

Women, Trauma, and Identity: An Ecofeminist Study of Small Remedies and Mrs. Dalloway

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Abstract

The intersection of personal trauma and female identity takes center stage in both Shashi Deshpande's Small Remedies and Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway, inviting a comparative discussion of their treatment of the feminine experience. The paper examines how characters' experiences of trauma shape their sense of self and identity, highlighting the inherent fragility of female identity within the constraints of societal norms and expectations. Furthermore, the paper adopts an ecofeminist perspective, recognizing the interconnectedness between women's oppression and environmental exploitation. Drawing on ecofeminist theory, the study focuses on how patriarchal standards influence women's identities and bodies, as well as their physical and psychological environments. The study examines how memory, experience, relationships, and spatial dynamics impact identity formation, offering insights into the multidimensional nature of trauma and the search for authenticity. The study offers a comprehensive insight into the layered and dynamic construction of identity, particularly as it is shaped by social structures and environmental influences on women's lives.

Keywords: Women, trauma, identity, ecofeminism

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a unique instrument that reaps its rewards by exploring the raw experience and existential components of human existence at both micro and macro levels. While academic or political publications on peace and war focus on state-centric policy, literary works (particularly novels, short tales, and poems) provide rhetorical, reactive, and evaluative answers to any social occurrence. Peace and conflict are complex subjects that require in-depth consideration of several occurrences. Psychosomatic, behavioural, and structural factors can all contribute to conflict. Understanding a conflict requires a thorough and critical examination of all associated concerns, making it interdisciplinary. The multidisciplinary character of the study on peace and conflict warrants the inclusion of literary literature in this domain. As Johan Galtung notes, "Literature and the arts provide insight into the deep culture of a society, exposing the underlying assumptions and emotional dimensions that formal academic discourses often neglect. They humanize the understanding of conflict and peace." (Galtung 9) Literary works provide a humanistic and holistic way to recording, analysing, interpreting, and appraising answers to peace and conflict situations. Literary inscriptions can help individuals assess the pros and cons of a subject and develop skills for dealing with conflict constructively. Human history has perpetuated identity, conflict, and pain via destruction and devastation. A conflict may cease, but its impact on human brains lasts far longer. Conflict victims experienced psychological and physical trauma, as depicted in the works of fiction writers from the 20th and 21st centuries. The link between women and war has been a source of contention among feminist thinkers. The role of women in national liberation battles is considerably more complex. "A deep but unreconciled conflict subsists between identities predicated on gender and identities predicated on nationality, and between feminism and patriotism." (Choudhury 16) The investigation of trauma, identity, and women's experiences in literature sheds light on the psychological and emotional landscapes produced by personal and societal factors. The protagonists of Shashi Deshpande's *Small Remedies* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* depict the devastating impact of trauma on women and their search for selfhood within the framework of their civilizations. "Women are often depicted as navigating the complexities of their role in society while struggling to assert their individuality" (Sanap 36).

This research, in addition to feminist and psychoanalytic interpretations, is based on an ecofeminist approach that draws important parallels between the exploitation of women and the exploitation of the environment. Ecofeminism offers a powerful perspective through which to examine how patriarchal ideas

