TRACING CULTURAL TRAUMA: A STUDY OF SELECTED KASHMIRI FICTIONAL NARRATIVES

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Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Tracing Cultural Trauma: A Study of Selected Kashmiri Fictional Narratives** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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ABSTRACT

Title: Tracing Cultural Trauma: A Study of Selected Kashmiri Fictional Narratives

Cultural Trauma is a socially mediated process that occurs when a group of people endures horrific events affecting their group consciousness and identity. Cultural sociologists believe that events are not intrinsically traumatic, rather it is the representation of horrendous events by carrier groups that shapes the perception of audience and determines which events qualify as Cultural Trauma. This concept of Cultural Trauma was introduced and discussed in detail by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, and various other cultural sociologists in their collaboratively authored seminal book *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004). Using Jeffrey C. Alexander's theoretical lens which underscores the necessity of highlighting the terrifying injuries of the most defenseless segments of the world's population i.e. non-Western regions, this research examines the selected fictional narratives by Kashmiri writers, *The Half Mother* (2014) by Shahnaz Bashir and *Lost in Terror* (2016) by Nayeema Mahjoor. Through textual analysis, the study foregrounds how these fictional narratives grapple for meaning to demonstrate the permeating impact of Kashmir's incessant sufferings and contribute to its construction as Cultural Trauma. Moreover, tracing the trauma process in the context of the occupied Kashmir, this study shows how authors of the selected narratives, as cultural agents, craft traumatizing social reality of Kashmir into trauma claims, and determines if it qualifies to be constructed as a Cultural Trauma. Also, analysis of the selected narratives helps to investigate various possibilities and identify constraints embedded in the mediation of such cultural trauma narratives in different institutional arenas which are working under the direct or indirect influence of stratificational hierarchies in Kashmir. This study concludes that Cultural Trauma has not been fully established for Kashmiris because trauma claims are subdued by the oppressors. The illegitimate control of the Indian state machinery in Kashmir subjugates the victims, whitewashes the evils done by perpetrators, and confounds the world by deliberately keeping the real contours of Kashmir conflict hidden from the world at large. By problematizing the necessity of establishing Cultural Trauma for Kashmiris, this study illuminates a crucial social responsibility and political action to be taken by perpetrators of trauma and a wider audience which can only be materialized after successfully establishing Cultural Trauma of Kashmiris.

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DEDICATION

For Kashmir
For Justice
For Liberation

*"POOR KASHMIR. It lies in the Himalayan
ramparts where the borders of India, Pakistan and
China rub together. Reality mocks its beauty. There
is no escaping the permeating melancholy of a land
that lies under the gun. It is as if malevolent gods,
jealous of its loveliness, placed a curse on it."*
(Fishlock n.p.)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I Protest, Against the things you've done,
I Protest, For a mother who lost her son,
I Protest, I'll throw stones and never run,
I Protest, Until my freedom has come.
MC Kash, "I Protest" (2010)

The present research aims to analyze two Kashmiri fictional narratives, Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother* (2014) and Nayeema Mahjoor's *Lost in Terror* (2016) and traces the trauma process involved in the social construction of Cultural Trauma for Kashmiris. In this chapter, I have given a brief account of the past and current situation of the occupied Kashmir to provide a background knowledge of the war-ridden region under discussion. The chapter also discusses the significance of fictional narratives and relevance of J. C. Alexander's Cultural Trauma theory for the investigation of Kashmir's Cultural Trauma.

1.1 Background of the Study

The valley of Kashmir was once known for its extraordinary beauty but now it is mired in one of the biggest and most brutal military occupations in the world with more than half a million Indian soldiers deployed in the Indian Occupied Kashmir. A series of rigged and devised elections in the past have installed "puppet" regimes in Jammu and Kashmir that repeatedly tried to strangle people's desire for freedom and ignore every UN resolution for the settlement of the Kashmir dispute. Reinforced by the constant surveillance oriented inwardly and outwardly by Indian armed forces, the imposed governments have turned Kashmir into what Achille Mbembe termed "a late-modern colonial occupation" (Bhan, Duschinski and Zia 2) where the "eye acts as a weapon"

(Mbembe 81), and the state violence is blurred under the farce of democracy and rule of law. The issue of Kashmir has remained disputed since the division of the Indian subcontinent, but it was the political instability and massacre of protestors in the 1980s that provoked Kashmiris to launch a freedom struggle against the Indian government in 1989. During 1990s and 2000s, Kashmiris, being subjected to the Indian Armed forces, have seen an upsurge in oppression and violence committed by the agents of the Indian state, but they kept resisting and fighting for their freedom. In "Introduction" to *Resisting Occupation in Kashmir* (2018), Mona Bhan et al. mention that India deployed more than 700,000 military and paramilitary forces to subdue the resistance through constant surveillance, extrajudicial killings, curfews, torture, unjustifiable detentions, and illegitimate control (2). With a population of over 12.5 million, Jammu and Kashmir is "one of the densely militarized zones" as there is one soldier for every 17 Kashmiris (Bhan et al. 2). Uprisings and protests increased with the rise in the atrocities committed by the Indian armed forces against unarmed Kashmiris but their voices remained muffled by the so-called democratic Indian State. Even today, the young demonstrators periodically fill the streets of Kashmir, yet the Indian state is determined to strangle new generation's voice as it did in the past (Mishra 1).

