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The Mother Wound: Intergenerational Trauma and the Failure of Individualization in Yoshi`s *Girl in White Cotton*

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Abstract

Girl in White Cotton (2019) by Avni Doshi can be read as a psychological and theoretical exploration of intergenerational trauma, maternal subjectivity, and fragmented identity formation. The novel highlights the concept of the "mother wound," where early emotional experiences between mother and child shape long-term psychological patterns and identity conflicts. Drawing on psychoanalytic and trauma theories, the narrative demonstrates how unresolved maternal trauma is passed across generations through memory, behavior, and emotional responses rather than direct communication. The work reflects the ideas of Sigmund Freud regarding psychoanalysis, the unconscious mind, repression, and repetition compulsion. It also resonates with Donald Winnicott's theory of the mother-child bond and the influence of parental relationships on self-development. Similarly, Carl Jung's concepts of individuation and the collective unconscious help explain the characters' struggle for emotional autonomy and stable identity. The mother-daughter relationship in the novel becomes a complex space of emotional dependence, conflict, and psychological entanglement. Through its fragmented narrative structure, the text mirrors the instability of traumatic memory and emotional disorientation. Furthermore, the novel challenges idealized cultural notions of motherhood by portraying maternal relationships as psychologically complicated rather than purely nurturing. Ultimately, the novel reveals how inherited trauma disrupts identity formation and prevents emotional stability across generations.

Keywords: *Anxiety, Criticism, Failure, Feminism, Individualization, Trauma.*

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1. Introduction

Avni Doshi's *Girl in White Cotton* published (2019) internationally as "Burnt Sugar" is a powerful exploration of the fractured mother-daughter relationship shaped by trauma, abandonment, memory, and emotional inheritance. Set in contemporary India, the novel revolves around Antara and her mother Tara, whose toxic and emotionally dependent relationship reveals the psychological concept of the "mother wound." The mother wound refers to the emotional pain, neglect, rejection, or unresolved trauma transmitted from mother to daughter across generations. Doshi's novel portrays how unresolved maternal trauma becomes intergenerational, shaping identity, emotional development, and the ability of women to separate themselves into autonomous individuals.The narrative begins with Antara caring for her aging mother Tara, who suffers from memory loss and possible Alzheimer's disease. However, beneath this caregiving relationship lies years of emotional neglect and resentment. Antara openly admits: "I would be lying if I said my mother's misery has never given me pleasure," a statement that immediately establishes the bitterness and psychological damage at the center of the novel (Doshi 1).

Tara abandoned conventional domestic life to live in an ashram with a spiritual guru, exposing Antara to instability, neglect, and emotional deprivation during childhood. As scholars note, the novel examines "the consequences of childhood trauma" and Antara's inability to escape "the haunting memories of the past." The concept of intergenerational trauma is central to the novel because Tara herself is also a victim of emotional dissatisfaction, alienation, and patriarchal neglect. Her failed marriage, emotional isolation, and search for freedom through spirituality influence the way she mothers Antara. Instead of healing her wounds, Tara unconsciously transfers them to her daughter. Antara, in turn, grows into adulthood carrying unresolved anger, emotional instability, and fear of intimacy. Critics observe that Tara and Antara become "mirror images of each other,"repeating the same patterns of alienation and dissatisfaction across generations. Thus, the trauma does not remain individual; it becomes inherited psychological damage.The novel also demonstrates the failure of individualization, a psychological process through which a person develops an independent identity separate from parental influence. Antara constantly attempts to distance herself from Tara, yet she gradually becomes more like her mother. Although she resents Tara's neglect and emotional cruelty, she reproduces similar behaviors in her own marriage and motherhood. Her postpartum depression, emotional detachment from her child, and inability to form healthy relationships reveal her failure to construct an identity outside maternal trauma. Scholars argue that Antara remains "fixed to a particular point in the past,"unable to separate herself from childhood wounds. Doshi further complicates the idea of identity through memory and narration.

Tara's memory loss destabilizes Antara because her identity through memory and narration. Tara's memory loss destabilizes Antara because her sense of self depends upon shared memories of suffering. The mother's forgetting becomes another form of abandonment,

while Antara remains trapped within recollections of pain. The novel therefore suggests that trauma survives not only through actions but also through memory, silence, and emotional repetition. As reviews of the novel emphasize, the text is deeply concerned with "memory," "obsession," and "the boundaries of the self." Ultimately, *Girl in White Cotton (2019)* portrays motherhood not as nurturing and sacred, but as psychologically complex and deeply destructive when shaped by unresolved suffering. Through Tara and Antara's relationship, Doshi exposes how maternal trauma is inherited across generations and how daughters struggle to achieve individuality while carrying emotional wounds passed down by their mothers. The novel becomes a profound critique of patriarchal structures, emotional neglect, and the cyclical nature of female suffering, illustrating that without healing, trauma continues to reproduce itself from mother to daughter.

1.1. Research Background

The narrative unfolds through fragmented memories, emotional neglect, abandonment, and psychological suffering, revealing how trauma passes from one generation to another. The novel presents motherhood not as a nurturing institution but as a site of emotional conflict, resentment, and inherited pain. The concept of the "mother wound" refers to the emotional and psychological damage transmitted from mothers to daughters through patterns of neglect, repression, guilt, insecurity, and emotional absence. In feminist psychoanalytic theory, the mother-daughter relationship plays a crucial role in the development of female identity and subjectivity. However, when the maternal bond is shaped by trauma and emotional instability, the daughter struggles to achieve a stable sense of self. This condition leads to what Carl Jung describes as the failure of individuation the inability of an individual to separate psychologically from inherited emotional patterns and develop an independent identity. In the novel, Tara's traumatic experiences, failed marriage, emotional dissatisfaction, and unstable lifestyle deeply affect Antara's childhood and adulthood. Antara grows up deprived of affection and security, carrying unresolved anger and confusion into her own married life and motherhood. The narrative demonstrates how trauma is unconsciously inherited and repeated across generations. Antara gradually realizes that she is becoming emotionally similar to her mother, despite her efforts to reject her. Previous studies on the novel have mainly focused on trauma, memory, motherhood, and psychological suffering. Scholars have examined the impact of childhood neglect and emotional alienation on the characters' lives. However, limited research has specifically analyzed the connection between intergenerational trauma and the failure of individuation through the framework of the "mother wound." Therefore, this study aims to investigate how inherited maternal trauma obstructs Antara's psychological independence and identity formation in the novel.