diminish both women and the environment, placing female suffering and identity into a larger ecological and social framework. The word "ecofeminism" is derived from the realization that patriarchal capitalism's dominance and oppression of women and the environment are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing. Women, who are typically viewed as "closer to nature" because of traditional duties linked with caring and reproduction, are traumatized not just by societal institutions but also by the destruction of their natural settings. Deshpande and Woolf delicately incorporate ecological analogies and references to natural settings to help readers comprehend their protagonists' psychological states. For example, in *Small Remedies*, the rural and semi-urban settings, weather descriptions, and the presence of natural elements such as trees and birds act as exterior representations of Urmi's emotional landscape—her loss, sorrow, and ultimate resilience. Similarly, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf's London is more than simply a backdrop; it is a real, breathing organism that reflects Clarissa Dalloway's inner turmoil and the scars of tragedy. The novel's changeable weather patterns, blossoming flowers, and urban parks represent the fragility and rebirth of human existence and identity. Ecofeminism's emphasis on the interconnectivity of women and the environment undermines standard literary critique, which frequently dismisses female suffering as a psychological or social phenomenon. Instead, this method promotes a comprehensive understanding of trauma that includes ecological consciousness. For example, the female characters' disintegration of selfhood might be interpreted alongside the fragmentation of the natural world, underlining the similarity between environmental damage and the loss of women's identities in patriarchal society. This perspective illustrates how social neglect and violence against women reflect wider environmental concerns such as pollution, deforestation, and climate change, all of which disproportionately affect underprivileged people, including women. The ecofeminist perspective also highlights how women's healing and reclamation of identity are often tied to their reconnection with nature or natural rhythms. In *Small Remedies*, Urmi's journey toward healing is symbolically tied to her engagement with the natural world and the cultural landscapes of India, where traditional and modern elements coexist and clash. This dynamic creates a space for negotiating trauma and identity within an ecological context. Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* similarly uses the cyclical patterns of nature—the changing seasons, the day's passage, and the life cycles of flowers—to underscore themes of renewal and continuity amid psychological fragmentation and social upheaval. Additionally, the ecofeminist method in this study allows for an examination of gendered places, notably urban-rural dichotomies, and their impact on women's identities. While Woolf's urban location in post-war London reflects both the wreckage of war and the promise of modernity, Deshpande's Indian setting highlights the contradictions between tradition and progress in a postcolonial culture. Both environments provide particular problems and traumas for women, defined by cultural norms and historical legacies. Ecofeminism sheds light on how these geographical dimensions shape women's lives and how they fight, adapt, or succumb to these forces. The ecological lens broadens the discussion of trauma beyond human suffering to include social and intergenerational trauma related to historical events and environmental deterioration. For example, the pain represented in *Small Remedies* is not just personal, but also part of a wider framework of political violence in India, which includes the land and nature. Woolf's work, written after the tragedy of World War I, shows societal pain that permeates the urban environment. Ecofeminism allows for a critical engagement with these elements, emphasizing how trauma is embedded in landscapes and cultural memory, as well as how identity is formed via contact with both social and natural surroundings. This study delves deeper into how patriarchal systems control and limit women's voices and agency, just how they control natural resources and landscapes. The ecofeminist paradigm exposes the systemic basis of this control, connecting women's silence and pain to environmental exploitation. This research compares *Small Remedies* and *Mrs. Dalloway* to show how the protagonists' battles for voice and selfhood defy oppressive forces, presenting alternative forms of existence that stress care, connectivity, and sustainability—all of which are essential aspects of ecofeminism. Thus, the ecofeminist viewpoint not only deepens our understanding of women's pain and identity in these works, but it also offers up new possibilities for conceptualizing recovery that transcends anthropocentric constraints. It urges readers to see the reciprocal flourishing of the human and non-human worlds as essential for healing trauma and restoring identity. This method is especially pertinent in the current context of environmental catastrophes and persistent socioeconomic inequities, making literary studies an important place to

investigate the interconnections of gender, trauma, identity, and ecology. In conclusion, this research writing uses feminist trauma theory, postcolonial identity studies, and ecofeminist critique to present a complex and interdisciplinary analysis of the female experience in *Small Remedies* and *Mrs. Dalloway*. The research highlights the long-term consequences of patriarchal violence on women and the environment by studying the protagonists' travels through trauma, identity development, and complicated interactions with nature. It also implies that the process of healing and self-reclamation is inextricably linked to ecological knowledge and respect for nature. This novel approach not only broadens literary criticism but also adds to larger discussions about social fairness, environmental sustainability, and human resilience.

