice, casting new designs with our fingers. This procedure of recreating new patterns ignited a powerful metaphor for me, and I told Mumma: "Doing this activity of forming new patterns and then dismantling them to create other patterns reminds me of how the world would look like if there was true solidarity between women. And imagine, what if they came together to fight against patriarchy the same way?"

Despite Mumma's bounded exposure to such concepts, she nodded in agreement. She said "yes" in a way that she does when she agrees with something firmly. Her simple "yes" carried the burden of understanding where I came from, connecting a link between our different generations through this shared moment of consideration. The act of dispersing and reuniting the rice grains corresponded with the idea of dismantling and restructuring social structures, highlighting the potential power of unity in reimagining our world in the context of gender equality and overthrowing patriarchal systems.

I was reflecting over our conversation and told Mumma, "I think society has shaped women to be "strong" but only in a specific way. The strong is not for women to stand on their feet, but rather for tolerating injustice towards them. It is almost as if a woman's strength is measured by how much she can tolerate and bear. It seems like a very clever manipulation."

"You are right. There is an old saying, 'God created a woman with a lot of leisure in mind but forgot to give her any.' And it's true. When do women really have the time to just be? We are expected to work 24/7. Even the ones with careers come home to household chores. The ones who do not have careers work tirelessly at home. Where is our leisure time?"

Even though Mumma comes from a perspective which is deeply rooted in traditional roles, there was a thread of aversion in her words, or at least trying to question these norms.

3.5 The Process of Harvesting: Reflection and Consequences of Patriarchy

"Maybe we are like our mothers in how we look for honey where it might not live. We look at a hell, at a hurt, at a perfectly ruined thing and can still hope for it and still include it in our prayers. Maybe this is the fault of the soft, the openhearted."

(Chisala, 2017, p. 63)

As Mumma and I sat to do embroidery again, amid it, I found myself breaking into a song, conveying similar rhythms Mumma frequently hummed. "Do you recognize this one" I asked, referring to a tune that was related to our activity. "Rafu"- a word that recalled the act of darning, of stitching a hole. This metaphorical instance was not lost on me, for in that moment, I realized the intense gravity of our share experience together. Through stitching together, discussing about what colors to choose, we were engaged in a graceful process of repairing the fabric of our relationship- a fabric that at times had been compromised by the adamant forces of patriarchy, and by our failure to truly understand each other's worlds.

In the act of stitching, we were engaging in symbolic gestures of possibilities- one that reflected the possibility of healing, of reclaiming the wholeness of a connection, that at times, felt endangered. Amid all this, the room was yet again punctured by the noise of my father's phone. Neither of us said anything, maintaining a polite silence, feeling tired of constantly having to ask my father to lower the volume. It was then that Mumma recalled an instance of how during her recent visit to my aunt's house, most people could effortlessly surrender to sleep. Even in the drowsy afternoon hours, when the women, including Mumma, were done with all the chores and immediately fell asleep, Mumma couldn't. She conveyed her inability to sleep and instead found herself observing and surrendering to their rest, while remained fully awake, her mind refusing what her body craved.

This event of solitary wakefulness is something I am familiar with which ignites a profound sense of aloneness. The mind, drifting from the hook of unconsciousness, struggles with the unresolved pains and intrusive thoughts that feel impossible to escape. Even when surrounded by loved ones, the realization of one's own struggle resurfaces, as if a painful reminder that in the end, it is us and our painful thoughts. This acute loneliness looks at your loved ones sleeping peacefully as you crave for them to hold your hand as a reassurance that we are not alone. I knew what Mumma was talking about, I knew because I experience it quite often in life. This simple act of sharing similar pain had become a metaphor for the therapeutic power of empathy, of finding similar grounds of pain amidst the entanglement of forces that threaten to divide us.