1.2. Research Objectives

1. To examine the representation of the mother wound in *Girl in White Cotton (2019).*
2. To analyze the effects of intergenerational trauma on the psychological development of Tara and Antara.

3. To explore how emotional neglect, abandonment, and memory shape the mother-daughter relationship in the novel.

1.3. Research Questions

1. How does *Girl in White Cotton (2019)* represent the concept of the "mother wound" through the relationship between Tara and Antara?
2. In what ways does intergenerational trauma shape Antara's identity formation and psychological development?
3. How does the novel portray the failure of individualization within the mother-daughter relationship?
4. How are memory, trauma, and emotional inheritance interconnected in *Girl in White Cotton*?

1.4. Research Significance

This research is significant because it contributes to contemporary literary studies by examining the psychological and emotional dimensions of motherhood in South Asian fiction. The study highlights how trauma experienced by one generation can unconsciously shape the lives and identities of the next generation. By focusing on the "mother wound," the research provides a deeper understanding of the emotional complexity of mother-daughter relationships beyond traditional representations of motherhood.

1.5. Problem Statement

This study examines the representation of the "mother wound" as a form of intergenerational trauma in *Girl in White Cotton (2019)* and investigates how maternal inheritance obstructs the process of female individualization. The novel portrays a deeply fractured mother–daughter relationship in which emotional neglect, psychological dependency, resentment, and inherited suffering shape the identities of both women. Rather than functioning as a nurturing figure, the mother becomes a source of trauma, transmitting unresolved pain and instability across generations.

"The Mother Wound: Intergenerational Trauma and the Failure of Individualization" in *Girl in White Cotton (2019)* explains how pain and emotional suffering pass from one generation to another between Tara and Antara. Tara's troubled behavior and neglect affect Antara's mental and emotional growth. Because of this, Antara struggles to build her own identity and becomes emotionally connected to her mother's pain and anger. The novel critically shows that unresolved trauma in families can damage relationships and stop personal independence. Avni Doshi presents motherhood in a realistic and painful way, showing how the past continues to shape both mother and daughter.

2. Literature Review

The article argues that the novel portrays "Trauma" as an inherited emotional condition that obstructs the daughter's process of individuation and selfhood. To support this interpretation, the discussion can be connected with several major theorists whose ideas explain the psychological, social, and gendered dimensions of intergenerational trauma. One of the

most significant theorists relevant to the article is *Sigmund freud* (1901) his foundational theory *"The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*" which explored how the unconscious mind influences daily, actions. Provides the foundation for understanding repression, unconscious conflict, and childhood trauma. Freud argues that unresolved experiences from childhood remain buried in the unconscious mind and later reappear in distorted forms such as anxiety, repetition, and emotional instability. In *Girl in White Cotton (2019),* the daughter's fragmented consciousness and unstable identity reflect this Freudian model of trauma. The painful maternal relationship shapes her psychological development, while memories emerge in broken and disoriented forms rather than coherent narration.

Freud's theory helps explain why trauma in the novel cannot easily be escaped; instead, it repeats itself across generations. The article also reflects *Carl Jung's* theory (1938) "*Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype"* he presents the primary essay on this topic Jung views the mother figure as a powerful archetype capable of both nurturing and destruction. In the novel, the mother embodies emotional dependency, instability, and suffering, creating fear and attachment simultaneously. Jung's concept of individuation the process through which a person develops an independent self is central to understanding the daughter's psychological struggle. The daughter cannot achieve individuation because she remains emotionally trapped within her mother's unresolved trauma. Thus, the maternal bond becomes psychologically imprisoning rather than protective. *Margaret Mahler's* (1975) "*Seperation and Individuation*" theory is particularly important in relation to Yoshi's argument about the "Failure of Individualization." Mahler explains that children gradually form an independent identity by emotionally separating from the mother during development. Healthy individuation requires emotional security and stable attachment. However, in *Girl in White Cotton (2019),* the daughter's development is interrupted because the mother's trauma creates emotional instability and dependence. The daughter remains psychologically fused with the mother, unable to establish boundaries between her own identity and inherited suffering. Mahler's theory therefore directly supports Yoshi's central claim that maternal trauma obstructs psychological autonomy.

Another important theorist is *John Bowlby* (1960) presents "*Attachment Theory"* explains how early emotional relationships shape later psychological behavior. Bowlby argues that insecure attachment in childhood leads to anxiety, fear of abandonment, and emotional dysfunction in adulthood. The mother-daughter relationship in the novel reflects this insecure attachment pattern. The mother's emotional unpredictability creates confusion and fear, preventing the daughter from developing emotional stability. Bowlby's theory helps explain why trauma in the novel is not merely personal but relational, emerging through disturbed patterns of caregiving and dependency. *"The Feminist Psychoanalytic"* theory of *Nancy Chodorow* (1989) . Chodorow argues that daughters develop identity through identification with their mothers, which often leads to the repetition of maternal emotional experiences. In patriarchal societies, women unconsciously transmit their suffering and frustrations to their

daughters. This idea is highly relevant to Girl in White Cotton, where maternal pain becomes a generational legacy. The daughter inherits not only emotional trauma but also the social burdens associated with womanhood. Chodorow's theory demonstrates how motherhood becomes both a psychological and cultural institution through which trauma is reproduced.

Cathy Caruth's (1995) "*Trauma*" theory also strongly informs the article's framework. Caruth describes trauma as an experience that cannot be fully understood at the moment it occurs and therefore returns later through fragmented memories, repetition, and silence. In the novel, trauma appears indirectly through disjointed narration and emotional confusion. The characters struggle to articulate their suffering clearly because trauma exceeds ordinary language. Caruth's ideas help explain the fragmented structure of the text and the haunting persistence of maternal pain throughout the narrative.

2.1. Intergenerational Trauma

Intergenerational trauma means emotional pain passed from one generation to another. Trauma does not disappear automatically; instead, it influences relationships, emotions, and identity across generations. Tara appears emotionally traumatized by patriarchal expectations, failed relationships, and dissatisfaction with life. She rejects traditional domestic life because she feels emotionally trapped inside it. However, she cannot fully escape emotional suffering or create stability for herself. Her unresolved trauma affects Antara deeply. Antara grows up emotionally insecure and psychologically attached to her mother's instability. She becomes obsessed with her mother emotionally even while criticizing and resenting her. The novel suggests that trauma passes silently between generations. Tara's emotional dissatisfaction becomes part of Antara's emotional identity. Antara struggles with anxiety, emotional confusion, resentment, and guilt because she has inherited her mother's emotional pain. One important aspect of intergenerational trauma in the novel is emotional silence. Neither mother nor daughter can openly communicate honestly about their pain. Their relationship is built on unspoken anger and emotional manipulation instead of understanding.