Trauma and Memory in Women's Lives

Shashi Deshpande is one of the most influential authors in modern Indian English literature. She makes an innovative attempt to trace the situation of women in the twenty-first century. Her works mostly portray middle-class women, with a focus on their sexual, cultural, conventional, and sensitive positions. They portray educated, working-class women who are subjugated and oppressed by men, other women, and society as well. They emphasize women's views and personal difficulties. They call for women's rights and laws to be respected. Shashi Deshpande's work, *Small Remedies*, frequently addresses topics concerning women and their place in society. In all of her efforts, she concentrated on women's difficulties. Regarding feminism and women's writings, she says, "A woman who writes of women's experiences often brings in some aspects of those experiences that have angered her." (Babu 495) This fragmentation is both a psychological response to trauma and a demonstration of how cultural expectations and standards may muffle and erase women's experiences. As we dive into the inner world of Deshpande's heroine, we are reminded of Virginia Woolf's words, which, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, so astutely identified how trauma, memory, and identity influence women's lives. Woolf's Clarissa Dalloway, like Deshpande's protagonist, struggles with the fragility of identity and the haunting influence of the past, posing fundamental concerns about how societal standards and expectations shape women's lives. Trauma in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* is represented through a variety of scenarios and ways of representation that affect the major characters in varied conditions and intensities. Woolf, who is likely to have experienced early childhood trauma herself, makes the daring decision to address this topic in her fiction, and she does so in both a communal and individual sense. Even though few people were aware of trauma or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at the time, Woolf used the phrase "shell shock" throughout the novel to describe what the characters experienced as a result of their participation in World War I. This medical condition expresses itself as increased collections and nightmares, as well as anxiety and thoughts about past occurrences over which one has no control. However, during the novel, it is demonstrated that there are two sorts of traumatic disorders: those caused by one's own life choices and post-war trauma. Trauma theorist Roger Luckhurst notes, "the trauma aesthetic is uncompromisingly avant-garde: experimental, fragmented, refusing the consolations of beautiful form, and suspicious of familiar representational and narrative conventions." In the instance of *Small Remedies*, the pain stems from Madhu's extremely personal loss of her son, Adit, and the consequent breakdown of her married relationship. This individual tragedy is not unique but part of a greater network of societal silences around motherhood, sorrow, and guilt. Deshpande depicts trauma as an unfolding, multifaceted phenomenon that pervades Madhu's memories and changes her perception of herself. The death of her son is aggravated by social expectations that require a mother to absorb and bear anguish in silence. Her trauma is also tied to a broken relationship with her husband, Som, who serves as a mirror for her divided inner self. Through Madhu's narration, Deshpande articulates women's trauma as both lived and inherited. She investigates how cultural scripts, particularly those relating to gender, wifehood, and motherhood, encourage women to hide their grief. Madhu's return to her past, her investigation of her aunt Leela's rebellious existence, and her documenting of Savitribai's musical career are all acts of resistance. These memories are more than just recollections; they are expressions of survival and reclamation. Memory in *Small Remedies* is transformed from a passive reservoir of previous events to an active, if painful, process of negotiation and reinvention. Female heroes in both *Small Remedies* and *Mrs. Dalloway* battle with their pasts, facing trauma and working with how it shapes their present identities. Clarissa Dalloway's life in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* is defined by haunting recollections of her adolescence, specifically her decision to marry Richard Dalloway rather than Sally Seton, to whom she had a strong emotional connection. This decision causes unresolved stress in