India has always responded to Kashmir's political and social problems through rigged election, jailing of political leaders, militarization, violence, and repression. The rigged elections of 1987 in Kashmir were an overt denial of justice, and the political tensions culminated in the uprisings of late 1980s against Indian despotic rule and Kashmiris launched a freedom struggle for their right to self-determination. The Indian government responded to this insurgency with the deployment of more armed forces who unleashed a reign of terror in the valley. A state of emergency was declared in the 1990s, through the passage of AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Powers Act of 1958) which is modeled on the British Ordinance that was designed to curb the Indian Independence movement in 1942 (Duschinski 117). This special act was designed to justify lethal violence, paradoxically legitimizing the legal suspension of law to preserve the law and order. The AFSPA was introduced to control the "disturbed and dangerous condition" in the targeted Kashmir valley (Duschinski 117). Under this Act, Indian military and paramilitary forces exercised sweeping powers facilitating detentions, unlawful killings or

executions, and arbitrary arrests while ensuring impunity for perpetrators working for the Indian government (Zia *Politics* 13). Enabling such brutal violence in the valley, AFSPA transformed the supposed "dangerous and disturbed region" into "a theater of warfare" (Duschinski 118) and it continues to exist in the same condition to date. Duschinski argues that the Indian state maintains its lethal machinery in Jammu and Kashmir through a state-security apparatus, consisting of more than half a million troops, by manipulating the law-and-order situations.

Kashmir's special status under Article 370 of the Indian constitution was revoked on 5th August 2019. An Indian constitutional expert and scholar A. G. Noorani calls this decision, taken by the Modi government, "utterly and palpably unconstitutional" (Deshmane n.p). It stripped Kashmir of its constitutional limited autonomy and imposed direct rule from New Delhi, which was followed by a military lockdown by the Indian armed forces. Although international law stipulates that every individual has the right to live freely but, in the occupied Kashmir, all the universally acknowledged conventions and customs are violated by the Indian army. Nevertheless, the plight of Kashmiris, if compared to non-Western regions, is not given due importance internationally. People in power have always maintained the "strategic public silence" regarding the Kashmir crisis, as the perpetrator of this suffering, that is India, is an ally of the "liberal West" (Mishra 2). Jeffrey C. Alexander in his article, in a co-authored book *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004), states the same predicament that the majority of the marginalized non-Western regions of the world have experienced more traumatizing injuries but their pains are usually played down as compared to Western tragedies (24).

Indian armed forces are suppressing the voice of Kashmiris by all means; hence their sufferings are not being effectively projected to the world at large. Kashmiris working in mass media are unable to bring the objective truth in front of the people as they are constantly being harassed and threatened, and their freedom of expression is curbed by the Indian government. For instance, Masrat Zahra, a Kashmiri visual photojournalist whose work is focused on women and children in conflict, was charged under the anti-terrorism law for speaking against injustice and uploading photos that can supposedly disturb law and peace. It was one of the many attempts by the Indian state to curb freedom of

expression, and Zahra in an interview tells Time Magazine, "I personally feel they charged me to send a stern message to the whole journalist fraternity in Kashmir" (Khan and Perrigo n.p). In their website article "What Life Is Like Inside the World's Longest Lockdown" (2020), Khan and Perrigo write that India has shut off internet in Kashmir more than any democracy in the world. Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir faced almost 55 internet blackouts in 2019 alone which restrained their freedom of speech and expression (Khan and Perrigo n.p). Silencing the suffering collectivity and muzzling of the news media has resulted in making Kashmir even more invisible to the world.

In the year 2020, Palestinian, Rohingya, Uighur and Black Lives Matter activists came out to show sympathy for the sufferings of the people of the Indian occupied Kashmir. Ahead of first anniversary of the revocation of Kashmir's autonomy by the Indian government, activists from around the world expressed their solidarity with Kashmiris and called for global attention to plight of Kashmiris and their resistance. In a report published by Al-Jazeera, "Activists call for 'global spotlight' on plight of Kashmiris" (2020), Cornel West, an American political activist, social critic and Professor of Harvard University calls it a "vicious Indian occupation" (AlJazeera n.p.) and expresses solidarity with Kashmiris. A Palestinian writer and activist, Mariam Barghouti, addresses Kashmiris in a video message, "I know that the plight for self-determination is difficult and oppressors rely on making their violence invisible and that they rely on making us invisible but your voices are heard and your shouts and screams as difficult as they are to utter are heard" (AlJazeera n.p.).