2.2. Memory and Trauma

Memory plays an important role in the novel because Antara narrates much of the story through memories of her mother and childhood. However, trauma affects memory deeply. The article examines how traumatic memories are inherited across generations and how unresolved maternal wounds prevent the daughter from developing an independent identity. Drawing on trauma theory, psychoanalysis, and feminist criticism, the discussion reflects the ideas of several famous theorists such as *Cathy Caruth*, *Sigmund Freud*, *Carl Gustav Jung*, and *Nancy Chodorow*. The novel suggests that trauma traps people inside painful emotional histories. Without emotional healing or honest communication, individuals remain psychologically attached to past suffering.The article also engages with modern trauma studies that define trauma as a psychological wound affecting memory, identity, and relationships. Trauma in the novel is not only personal but relational. Tara's memory loss due to dementia symbolizes both escape and repression. While Tara forgets painful events, Antara remains trapped in

remembrance. Memory therefore becomes both a burden and a site of suffering. The fragmented narration of the novel reflects the fragmented psyche of traumatized individuals. The article emphasizes the failure of individualization. In psychological terms, individualization means developing a separate and independent self.

2.3. Guilt and Emotional Dependency

Guilt is another major theme in the novel. Both Tara and Antara use guilt emotionally within their relationship. Antara feels guilty for hating and resenting her mother, especially when Tara begins relationship. Antara feels guilty for hating and resenting her mother, especially when Tara begins suffering from memory loss. Even though Antara carries emotional pain from childhood, she also feels responsible for caring for her mother. At the same time, Tara emotionally depends on Antara and often manipulates her through emotional vulnerability. Their relationship becomes emotionally exhausting because both women remain trapped in cycles of guilt and dependency. According to feminist theory, daughters are often taught to feel emotionally responsible for mothers. Patriarchal culture expects women to maintain emotional care inside families, even when relationships become harmful. This emotional obligation prevents Antara from fully separating herself from Tara. She feels trapped between anger and responsibility. The novel therefore shows how guilt becomes part of the mother wound and prevents emotional freedom.

2.4. Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework for the study titled The Mother Wound: Intergenerational Trauma and the Failure of Individualization in *Girl in White Cotton* (2019) by Avni Doshi. The framework examines how maternal trauma, emotional neglect, and inherited suffering shape female identity and psychological development in the novel. The study employs psychoanalytic theory, feminist trauma theory, and concepts of intergenerational trauma to analyze the complex relationship between Tara and Antara. The chapter explores the concept of the "mother wound" as an inherited emotional injury passed from mother to daughter through patterns of neglect, silence, resentment, and psychological instability. It further investigates how unresolved trauma obstructs the process of individualization, preventing the daughter from developing an autonomous identity. The framework draws on the theoretical contributions of Carl Jung, Nancy Chodorow, Julia Kristeva, Sigmund Freud, and Cathy Caruth to explain the emotional entanglement between mother and daughter in the novel. The narrative of Girl in White Cotton reflects the psychological consequences of dysfunctional motherhood and demonstrates how trauma is transmitted across generations. The novel interrogates traditional ideals of motherhood and exposes the emotional complexities hidden beneath familial relationships. Through fragmented memories and unstable narration, Doshi illustrates how inherited trauma shapes identity, memory, and emotional behavior.

2.5. Concept of the Mother Wound

The concept of the mother wound refers to emotional pain inherited by daughters from mothers who themselves have experienced psychological suffering, social oppression, or emotional deprivation. Feminist psychologists argue that patriarchal societies create unrealistic expectations of motherhood by idealizing mothers as endlessly nurturing and self-sacrificing. As a result, the emotional struggles and frustrations experienced by mothers are often silenced or ignored. These unresolved wounds unconsciously affect the next generation. The mother wound is not limited to direct abuse or violence; it also includes emotional neglect, absence, inconsistency, manipulation, and lack of affection. Daughters raised in emotionally unstable environments often struggle with insecurity, low self-worth, anxiety, and identity confusion. In *Girl in White Cotton (2019)*, Antara experiences emotional instability because of Tara's neglectful and unpredictable behavior. Although Tara rejects conventional domestic life in search of personal freedom, her emotional dissatisfaction profoundly affects her daughter. The novel challenges traditional cultural assumptions that motherhood is naturally nurturing and selfless. Tara is portrayed as emotionally complex, selfish, and psychologically unstable. Her inability to provide emotional security to Antara creates a lasting psychological wound. Antara's adult identity is therefore shaped by resentment, anger, and emotional dependence on her mother. The mother wound becomes central to the daughter's understanding of herself and the world around her. Feminist theorists argue that maternal trauma is deeply connected to patriarchal oppression. Women who are denied autonomy, fulfillment, or emotional support may unconsciously transfer their frustration and suffering onto their daughters. Tara's dissatisfaction with marriage, domesticity, and social expectations reflects the pressures imposed on women in patriarchal societies. However, her attempts to escape these restrictions result in emotional abandonment that damages Antara's psychological development. The mother wound in the novel therefore represents both personal and social trauma. It is not merely the result of Tara's individual failures but also a consequence of broader cultural systems that restrict female agency while demanding ideal motherhood. Through this portrayal, Doshi reveals the complexity of maternal relationships and questions idealized representations of motherhood.