Clarissa's life, as she continuously doubts her decisions and the route she has chosen. Her anguish stems from emotional repression, and her search for identity is an attempt to reconcile her aspirations with the cultural limits imposed on her as a woman in her day. Similarly, Madhu's views in *Small Remedies* reveal a lady who is always reevaluating her past mistakes. Her choice to leave her spouse following their child's death was not taken lightly. It is a decision made out of anguish, silence, and an inability to express her loss within the confines of a typical marriage partnership. Madhu, like Clarissa, is lonely in her suffering. She takes consolation in her profession as a biographer, but it is also problematic since it requires her to deal with the lives of other women who have defied conventional standards and faced their tragedies. Madhu's trauma becomes dialogic on this voyage, speaking not just through her voice but also via the voices of other silenced women. Female Protagonist in both *Small Remedies* and *Mrs. Dalloway* battle with their pasts, facing trauma and working with how it shapes their present identities. Clarissa Dalloway's life in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* is defined by haunting recollections of her adolescence, specifically her decision to marry Richard Dalloway rather than Sally Seton, to whom she had a strong emotional connection. This decision causes unresolved stress in Clarissa's life, as she continuously doubts her decisions and the route she has chosen. Her anguish stems from emotional repression, and her search for identity is an attempt to reconcile her aspirations with the cultural limits imposed on her as a woman in her day. Clarissa and Madhu are both affected by psychological fragmentation, which is common after trauma. Clarissa's trauma emerges as an oscillation between recollections of the past and her current reality. Woolf depicts Clarissa's fractured thoughts using a stream-of-consciousness storytelling approach in which the past and present alternate frequently. This narrative approach highlights how trauma defines Clarissa's personality, since she is unable to entirely overcome the emotional wounds caused by her previous mistakes. Similarly, in *Small Remedies*, Deshpande uses a non-linear narrative in which Madhu's memories and current events are linked, illustrating the cyclical nature of trauma and the difficulties of moving ahead when the past continues to haunt the present. Deshpande's representation of Madhu's pain also allows for a nuanced ecofeminist interpretation. Madhu's surroundings, particularly the wild places in which she escapes, frequently reflect her internal feelings. Nature's stillness, consolation, and reluctance to judge stand in sharp contrast to the rigidity of the social world. Retreating into natural settings is not an escape, but rather a process of calm recuperation. Similarly, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa finds temporary solace in the natural elements—the freshness of air, the ringing of Big Ben, the shifting light—as she goes about her day. These appearance clues get woven into her mental story, acting as little anchors in an otherwise chaotic inner environment. Both Woolf and Deshpande appear to hint at a healing that may exist beyond rigorous societal constructs—in personal memory, natural rhythms, and feminine expression. Another significant aspect of trauma in these books is the intergenerational nature of memory. Madhu's cultural and familial heritage, as well as her past, haunt her in *Small Remedies*. Her endeavor to write about Savitribai's life exposes a lady who defied societal rules, creating a counter-memory to the silences that dominate Madhu's family history. The act of reclaiming another woman's voice is an important feminist gesture. It connects the personal and the political, highlighting how suffering may be transformed into witness. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, the memory of Septimus Warren Smith fulfills a similar function. His suicide is more than simply a terrible conclusion; it also represents society's unwillingness to accept invisible hurts. Clarissa's last acknowledgment of Septimus' death as a form of rebellion emphasizes the common, however indirect, emotional strands that connect people. In both works, memory serves as a location of conflict and healing. It isn't always linear or honest, but it's vital. For Woolf and Deshpande, trauma is more than just suffering; it is about enduring that pain in silence and giving it voice. Both writers acknowledge that memory may be selective, elusive, and even destructive, but they also see it as a tool for developing a cohesive sense of self. Madhu's final readiness to return to Som after *Small Remedies* acknowledges the lasting presence of her trauma, rather than erasing it. It's a moment of acceptance, not closure. Similarly, Clarissa's party after *Mrs. Dalloway* serves as a confrontation with age, death, memory, and, finally, with herself.

The Search for Identity

For ages, philosophers, psychologists, and literary academics have been fascinated by the search for identity, a fundamental human goal. At its root, identity refers to the complex and diverse idea of self, which includes a person's values, beliefs, experiences, and connections. The quest for identity is a lifelong