Loose Threads: Conversations on Love and Loss

I had been struggling for a while with one of my sisters and her behavior towards me. I took this opportunity to turn to Mumma and asked her a weighted question: "What if my relationship with my sisters were to break and we no longer remain in touch?" Her reply was delivered casually that contradicted its gravity: "What would happen?" Mumma asked, "Look at me and Maasi- there is barely anything left between us." I softly countered Mumma that the reasons for their fractions were different,

hinting that the rifts between them were not because of her or Maasi but instead originated from the dominance of their husbands and the prevalent currents of patriarchy.[8] Mumma asked me why I would want to break ties with my sisters, reinforcing the idea that we should always strive to maintain bonds with closed ones, extending it to mending what has been broken. I responded thoughtfully, "But what is the point of a relationship if there is no respect? If it does not value me for who I am?" This incited a weighted pause before Mumma responded, "I do not think I am well versed when it comes to relationships. Had it been that I knew better, I would not even be here in the first place." Her response pointed towards and unexpressed confession- an unsaid recognition of her own struggles in navigating the complications of understanding human connections. Perhaps, the failures she endured, the disappointments she received by my father, her own mother, and others, had inculcated in her a sense of skepticism, a prudence towards the very foundations of what relationships should personify: love, respect, and an unhesitating support. The "asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other" that Spivak (1988) highlights in her essay manifests in how women must navigate their identities and relationships through multiple layers of imposed silence and erasure.

When the most basic needs for love and understanding are unmet, it is coherent that one might begin to question the intend of conserving ties at all- to feel completely alone in a world that prioritizes societal commitment over the emotional demands of an individual. As Rhee (2021) observes, "Connection and love are the laborious and fragile process of what we do" (p. 78). Mumma's hesitancy to provide advice crossed a deeper personal recollection, a realization that relationships break, despite our best efforts to maintain them, they collapse under the weight of oppressive structures, as in the case of her relationship with Maasi.

As Mumma and I continued with our conversation, her hands were entangled in the threads and she said, "Everything is scattered. It has all become entangled." I replied with a smirk, "I thought you were talking about your relationships." We both laughed. It was, however, a reflection about the complexities of human relationships like that of the threads of a garment that sometimes become pessimistically intertwined.

[8] There are a few reasons why Mumma and Maasi are going through a difficult time in their relationship. Reasons I cannot reveal in this paper for ethical purposes.

Chapter 4: Concluding with Rememory's Radical Hope

"Like snow covering the particulars of the city, they will say we never happened, that our survival was a myth. But they're wrong. You and I, we were real. We laughed knowing joy would tear the stiches from our lips"

(Vuong's, 2019, p. 192 in Rhee, 2021, p. 78).

I wish I could say 'and all ended well' but that would disrespect the journey and more importantly, it does not hold true. This research grew out of curiosity, love, and care, and while the process was overwhelming and emotional, I am grateful for the unexpected gift- my new-founded bond with Mumma. "While a generation separates us in age, our experiences bind us together" (Lederach & Lederach, 2021, p. xv). This research journey has helped me in noticing my entitlement and ignorance in an ableist world that prevented me from seeing Mumma's compound, conflicting, and chaotic reality. This is what I aim to do now- "accepting my responsibility, 'doing my shitwork': writing mothers' rememory as an interconnected inheritance" (Rhee, 2021, p. 51). Even after spending months on this project, I find myself struggling with the compound legacies of trauma and resistance that have transformed Mumma's and my life. Yet, in the very front of struggling, I have found a silver lining. By shaping the fragments of our stories, by linking it into a collective narrative of herstories, I have found comfort in the transformative power of rememory. The personal becomes not a limitation but a root of emancipatory knowledge. "A personal story becomes for others to be heard and healed as stories of the past, herstory, inform what it is now" (Rhee, 2021, p. 64). My story is no longer just mine; it binds me with Mumma, it binds me with you, it binds me with everyone whose past has been a struggle against patriarchal and colonial violence. "In this process of writing down stories that connect us, somehow, I am getting undone" (Ahmed, 2004/2014, 2017 in Rhee, 2021, p. 64). As different feminist stories unveil different possibilities, these stories teach us to feel our way beyond "centric, categorical, and hierarchical logic" (Lugones, 2010; Mohanty, Russo, & Torres, 1991; Narayan, 1997; Weems, 2017 in Rhee, 2021, p. 11). I connected with Mumma's story with 'sadness,' a pedagogy of feminism (Ahmed, 2017, p. 62 in Rhee, 2021). Our stories are not complete, but this is what I would remind readers that we never get a complete story. "What we see, what we hear, what we think we know depends on what we do not see, what we do not hear, and what we do not know" (Rhee, 2021, p. 15). Writing a conclusion is yet another imposed way of "thinking, doing, and writing" (Ibid, p. 72). More importantly, "I now know that there could be no such thing as a conclusion for our embodied questions. We live/die with them" (Ibid) and perhaps because I am still grieving.