2.6. Intergenerational Trauma

Intergenerational trauma refers to the transmission of psychological suffering from one generation to another. Trauma scholars explain that unresolved emotional pain does not disappear; instead, it resurfaces through behavior, memory, relationships, and emotional patterns. Children often inherit the emotional consequences of experiences they did not directly witness. Cathy Caruth defines trauma as an overwhelming experience that cannot be fully processed at the moment of occurrence and therefore returns repeatedly through memory and emotional disturbance. Trauma disrupts identity, language, and perception. In Girl in White Cotton, trauma appears not through dramatic events alone but through emotional neglect, instability, and fractured relationships. Antara's memories of childhood are filled with confusion, resentment, and insecurity, demonstrating the long-term effects of inherited

suffering. The relationship between Tara and Antara illustrates how trauma is transmitted across generations. Tara herself appears psychologically wounded by failed relationships, emotional dissatisfaction, and social expectations. Her instability affects her parenting and creates emotional insecurity for Antara. Instead of breaking the cycle of suffering, Tara unconsciously reproduces it in her daughter's life. Intergenerational trauma in the novel is reinforced through repetition. Antara constantly fears becoming like her mother, yet she unconsciously mirrors Tara's emotional coldness and dissatisfaction. This repetition reflects Freud's concept of repetition compulsion, which describes the unconscious tendency to recreate traumatic experiences. Antara's inability to escape the emotional influence of her mother demonstrates how inherited trauma shapes identity and behavior. The novel also portrays trauma through fragmented memory and unreliable narration. Antara's recollections are inconsistent and emotionally charged, suggesting that trauma has distorted her perception of reality. The instability of memory reflects the psychological fragmentation associated with traumatic experience. Scholars discussing the novel argue that trauma in the text is represented through emotional discontinuity, unstable relationships, and psychological alienation. Furthermore, Tara's Alzheimer's disease symbolizes the uneven burden of traumatic memory. While Tara gradually forgets the painful past, Antara remains trapped within it. The mother loses memory, but the daughter continues to carry emotional pain. This contrast emphasizes the persistence of inherited trauma across generations.

2.7. Jung's Theory of Individualization

The concept of individualization was developed by Carl Jung to describe the psychological process through which individuals develop an integrated and autonomous identity. According to Jung, individualization requires separation from parental influence and confrontation with unconscious conflicts. A person achieves psychological maturity only by recognizing and integrating hidden aspects of the self. In *Girl in White Cotton (2019)* , Antara fails to achieve successful individualization because her identity remains emotionally entangled with her mother. Although she attempts to reject Tara and distance herself from her past, her thoughts and emotions continue to revolve around maternal resentment. Her adult life becomes defined by reactions against her mother rather than by self-discovery or autonomy. Jung argues that unresolved unconscious material inherited from parents can obstruct psychological development. Antara's inherited trauma prevents her from establishing a stable sense of self. Even after marriage and social mobility, she remains emotionally dissatisfied and psychologically dependent on memories of maternal neglect. Her inability to separate emotionally from Tara demonstrates the failure of individualization. The novel suggests that identity formation is deeply affected by childhood emotional experiences. Antara's emotional insecurity prevents her from developing healthy relationships and self-confidence. She becomes trapped between hatred and attachment, unable to completely reject or forgive her mother. Her identity remains fragmented because unresolved trauma dominates her consciousness. The failure of individualization also reflects broader social pressures placed

upon women. Patriarchal cultures often define women relationally as daughters, wives, or mothers rather than as autonomous individuals. Antara's inability to establish a self beyond maternal trauma reveals how female identity is shaped by emotional dependency and inherited suffering.

2.8. Nancy Chodorow and Mother Daughter Relational Theory

Nancy Chodorow argues in The Reproduction of Mothering that daughters experience identity formation differently from sons because daughters remain emotionally connected to the mother during psychological development. This prolonged attachment creates emotional dependency and ambivalence within mother-daughter relationships. According to Chodorow, daughters often struggle to establish individuality because they identify closely with their mothers. The emotional closeness between mother and daughter can therefore become psychologically suffocating. In *Girl in White Cotton (2019),* Antara's emotional attachment to Tara persists despite resentment and hostility. She constantly defines herself through comparison with her mother, demonstrating incomplete psychological separation. Chodorow's theory explains why Antara cannot fully escape Tara's influence. Even in adulthood, Antara remains psychologically dependent on maternal approval, recognition, and memory. Her identity is shaped not through autonomy but through emotional conflict. The relationship between mother and daughter becomes both intimate and destructive. The novel also reflects Chodorow's argument that motherhood itself is socially reproduced through emotional patterns inherited across generations. Tara's own dissatisfaction and emotional instability influence her maternal behavior, which in turn affects Antara's psychological development. Trauma therefore becomes cyclical and reproductive.

2.9. Julia Kristeva and the Theory of Abjection

Julia Kristeva introduces the concept of abjection to explain the psychological tension involved in separating from the maternal figure. According to Kristeva, identity formation requires rejection of the maternal body, yet this separation also creates fear, fascination, and emotional instability. In *Girl in White Cotton (2019),* Antara experiences Tara as both repulsive and emotionally unavoidable. She despises her mother's instability, selfishness, and emotional manipulation, yet she remains psychologically attached to her. Tara becomes an intrusive presence within Antara's consciousness. This emotional contradiction reflects Kristeva's concept of abjection. Antara's hatred toward Tara conceals a deeper emotional dependency. She cannot fully separate herself from her mother because Tara continues to shape her identity, emotions, and memories. The maternal figure therefore becomes both threatening and necessary. Kristeva's theory helps explain the emotional discomfort and psychological fragmentation present in the novel. Antara's identity remains unstable because separation from the maternal figure is incomplete. Her emotional life is dominated by resentment, guilt, and unresolved attachment.

2.10. Feminist Trauma Theory

Feminist trauma theory examines how women experience trauma within domestic, emotional, and patriarchal contexts. Unlike public forms of trauma such as war or political violence, female trauma often occurs within intimate relationships and family structures. Emotional neglect, psychological manipulation, and maternal absence can therefore become significant sources of trauma. In *Girl in White Cotton (2019)* trauma is deeply connected to gender expectations and patriarchal pressures. Tara struggles against traditional expectations of womanhood and motherhood, but her resistance does not lead to liberation. Instead, her emotional instability affects her daughter and reproduces suffering within the family. Feminist trauma theorists argue that women's emotional pain is frequently silenced because society expects mothers to remain nurturing regardless of personal suffering. Tara's emotional failures challenge these cultural expectations and reveal the hidden complexities of motherhood. The novel exposes the psychological consequences of idealizing maternal sacrifice while ignoring women's emotional needs. The novel further demonstrates how daughters inherit emotional burdens through caregiving roles. Antara becomes responsible for Tara during her illness despite years of neglect and resentment. This reflects patriarchal expectations that women should provide emotional care even within damaging relationships.