journey filled with twists and turns as people navigate the complexity of their own lives. The search for identification has long been a literary topic, with authors investigating the human condition through the prism of identity. Many literary works have addressed the intricacies of identity, emphasizing the self's fragility and flux. Memory and experience play an important part in the search for identity. Our memories and experiences shape our identities, impacting our values, beliefs, and relationships. However, memories can be fractured, twisted, or even fake, resulting in a disconnected and ambiguous sense of identity. Furthermore, the quest for identity is frequently linked to the idea of belonging. Individuals want to be a part of communities, cultures, and societies that may provide them a feeling of purpose and identity. This need for belonging, however, may lead to conflicts and tensions as people navigate the complexity of their identities within the framework of wider societal systems. The quest for identity is therefore inextricably linked to the idea of authenticity. Individuals strive to be true to themselves, living truthfully and sincerely. However, the pursuit of authenticity may be difficult as individuals traverse the intricacies of their aspirations, values, and beliefs. Both works depict the protagonists' struggle for identification amid their pain. Woolf's *Clarissa Dalloway* confronts the fragility of identity in Mrs. Dalloway, but in a different situation. Clarissa's existence is defined by feelings of detachment and fragmentation as she navigates the complexity of her own identity and the cultural expectations that have formed it. Through Clarissa's tale, Woolf highlights crucial themes about the nature of identity, highlighting how it is changed by memory, experience, and society's standards. "We see our lives through memory, and memories are fractured, fragmented, almost always cutting across time." (Deshpande 165) Clarissa's search for meaning is linked not just to her personal experience, but also to her status as a woman in a conservative culture. Her internal turmoil originates from society's expectation that women comply with traditional roles as husbands and mothers, leading her to doubt her own goals and identity. Her reunion with Sally Seton at the novel's conclusion demonstrates the complexities of her identity, forcing her to confront feelings she has suppressed for years. Clarissa's concept of self is changeable, formed by her connections, prior decisions, and the constraints imposed by her social surroundings. "She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown... this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa anymore." (Woolf 10) Clarissa's search for meaning is linked not just to her personal experience, but also to her status as a woman in a conservative culture. Her internal turmoil originates from society's expectation that women comply with traditional roles as husbands and mothers, leading her to doubt her own goals and identity. Her reunion with Sally Seton at the novel's conclusion demonstrates the complexities of her identity, forcing her to confront feelings she has suppressed for years. Clarissa's concept of self is changeable, formed by her connections, prior decisions, and the constraints imposed by her social surroundings. Dynamic narrative forms are one of the primary ways Woolf and Deshpande express the quest for identity. Deshpande uses a nonlinear narrative in *Small Remedies* to reflect Madhu's own broken and confused recollections. This story style emphasizes the fragility of identity by showing how memories, experiences, and emotions may become detached and disjointed. Dr. Kumar rightly observes, "Women's struggle in the context of contemporary Indian society, to find and preserve her identity as wife, mother and, most important of all, as human being, is Shashi Deshpande's major concern as a creative writer." (Kumar 214) Madhu, Deshpande's heroine, is on a voyage of self-discovery, navigating the intricacies of her past, present, and future. Deshpande expertly addresses the fragility of identity via Madhu's tale, particularly for women who are frequently forced to adhere to cultural standards and expectations. Madhu's attempts to balance her ambitions, aspirations, and ideals with the demands of her family and society are a strong example of how external pressures shape women's identities. Madhu's search for identity in *Small Remedies* is linked to both her cultural environment and her personal experiences. The cultural restraints of being a woman in postcolonial India severely limit her sense of self. Her search for identity is also influenced by her need for closure after the death of her daughter, a horrific incident that continues to impact her. Madhu's path of self-discovery and self-reclamation takes her through a tangled web of familial expectations, cultural conventions, and personal grief. Madhu's recollections of the past act as a potent spark for her self-discovery. Madhu's memories allow her to reconnect with her wants, aspirations, and beliefs, as well as begin to construct a genuine and meaningful sense of identity. Deshpande's portrayal of Madhu's growing sense of self exemplifies women's perseverance in the face of adversity, as they attempt to reinvent their identities on their terms. Both

individuals' paths to selfhood are based on their efforts to reconcile their pain with their societal obligations. Clarissa's endeavour to reconnect with Sally Seton, like Madhu's struggle to understand her role in a society that marginalizes her, are both attempts to restore agency and a sense of self. However, whereas Clarissa's identity is related to the British social structure and the limits put on women in the post-Victorian age, Madhu's identity is formed by the convergence of cultural tradition and the consequences of colonialism in India. Shashi Deshpande's *Small Remedies* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* both brilliantly express the universal human experience of searching for one's identity. Deshpande and Woolf's works emphasize the fragility of identity, especially for women, who are frequently required to adhere to cultural standards and expectations. They also emphasize the role of memory, experience, and relationships in identity formation, as well as raise crucial concerns concerning the nature of identity and how external circumstances shape it. Finally, both novels provide significant insights into the human experience, reminding us of the significance of accepting our complexity and inconsistencies to develop a genuine and meaningful sense of self.