According to Maté (2022), for healing to happen, the suffering must be heard and acknowledged. It is one of the first essential steps for our hurt to be fully acknowledged by the oppressor. What happens when the acknowledgment does not come? Sometimes, the acknowledgement takes a long time to come as in mine and Mumma's case. We need to acknowledge our own sufferings for healing to take place (Ibid,). A phenomenon that I have inculcated to validate my own sufferings through therapy and building my own support systems. A phenomenon that Mumma has struggled with sometimes. In accordance with the above experiences, I have grabbed the chance of connecting with Mumma as much as I could. There were, however, times when I failed to

connect with her, but her words and gestures have acted as a reminder for me: who I am is greater than my sufferings. Even though the tyranny of the past dominates our present, we have tried to hold space for our different ways of being/knowing/living. Writing this research has felt like opening a wound that still bleeds on some days. However, it has also acted as a reminder that "healing will come for us too" (Chisala, 2017, p. 45). Perhaps the hardest realization I have had to deal with it living away from Mumma because she will never leave my father. It is, on the other hand, a sign of all "the hard things our mothers had to pull themselves up from" (Ibid, 56) for us to be here. The research has therefore been a call for the embodied feminist experiences- of holding, extending, and tracing relationships with mothers.

4.1 Bat Feminism, Axolotl, and Everything in Between

"We came from broken homes, but every crack was a lesson. Love is possible, even for us."

(Chisala, 2017, p. 107)

This research has not provided me a clear path or a tidy, happy ending. Instead, it has unlocked a domain of in-between-ness, a domain where the borders between mother and daughter, oppressor and oppressed, memory and forgetting are blurred. "Our (mothers') personal is a resource to generate such healing and whole knowledge that re-members pieces together" (Rhee, 2021, p. 25). The foundational violence of patriarchy and colonialism that have shaped our lives do not simply evaporate, no matter how much we might wish for it. Instead, they loiter, ghostlike, overthrowing their shadows over our small, intimate moments. And yet, it is in these small spaces- the kitchen, the shared laughter with Mumma, our conversations over chai- that the bud of healing begins to grow. In these tiny instants, the divisions between past and present disappear, and we can remember the experiences of the women who came before us. It is here, in these liminal spaces, that I glance the radical hope of rememory. In doing so, Rhee (2021) is reminding us "to be mindful of what happens in the gap: the rememories we bump into, the potential ruptures we experience, the letters we write to our mothers" (p. xv). Anzaldúa (2015a) addresses these liminal spaces as "nepantla", a Nahuatl term meaning in between worlds (Ibid). On similar lines, it takes me back to what comforted me at my lowest, the Axolotl, a creature that is in-between, neither an amphibian nor a fish. Consequently, Rhee (2021) introduces the concept of Bat feminism which is a fable where the bat is categorized as neither a bird nor a beast. Bat feminism enfolds the in-between spaces and composite identities, drawing from her personal experiences regarding her relationship with her mother and Western feminist theories.

These liminal spaces are not solely a drive to excavate the silenced narratives of the past. It is also a medium to imagine new futures, of remembering the broken pieces of our worlds and braiding them into something more whole, more dynamic, more caring. Through this research, I have learnt that healing is not the absence of hurt, but the presence of care- for us, for each other, for the multitude worlds we live in. It is the act of witnessing our mothers' stories, of taking care of the wounds engraved into our bodies and acknowledging the fragility that hold us together. It is then, in these connections, that the possibility of renewal begins to surface. It is a reminder, that the practice of rememory will

proceed beyond the confines of this research. It will exhibit in the quite moments shared with other women, in the ceremonies and rhythms of the everyday, in the retrieving of spaces that have long been considered meaningless. For it is here, in the in-between, that we discover the courage to redefine our worlds where the foundations involve a more just, more empathetic, and vibrant future. "This in-between place offers the "possibility of the radically heterogenous" (Spivak, 1987, p. 105) and fragile connectivity as/of self" (Ibid, p. 65). This is perhaps not a conclusion but a beginning- a footstep towards a world of possibilities that involves surpassing the confines of this text. It is an invitation for me, to listen closely, to feel deeply, and more importantly, to remind myself that the personal has always been, and will always be, a place of profound political potential. In this way, this research is not limited to academic spaces for me, but goes beyond it, as a way of being- a radical hope of connection, of empathy, of care and communal healing.

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