2.11. Memory and Narrative Fragmentation

Memory plays a central role in the representation of trauma within the novel. Trauma theorists argue that traumatic experiences disrupt linear memory and create fragmented recollections. Antara's narration is unstable, contradictory, and emotionally charged, suggesting that memory itself has become traumatic. The fragmented structure of the novel reflects Antara's psychological condition. Events are not narrated chronologically but through disconnected memories and emotional associations. This narrative style mirrors the instability of traumatic consciousness. Readers experience uncertainty and emotional discomfort similar to Antara's own fragmented perception. Avni Doshi explains that memory is often reconstructed and reshaped through personal interpretation. This idea is significant because Antara's memories cannot be accepted as completely objective. Her resentment toward Tara influences the way she interprets the past. The novel therefore questions the reliability of memory and highlights the subjective nature of trauma.

This theoretical framework demonstrates that *Girl in White Cotton (2019)* can be effectively analyzed through the interconnected concepts of the mother wound, intergenerational trauma, and the failure of individualization. The theories of Jung, Chodorow, Kristeva, Freud, and feminist trauma scholars provide important insight into the emotional complexities of the mother-daughter relationship in the novel. The framework reveals that Antara's psychological instability results not only from personal experiences but also from inherited emotional suffering transmitted through maternal relationships. Tara's unresolved trauma becomes embedded within Antara's identity, preventing her from achieving emotional independence and self hood. The novel ultimately portrays motherhood as a site of both intimacy and violence, challenging idealized cultural assumptions about maternal love.

Through fragmented memory, emotional conflict, and psychological repetition, Doshi illustrates how trauma passes silently between generations and shapes female identity. The failure of individualization in the novel therefore reflects the destructive power of inherited emotional wounds and the difficulty of escaping maternal trauma within patriarchal social structures.

3. Analysis

Girl in White Cotton (2019), published internationally as Burnt Sugar, is a psychologically complex narrative that explores the destructive intimacy between a mother and daughter trapped within cycles of resentment, memory, abandonment, and emotional dependency. Set primarily in Pune, the novel revolves around Antara and her mother Tara, whose relationship becomes the emotional and philosophical center of the text. The novel opens with the startling confession: "I would be lying if I said my mother's misery has never given me pleasure," immediately establishing a narrative world structured around bitterness rather than affection. The novel resists sentimental portrayals of motherhood and instead examines what contemporary psychology and feminist criticism often describe as the "mother wound"the inherited emotional trauma passed from mothers to daughters across generations. In Doshi's narrative, motherhood is not nurturing but destabilizing; it becomes a site of psychological violence, emotional neglect, and fractured identity formation. Antara's inability to detach from Tara psychologically demonstrates a profound failure of individualization, the developmental process through which a child establishes an autonomous self distinct from parental influence. Through nonlinear memory, bodily imagery, emotional cruelty, and fragmented narration, Doshi portrays intergenerational trauma as something transmitted not only through actions but through silence, memory, repetition, and emotional inheritance. Antara's adulthood becomes haunted by the unresolved injuries of childhood, and instead of escaping her mother's influence, she gradually reproduces Tara's emotional patterns in her own marriage and motherhood. The novel therefore becomes an exploration of cyclical trauma: daughters become mirrors of the mothers they resist. This essay analyzes Girl in White Cotton through the interconnected frameworks of the mother wound, intergenerational trauma, and the failure of individualization. It argues that Doshi presents motherhood as both a psychic inheritance and a prison, where memory prevents healing and identity remains perpetually contaminated by maternal damage.

3.1. The Concept of the Mother Wound

The "mother wound" refers to the emotional pain and psychological damage transmitted from mother to daughter through neglect, criticism, abandonment, emotional unavailability, or unresolved maternal trauma. Unlike overt violence, the mother wound often operates subtly through absence, inconsistency, emotional manipulation, or conditional affection. In patriarchal societies, daughters frequently internalize maternal suffering because mothers themselves become carriers of cultural repression and unfulfilled desires. In *Girl in White Cotton (2019),* Tara embodies this wounded maternal figure. She is impulsive, self-

destructive, narcissistic, and emotionally unstable. She abandons conventional domestic life to follow a spiritual guru, dragging young Antara into unstable environments marked by poverty, neglect, and insecurity. Tara rejects social expectations of motherhood, yet she also fails to provide emotional grounding for her daughter. Antara consequently grows up deprived of safety, affection, and consistency. The novel repeatedly demonstrates that Antara's deepest psychological injuries emerge not from singular traumatic events but from continuous emotional unpredictability. Tara oscillates between dependence and rejection, intimacy and hostility. This inconsistency creates in Antara an unstable sense of self. She cannot trust love because maternal love itself was unreliable. Critics and reviewers have emphasized how the novel dismantles idealized assumptions about motherhood. Doshi portrays motherhood not as instinctively nurturing but as psychologically burdensome and morally ambiguous. Tara's failures as a mother are neither excused nor simplistically condemned. Instead, the narrative suggests that Tara herself is a damaged subject shaped by patriarchal limitations, emotional deprivation, and unfulfilled longing. The mother wound therefore functions bidirectionally. Tara wounds Antara, but Tara herself is also wounded by social structures and emotional dissatisfaction. Trauma in the novel becomes hereditary: pain moves from one female body to another.

3.2. Intergenerational Trauma and Emotional Inheritance

Intergenerational trauma refers to the transmission of psychological suffering across generations. Trauma survivors often unconsciously reproduce their pain through parenting styles, emotional behaviors, and relational dynamics. In Doshi's novel, trauma is inherited through memory, emotional modeling, and repetition. Antara's narrative voice reveals how deeply she has internalized maternal damage. Although she despises Tara, she remains psychologically fused with her. Her resentment dominates her emotional life, and even adulthood does not free her from maternal influence. Antara's identity forms reactively: she defines herself against Tara, yet paradoxically becomes increasingly similar to her. The novel portrays trauma not as a completed past event but as a persistent psychological presence. Antara's childhood memories continuously interrupt the present narrative, indicating that trauma resists chronological closure. Her memories emerge fragmented, obsessive, and contradictory, mirroring the instability of traumatic recollection itself. Doshi's exploration of memory aligns with contemporary trauma theory, particularly the idea that traumatic memory is nonlinear and repetitive. The novel repeatedly questions whether memory is reliable or constructed. Antara remembers events selectively, sometimes exaggerating or revising them. Tara's dementia complicates this further because the mother begins losing memories precisely when Antara becomes desperate to preserve and validate them. This creates a devastating psychological paradox: Antara's suffering depends upon memories that Tara can no longer confirm. The daughter is left alone with her trauma, unable to achieve acknowledgment or reconciliation. Tara's deteriorating memory thus symbolizes the collapse of shared history. The novel suggests that intergenerational trauma survives because it is rarely articulated openly.