Narrative Techniques and the Representation of Trauma

Woolf and Deshpande's narrative approaches are crucial to their works' explorations of trauma and identity. "Trauma is well-known in genocide, war, and crime situations" (Dewani 1) However, in literature, it frequently manifests itself as narrative structures that defy linearity and coherence, similar to the broken psyche of a traumatized individual. Both authors use distinct storytelling styles that reflect the psychological intricacies of their characters and allow for a more intimate portrayal of internal scars. Woolf's stream-of-consciousness style in *Mrs. Dalloway* allows readers to enter Clarissa's head and experience her fragmented thoughts and feelings. Woolf's stream of consciousness style is distinguished by three primary characteristics: narrator mediation, a cohesive style, and switch-off consciousness. Woolf's stream of consciousness is primarily mediated by a narrator from outside the story. "She felt somehow very like him—the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away... He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun." (Woolf 186) This text demonstrates Clarissa's emotional identification with Septimus, despite never meeting him. Woolf used parallel views to investigate how pain brings people together in unexpected ways. Woolf's approach offers a multilayered view of trauma, not only via Clarissa but also through Septimus Warren Smith. Septimus, a World War I soldier, suffers from hallucinations, remorse, and estrangement, exemplifying the hardships of wartime PTSD. Woolf depicts his trauma with abrupt temporal changes, sensory overload, and nonsensical internal monologues. His suicide represents a breach in the fabric of cultural apathy and the inadequacy of institutional remedies to psychological trauma. Woolf's fragmented awareness serves as both a counterweight and a supplement to Clarissa's interior world, emphasizing the complex character of trauma, which is moulded by both public and private grief. The presence of the narrator is evident in her use of tags like 'she thought' and 'she pondered'. "She always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day." (Woolf 6) Narrator mediation is present in each character's stream of consciousness. The mediation produces a cohesive style that promotes coherence among the many streams of consciousness in the story. As a result, Woolf's technique is extremely similar throughout all of the characters. The resemblance provides a strong sense of connection between the characters and is an example of the cohesiveness Woolf tries to depict in *Mrs. Dalloway*. This narrative technique highlights Clarissa's psychological depth, demonstrating how her trauma is more than just a succession of incidents, but rather a profound emotional experience that impacts her whole life. Woolf contrasts the personal with the societal by switching between the perspectives of different characters, such as Septimus Warren Smith, a World War I veteran suffering from shell shock, and the narrative focuses on Clarissa, exploring the broader implications of trauma and how it affects individual identity. Deshpande's *Small Remedies*, on the other hand, employs a more fractured framework that shifts back and forth in time, from the past to the present, to depict how trauma is experienced and remembered. The fragmented narrative represents the characters' psychological disintegration, notably Madhu's concept of self, which is not linear but is heavily influenced by prior events. Deshpande also uses a cultural lens to depict the dichotomy between tradition and modernity, which adds another depth to Madhu's pain and identity. The nonlinear tale represents the cyclical nature of trauma and how it is passed down through generations, especially in a postcolonial environment. Like Woolf, Deshpande avoids a chronological narrative. Instead, she enables