Neither Tara nor Antara possesses the emotional vocabulary necessary for healing. Communication between them is marked by sarcasm, hostility, accusation, and passive aggression. Silence becomes another form of inheritance. Moreover, Antara unconsciously reproduces maternal dysfunction within her own life. Her marriage lacks emotional intimacy, and she struggles to connect authentically with her child. The novel implies that unresolved trauma inevitably contaminates future relationships. Antara's fear of becoming Tara paradoxically ensures repetition.

3.3. Failure of Individualization

A central psychological theme in the novel is the failure of individualization. In developmental psychology, individualization refers to the process through which a child separates psychologically from parental identity and develops an autonomous self. Healthy individualization requires emotional security, stable attachment, and consistent caregiving. Antara never achieves such separation because Tara's emotional instability prevents the formation of secure identity boundaries. Instead of becoming autonomous, Antara remains psychologically entangled with her mother throughout adulthood. This entanglement manifests in several ways. First, Antara's emotional life remains organized around Tara. Even after marriage, motherhood, and professional development, her thoughts constantly return to her mother's behavior. Tara occupies excessive psychic space within Antara's consciousness. Hatred becomes a form of attachment. Second, Antara's identity lacks coherence. She struggles to understand her own desires independently from maternal influence. Her artistic practice, relationships, and bodily anxieties all reflect unresolved maternal conflict. The self becomes fragmented because the maternal relationship never stabilized. Third, Antara repeatedly imitates Tara despite conscious resistance. This repetition demonstrates how trauma disrupts individuation. The daughter cannot fully separate because the mother exists internally as a psychic structure. The symbolic similarity between the names "Tara" and "Antara" reinforces this failure of separation. Some readers and critics interpret Antara as "Un-Tara," suggesting that the daughter attempts to negate the mother while simultaneously remaining linguistically tied to her. The names signify mirrored identities rather than independent selves. The novel therefore challenges liberal ideas of autonomous individuality. Doshi suggests that identity is relational, inherited, and psychologically contaminated by familial history. Antara cannot simply "move on" because trauma has shaped the very structure of her subjectivity.

3.4. Motherhood as Ambivalence and Violence

One of the novel's most radical achievements is its refusal to romanticize motherhood. In many cultural traditions, motherhood is idealized as sacred, selfless, and naturally loving. Doshi dismantles this mythology by presenting motherhood as ambivalent, burdensome, and occasionally cruel. Tara resents maternal responsibility. She perceives Antara not solely as a daughter but as an obstacle to freedom. Her pursuit of spiritual and sexual autonomy repeatedly places Antara in danger. Yet Tara is not portrayed as a monstrous caricature. Instead, Doshi reveals how women constrained by patriarchy may redirect frustration toward their children.

Tara's rebellion against conventional femininity does not liberate her psychologically. Instead, she oscillates between dependency and defiance. Her inability to nurture Antara emerges partly from her unresolved dissatisfaction with her own life. Antara, meanwhile, inherits this ambivalence toward motherhood. She approaches her own child with emotional distance and anxiety. Rather than idealizing maternal love, she experiences motherhood as suffocating repetition. This cyclical pattern reveals how patriarchal structures perpetuate trauma through maternal lines. Women denied emotional fulfillment often become emotionally unavailable mothers, whose daughters then reproduce similar patterns. The novel therefore critiques not only individual mothers but also broader cultural expectations surrounding femininity and caregiving. Tara fails as a mother partly because society provides women with contradictory roles: self-sacrificing nurturer versus autonomous individual. Tara cannot reconcile these demands, and Antara inherits the resulting emotional fracture.

3.5. Memory, Dementia, and the Politics of Forgetting

Memory functions as one of the novel's central metaphors. Tara's dementia destabilizes the relationship between truth and recollection, forcing Antara to confront the fragility of personal history. Doshi has described memory as "co-authored," emphasizing how individuals collectively construct and reshape shared narratives. In the novel, memory becomes contested territory. Antara depends on memory to validate her suffering, while Tara's cognitive decline erases the very past Antara seeks to preserve. This creates intense psychological frustration. Antara cannot obtain apology, accountability, or emotional closure because Tara no longer fully remembers the injuries she inflicted. Dementia therefore functions symbolically as both escape and punishment. For Tara, forgetting becomes liberation from guilt. For Antara, remembering becomes imprisonment. The novel repeatedly questions whether memory itself is trustworthy. Antara's narration contains contradictions, exaggerations, and emotional distortions. Readers are never entirely certain whether events occurred exactly as described. This ambiguity reflects trauma's impact on perception. At the same time, memory in the novel is deeply embodied. Antara experiences psychological distress physically through anxiety, compulsive behaviors, eating disturbances, and bodily discomfort. Trauma is stored not only cognitively but somatically. The mother wound therefore exists both mentally and physically. Antara carries her mother inside her body through inherited fear, rage, and emotional instability.

3.6. Toxic Dependency and Emotional Cannibalism

The relationship between Tara and Antara exceeds ordinary familial conflict and approaches emotional cannibalism. They consume each other psychologically, deriving identity through mutual suffering. Antara repeatedly expresses pleasure at Tara's decline, revealing the sadistic dimensions of unresolved trauma. Yet this cruelty coexists with dependence. Antara cannot detach emotionally because her identity has formed through maternal injury. Their relationship operates through inversion rather than healing. Caregiving becomes revenge. As Tara becomes physically vulnerable due to dementia, Antara gains

temporary psychological power. However, this reversal does not produce liberation because domination still binds them together. The novel portrays caregiving as emotionally corrosive when rooted in unresolved resentment. Antara's role as caretaker forces her into intimate proximity with the source of her trauma. Instead of reconciliation, caregiving intensifies buried anger. This dynamic illustrates how unresolved intergenerational trauma transforms love into obligation, guilt, and hostility. Emotional intimacy becomes inseparable from violence.

3.7. Feminist Dimensions of the Nove

Doshi's novel participates in feminist literary traditions that challenge idealized representations of motherhood and female sacrifice. The text rejects patriarchal expectations that women must embody unconditional nurturing. Tara's refusal of domestic conformity initially appears rebellious. She abandons marriage, pursues desire, and rejects bourgeois respectability. However, the novel complicates simplistic feminist celebration of rebellion because Tara's freedom comes at Antara's emotional expense. Similarly, Antara's apparent social success does not produce liberation. Marriage, motherhood, and artistic identity fail to resolve her psychological fragmentation. The novel therefore suggests that female suffering cannot be explained solely through patriarchal oppression or individual moral failure. Trauma emerges through the interaction between social structures and intimate relationships. Importantly, Doshi also explores how women internalize patriarchal violence and reproduce it within maternal relationships. Tara's emotional cruelty partly reflects her own dissatisfaction and social marginalization. Instead of healing, pain circulates between generations of women. This feminist perspective destabilizes binary distinctions between victim and perpetrator. Tara is both wounded and wounding. Antara is both victimized child and emotionally damaged mother.

3.8. Narrative Style and Psychological Fragmentation

The novel's fragmented narrative structure mirrors the psychological disintegration experienced by its characters. Time shifts unpredictably between past and present, creating an atmosphere of instability and emotional claustrophobia. Antara narrates retrospectively, but her narration lacks objectivity. Memories emerge associatively rather than chronologically, reflecting traumatic consciousness. The fragmented structure emphasizes how trauma disrupts temporal continuity. Doshi's prose style is sparse yet emotionally intense. The language often feels cold, detached, and observational, mirroring Antara's emotional numbness. Moments of tenderness remain rare and unstable. This stylistic minimalism intensifies the novel's psychological realism. Rather than dramatizing trauma through overt emotional excess, Doshi presents suffering through everyday hostility, bodily discomfort, and emotional silence. The narrative's ambiguity also prevents moral simplification. Readers cannot fully trust Antara's perspective, yet Tara's failures remain undeniable. This uncertainty reflects the complexity of familial memory, where truth becomes emotionally negotiated rather than objectively fixed.

3.9. Repetition and the Inescapability of Trauma

One of the novel's bleakest insights is that trauma tends to repeat itself across generations unless consciously confronted and processed. Antara's greatest fear is becoming like Tara, yet she increasingly reproduces maternal behaviors.This repetition aligns with psychoanalytic theories of repetition compulsion, where individuals unconsciously recreate traumatic patterns in attempts to master unresolved pain. Antara reenacts emotional distance, resentment, and relational instability because these dynamics shaped her earliest experiences of attachment. The novel offers little optimism regarding escape from inherited trauma. Therapy, marriage, motherhood, and professional success all fail to heal Antara's psychological wounds fully. However, the novel's refusal of easy redemption is precisely what makes it powerful. Doshi rejects comforting narratives of reconciliation and instead presents trauma as enduring, ambiguous, and structurally embedded within identity itself.

Girl in White Cotton (2019) is a profound and unsettling exploration of the mother wound, intergenerational trauma, and the failure of individualization. Through the toxic yet intimate relationship between Tara and Antara, Avni Doshi dismantles sentimental myths surrounding motherhood and exposes the psychological violence embedded within familial relationships. The novel demonstrates how trauma operates across generations through memory, emotional inheritance, silence, and repetition. Antara's inability to separate psychologically from Tara reveals the devastating consequences of failed individuation. Rather than achieving autonomy, she becomes trapped within inherited emotional structures that shape her relationships, identity, and motherhood. Doshi's treatment of memory further intensifies this tragedy. Tara's dementia destabilizes historical truth and prevents reconciliation, leaving Antara imprisoned within unresolved suffering. Forgetting becomes both mercy and violence. Ultimately, the novel suggests that maternal relationships are never purely personal; they are shaped by broader social expectations, patriarchal pressures, and inherited emotional histories. Tara and Antara are not simply individuals but embodiments of generational pain transmitted through female lineage. By portraying motherhood as ambivalent, traumatic, and psychologically complex, Doshi creates a narrative that challenges cultural idealizations of maternal love. The novel refuses redemption, closure, or emotional purity. Instead, it offers a disturbing meditation on how deeply the mother lives inside the daughter not as comfort, but as wound.

4. Conclusion

Girl in White Cotton (2019) by Avni Doshi emerges as a profound exploration of the "mother wound," exposing how intergenerational trauma shapes identity, memory, emotional inheritance, and the fractured process of female selfhood. Through the turbulent relationship between Tara and Antara, Doshi dismantles idealized notions of motherhood and instead presents maternal intimacy as a site of violence, dependency, resentment, and psychological entanglement. The novel refuses sentimental reconciliation; instead, it reveals how unresolved trauma reproduces itself across generations, making individualization nearly impossible for women trapped within inherited emotional structures. The concept of the mother wound in the

novel extends beyond personal conflict. It becomes a psychological and cultural condition produced through neglect, abandonment, emotional manipulation, and inherited suffering. Tara, who herself exists as a wounded subject resisting patriarchal domesticity, unconsciously transmits her trauma to Antara. Rather than functioning as a nurturing maternal figure, Tara becomes emotionally unstable, self-absorbed, and destructive.

Yet Doshi complicates any simplistic condemnation of motherhood by portraying Tara as both victim and perpetrator. Her rebellion against conventional femininity and motherhood is born from her own dissatisfaction with social expectations and emotional deprivation. Consequently, her inability to mother Antara with affection or stability reflects the continuation of unresolved psychic damage rather than individual cruelty alone. Antara's childhood becomes the primary site where this intergenerational trauma manifests. Her experiences of neglect, displacement, instability, and emotional insecurity create a fragmented self incapable of emotional autonomy. Throughout the novel, Antara attempts to distinguish herself from Tara, but every attempt at separation only reinforces their psychological interconnectedness. Even her name symbolically encodes this conflict: "Antara" as "Un-Tara," suggesting an identity formed entirely through opposition to the mother. However, Doshi demonstrates that identity constructed through resistance alone cannot achieve genuine selfhood. Antara remains psychologically tethered to Tara because trauma shapes not only memory but also desire, fear, perception, and emotional response.

The novel's treatment of memory further intensifies this failure of individualization. Memory in the narrative is unstable, fragmented, and deeply subjective. Tara's deteriorating memory due to illness destabilizes Antara's understanding of the past, forcing her to confront the fragility of personal truth. Doshi suggests that memory is never entirely individual; it is co-authored through relationships, power structures, and emotional dependency. As Tara begins to forget, Antara becomes obsessed with preserving and interpreting their shared history. Yet this process does not liberate her. Instead, it traps her further within the emotional architecture of trauma. The daughter cannot construct an autonomous narrative because her identity remains inseparable from the mother's damaged psyche. Doshi thereby illustrates how intergenerational trauma disrupts the formation of a stable, independent self. The failure of individualization in the novel can also be understood through psychological and feminist frameworks. Traditionally, individualization involves the formation of an independent identity distinct from parental influence.