memory to determine structure. Madhu's thoughts frequently begin in the present, but rapidly go to memories of Adit, her son, or her early years with Som. This cyclical form depicts trauma's frightening persistence, which refuses to end. Deshpande also includes diary entries, letters, and recollected conversations, giving the story a layered, confessional feel. This narrative genre allows Madhu to reflect on her decisions with a mix of shame, contemplation, and quiet perseverance. The friction between tradition and modernity, which is so common in postcolonial Indian literature, lends another element to the plot. Madhu is divided between cultural standards and his convictions. The novel's structure reflects this dichotomy: disconnected, frequently contradictory, and always searching. Trauma, in Deshpande's universe, is a palimpsest—written over but never completely erased. Moreover, Deshpande's narrative voice resists grand gestures or overt dramatization. Her prose is restrained, almost sparse, which mirrors the silences surrounding grief in Indian culture. This subtlety in voice enhances the realism of Madhu's trauma. Her suffering is not spectacular but slow, intimate, and often invisible to others, much like the way many women experience trauma in patriarchal societies. The layering of voices—from Madhu's internal monologue to her reflections on Savitribai's radical past—further illustrates the interconnectedness of female experience and memory. The fragmented form also permits a kind of feminist historiography, as Madhu reconstructs the erased voices of women like Leela and Savitribai, thus reclaiming identity through storytelling. In both works, form and substance are intricately intertwined. The interruptions in chronology, the diversity of voices, and the use of subjective time are more than just stylistic experiments; they are literary enactments of trauma itself. Woolf and Deshpande recognize that trauma resists easy narrative. Their various storytelling methods enable readers to not only comprehend but also feel the displacement and fragmentation that their characters experience. The end effect is an immersive experience of trauma, not as spectacle, but as lived reality, formed by silence, memory, and the ongoing struggle for identity.

The Role of Relationships in Trauma and Identity

Relationships are crucial to Clarissa's and Madhu's trauma experiences and their search for identity. Clarissa's relationship with her husband, Richard, symbolizes the cultural constraints that define her identity in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Their marriage, while superficially steady, lacks the emotional depth Clarissa seeks. Her connection with Sally Seton symbolizes a distinct type of emotional pleasure, one that defies society's rules and gives Clarissa a glimpse of her true self. Clarissa's failure to completely accept her new personality, however, causes an emotional tension that lasts throughout the novel. Sally represents not only a love recollection, but also a realm of possibility—what life may have been without cultural expectations. Clarissa recounts intense emotional encounters with Sally, emphasizing her social class's denial of same-sex desires. This longing is more than just romantic; Clarissa desires to transcend the limitations put on her. Her identity is molded by the conflict between public compliance and private yearning, which resurfaces frequently in her encounters. Peter Walsh's return affects Clarissa's relationship dynamics. His presence invokes nostalgia and what-ifs. His harsh tone frequently disrupts Clarissa's serenity, reminding her of previous mistakes and missed opportunities. However, he, too, is bound by his failings, leveling the emotional playing field between them. These relationships—Richard, Sally, and Peter—act not simply as narrative devices, but also as reflected surfaces, allowing Clarissa to confront various aspects of her personality. "Many novelists shatter the myth that women find fulfilment in marriage and portray an honest picture of women who strive to be themselves; they move from submission to assertion to acquire an identity and to fit into the mainstream of society." (Srivani 1900) Madhu's relationships in *Small Remedies* are also laden with difficulty, particularly her troubled marriage to her husband Vikram. The loss of their daughter has created an emotional gap that neither can fill. Madhu attempts to connect with people, whether via employment or personal connections, are moulded by her prior trauma and societal expectations. The challenge of balancing her inner aspirations with her traditional duty as a woman is a significant impediment to her quest for recovery and self-discovery. Madhu's relationship with Savitribai becomes crucial to her quest. Madhu might look to the elder woman's unorthodox existence as a musician who defies society's boundaries for inspiration and reinvention. Madhu learns from her that decisions and defiance may transform one's identity. Similarly, her connection with Leela, however strained and convoluted, gives her company while also exposing her flaws. In contrast, Vikram represents the patriarchal structure from which Madhu is attempting to break

free. His emotional absence and refusal to grieve their shared pain further isolate her. Rather than bringing comfort, their friendship becomes a source of silence and suppression. However, it is in this stillness that Madhu begins to rediscover her voice, recreating herself through thought, isolation, and writing. Additionally, Clarissa and Madhu remake themselves not by abandoning their connections, but by reinterpreting them. Relationships serve as both mirrors and battlegrounds in their separate narratives, reflecting their scars while also providing pathways to recovery. By delving into emotional, platonic, sexual, and even strained familial ties, Woolf and Deshpande demonstrate how identity is inherently relational and how trauma may be triggered and modified by those closest to us.