However, Antara's development remains incomplete because her subjectivity is built upon emotional wounds inherited from Tara. She internalizes her mother's anxieties, instability, and dissatisfaction, reproducing them within her own relationships and self-perception. Even as an adult, Antara demonstrates emotional detachment, insecurity, resentment, and self-destructive tendencies. Her marriage, motherhood, and artistic identity fail to provide emotional liberation because the maternal wound continues to structure her consciousness. Doshi's portrayal of motherhood challenges dominant cultural narratives that

sanctify maternal sacrifice and unconditional love. Instead, the novel exposes motherhood as an institution burdened by patriarchal expectations, emotional labor, and impossible ideals. Tara's rejection of domestic norms initially appears liberating, yet her rebellion produces another form of emotional violence. The novel therefore avoids simplistic binaries of "good" and "bad" motherhood. Tara is neither monstrous nor heroic; she is profoundly human, shaped by unmet emotional needs and social alienation. This complexity allows Doshi to critique the cultural mythology surrounding motherhood while acknowledging the structural pressures imposed upon women. Importantly, the mother wound in the novel is not confined to biological inheritance.

It operates culturally and socially, reflecting broader systems of gendered trauma. Both Tara and Antara inhabit a society where women are expected to perform caregiving, emotional endurance, and self-sacrifice. Their suffering emerges partly from the impossibility of reconciling personal desire with socially prescribed femininity. Tara resists domestic conformity but fails to create an emotionally secure alternative. Antara, meanwhile, attempts conventional stability through marriage and motherhood but remains haunted by inherited emotional fragmentation. Thus, the novel reveals how patriarchal structures perpetuate cycles of female suffering across generations. The symbolic spaces within the novel also reinforce the themes of entrapment and failed individuation. The ashram, family homes, hospitals, and domestic interiors all function as psychologically charged environments where emotional boundaries collapse. The ashram initially promises spiritual liberation for Tara but ultimately becomes another site of exploitation and instability. Similarly, domestic spaces fail to offer safety or emotional grounding. Instead, these spaces become repositories of memory, resentment, and trauma. Antara's movement through these spaces reflects her inability to escape the psychological geography created by her mother. Physical movement never results in emotional separation because trauma travels internally. Doshi's narrative style powerfully mirrors the fractured emotional reality of the characters. The nonlinear structure, fragmented memories, and shifting emotional tones replicate the instability of traumatic recollection. Antara's narration is deeply subjective, often unreliable, emphasizing how trauma distorts perception and emotional interpretation.

This narrative fragmentation prevents readers from arriving at clear moral judgments, compelling them instead to inhabit the uncertainty and emotional confusion experienced by the protagonist. The language itself becomes intimate, sharp, and unsettling, capturing the corrosive intimacy between mother and daughter. Another significant dimension of the novel is the cyclical nature of trauma. Antara fears becoming Tara, yet she increasingly recognizes aspects of her mother within herself. Her anxieties surrounding motherhood suggest that trauma does not simply disappear through awareness or resistance. Instead, it reproduces itself through unconscious behavioral patterns and emotional inheritance. This cyclical repetition demonstrates the devastating persistence of the mother wound. Even when Antara consciously rejects Tara's behavior, she remains psychologically shaped by it. Doshi thereby questions

whether true liberation from inherited trauma is possible within deeply embedded familial and cultural systems. At the same time, the novel does not present trauma solely as victimhood. Trauma also becomes a mode of relational attachment. Tara and Antara remain bound together through resentment, guilt, dependency, and shared memory. Their relationship survives not because it is healthy but because trauma itself creates emotional intimacy. This disturbing closeness complicates conventional understandings of love and care.

Antara's caregiving for Tara during her illness is driven not purely by compassion but also by obligation, anger, fascination, and unresolved emotional need. Doshi portrays care as emotionally ambivalent, exposing the coexistence of cruelty and tenderness within familial relationships. Furthermore, the novel interrogates the relationship between body and trauma. Both Tara and Antara experience psychological suffering through bodily symptoms, illness, sexuality, and self-destruction. Tara's physical decline and memory loss externalize years of emotional instability, while Antara's anxieties manifest through compulsive behaviors and emotional numbness. The female body in the novel becomes a site where inherited pain is stored and reproduced. This embodiment of trauma reinforces the idea that intergenerational suffering is not abstract but physically lived and transmitted. The title itself, *Girl in White Cotton*, carries symbolic significance. White cotton evokes purity, mourning, asceticism, and emotional emptiness. It reflects both Tara's rejection of conventional domesticity and Antara's emotional desolation. The title encapsulates the tension between appearance and internal decay, innocence and damage, presence and absence. In international editions, the title Burnt Sugar similarly conveys bitterness beneath sweetness, symbolizing the toxic intimacy between mother and daughter.

Ultimately, Doshi's novel resists closure and redemption. There is no cathartic reconciliation between Tara and Antara, no definitive healing of the maternal wound, and no successful achievement of autonomous identity. Instead, the novel leaves readers with emotional ambiguity, emphasizing the enduring effects of inherited trauma. This refusal of resolution is crucial because it reflects the lived reality of psychological wounds that cannot easily be healed through forgiveness or understanding alone. The failure of individualization in the novel therefore becomes not merely a personal tragedy but a commentary on the persistence of intergenerational suffering within patriarchal and familial structures. In conclusion, *Girl in White Cotton (2019)* stands as a compelling literary examination of maternal trauma, fractured memory, and the impossibility of complete selfhood within inherited emotional systems. Through Tara and Antara's deeply unsettling relationship, Avni Doshi exposes how trauma travels across generations, shaping identity long after the original wound is inflicted. The novel demonstrates that the mother wound is not simply about maternal failure; it is about the emotional consequences of systemic gendered suffering, unresolved pain, and psychological inheritance. Antara's inability to individuate from Tara reveals the devastating power of trauma to blur emotional boundaries and imprison individuals within repetitive cycles of memory and resentment. By rejecting sentimental portrayals of motherhood and embracing

emotional complexity, Doshi creates a narrative that is unsettling, intimate, and profoundly truthful. The novel ultimately forces readers to confront difficult questions about love, care, identity, and the enduring scars left by inherited trauma.

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