Ecofeminism Redefined: Routes of Nature, Gender, and Care

While *Small Remedies* and *Mrs. Dalloway* are set in different cultural contexts, both works quietly connect with the ecofeminist paradigm, which links women's oppression to natural dominance. Ecofeminism, as expressed by thinkers such as Vandana Shiva and Val Plumwood, criticizes patriarchal notions that equate femininity with passivity, nurturance, and nature—characteristics that are frequently undervalued or exploited in male-dominated societies. In *Small Remedies*, the narrative's interaction with music, gardening, and the natural environment portrays a feminine connection to creation and life-sustaining activities. Madhu's retreat into recollection, as well as her identification with people like Savitribai, an unorthodox woman who questions traditional standards, demonstrate a type of resistance based on care, introspection, and relational thinking, all of which are important to ecofeminism. In the story, nature frequently provides a space for self-reflection and reclaiming, providing Madhu with a respite from patriarchal society's strict norms. Her transition from personal trauma to community memory parallels the ecofeminist appeal to interconnectivity as a means of healing both individual wounds and systemic injustice. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf's many references to nature—flowers, shifting light, the rhythm of the day—serve not just as background, but also as an extension of Clarissa's inner landscape. The transitory beauty of nature reflects Clarissa's fragile, broken personality. Woolf's writing reflects organic and cyclical patterns inherent in nature, in contrast to the novel's artificial, repressive institutions of patriarchy and militarism, which are haunted by Septimus' trauma and the medical institution's icy logic. *Mrs. Dalloway* gently criticizes the masculine mentality of control and domination, which produces environmental and psychological harm. Carolyn Merchant's key work demonstrates how the dominance of nature and the enslavement of women are historically linked via patriarchal and mechanical worldviews. This supports the ecofeminist interpretation of female characters in both Deshpande and Woolf, since their difficulties frequently parallel environmental exploitation and the loss of organic, caring qualities in modern society. (Merchant 41) Ecofeminism broadens the understanding of trauma and identity in both works, arguing that healing is a community and ecological process rather than a solitary psychological effort. The characters' psychological conflicts mirror a larger cultural alienation from sympathetic, life-affirming principles. Their trips show that women's identity creation is inextricably linked to the environmental and social environments in which they reside. Thus, both Woolf and Deshpande define a politics of care, memory, and relationality that is closely aligned with ecofeminist philosophy, implying that recovering identity necessitates a reorientation toward both the person and the planet as interconnected creatures.

CONCLUSION

Shashi Deshpande's *Small Remedies* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* both examine the complicated interplay of trauma, identity, and women's lives. While the books' cultural and historical backgrounds differ—postcolonial India in *Small Remedies* and post-society War I England in *Mrs. Dalloway*—both characters face a fundamental challenge: the search for selfhood in a society influenced by external forces and interior traumas. The authors' use of narrative techniques such as stream-of-consciousness and fragmented timelines allows readers to gain insight into the psychological realities of trauma and identity, and they concluded that the general effects that trauma may have on a person's psychological health, relationships with other people, and capacity to find purpose and fulfilment in life are highlighted by Woolf's depiction of characters who have had traumatic experiences. Trauma work is also memory work, and the survivor's testimony does not, in its expression, decide meaning or close a familial, cultural, or historical chapter. Rather, speaking about trauma opens meaning, produces meaning, and requires the

listener's willingness to bear witness to the catastrophic event, untangle the narrative knots, and listen through the gaps and ruptures, which takes precedence over any desire for closure. We are never free of the past, whether it's called history, memory, or experience. It is also the recognition that the past, what has already occurred, and the memories of which it is made up, are defined by pain.

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