In previous century, majority of writings on Kashmir were written from a hegemonic position which was far removed from the suffering centre and they kept neglecting the reality of oppression and violence in Kashmir. However, with the emergence of indigenous voices from Kashmir in the last few decades, we are witnessing fresh perspectives regarding the lived experiences of the conflict. Kashmiris are writing about their individual as well as collective experiences in an attempt to not only record the horrendous events but also convincingly narrate and represent the accompanying horror, grief, and anger. This offers a break from the previous monolithic projections of the

Kashmir conflict. Numerous Kashmiri and non-Kashmiri historians, writers and critics, like Alastair Lamb, Victoria Schofield, Willima W. Baker, Joseph Korbel, Basharat Peer, Mirza Waheed, Ather Zia, Shahnaz Bashir, Salman Rushdie, Nayeema Mahjoor, Suvir Kaul, Fahad Shah, Tariq Ali, Arundhati Roy, Pankaj Mishra, Shubh Mathur, Natasha Kaul and many others, are voicing their opinions about the reality of Kashmir in their historical, personal, political, fictional, critical, and anthological writings. Therefore, to comprehend the plight of Kashmiris, a study of the representations of their collective traumatizing experiences needs to be carried out. This may also lead a wider audience, outside the suffering collectivity, to develop a moral responsibility, to share the sufferings of each other and make repairs in such a way as to prevent traumatizing injuries from happening again in future. This understanding is also emphasized, although in another context, by Jeffrey C. Alexander, in his book *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004), where he says, "collective traumas have no geographical or cultural limitations" (27).

The field of trauma studies emerged during 1990s aiming at the construction of an "ethical response to the forms of human sufferings and their cultural and artistic representation" (Andermahr 1), in such a way as to share the suffering of marginalized and oppressed others. Cathy Caruth, in "Trauma and Experience: Introduction" (1995), argues that trauma narrations contribute to cross-cultural solidarity and bridge the gap between disparate traumatic experiences, as she goes to the extent of suggesting that "trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures" (11). Yet, although trauma theory has yielded diverse insights into correlation between psychic sufferings and cultural representations but postcolonial critics argue that it has failed to ensure cross-cultural ethical engagements, not successful in extending solidarity with oppressed non-Western others. Professor Dr. Stef Craps, Director of Cultural Memory Studies Initiative, in his book *Postcolonial Witnessing* (2013) also criticizes the Eurocentric bias of trauma theory, and encapsulates postcolonial concerns against trauma theory. Craps says that despite its claims to foster cross-cultural solidarity, trauma theory has largely failed in acknowledging non-Western sufferings, as "they marginalize or ignore traumatic experiences of non-Western or minority cultures" (2).

J. C Alexander also believes that traumas of Western societies have been discussed and narrated more than that of non-Western societies which, being the most defenseless and ignored segments of World population, has been subjected to the most atrocious traumatizing injuries. He, therefore, emphasizes the need to highlight non-Western tragedies and their effects on concerned societies as well, to give them recognition and due attention in the world community. Alexander, with a group of various Cultural sociologist, ventured to discuss and develop inclusive theories on social integration. Out of their discussions, emerged the notion of Cultural trauma, a group-based trauma, which was later crafted into a coherent Theory of Cultural Trauma published by Alexander in his collaboratively authored book *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004). This book is one of the foundational books in this field. His all-inclusive theory of Cultural Trauma can be fluidly extended to traumatizing occurrences in Kashmir, a marginalized, oppressed and subjugated region of the world. Since he believes that his theory can be applied to any society that has experienced traumatizing events, I adopt the framework given by Jeffrey C. Alexander and examine Cultural Trauma for Kashmiris by tracing the trauma process involved in trauma creation, and determine the ultimate success or failure in its social construction so far.

1.2 Selected Kashmiri Fictional Narratives for the Study

The selected texts under discussion in this study, *The Half Mother* (2014) and *Lost in Terror* (2016), are the contemporary fictional narratives that offer a nuanced approach to the sufferings of Kashmiris and their effects on their social and cultural life. Torture and victimization of children, men and women at the hands of the ruthless Indian army is a matter of routine in the Indian occupied Kashmir, and the selected narratives are an attempt, by their respective authors, to interpret and articulate Kashmir's traumatizing situation. Kashmiris are suffering from traumatizing events on both individual and collective levels, but their traumatizing pains go unobserved and unrecognized by the world at large. Contemporary Kashmiri authors have used the medium of writing to bring forth their untold and unheard stories of misery, loss, humility and helplessness, as they are narrating their individual and collective experiences of traumatizing reality of Kashmir in their writings. Different compelling Kashmiri narratives and memoirs like Nitasha Kaul's

Residue (2009), Mirza Waheed's *The Collaborator* (2011), Feroz Rather's *The Night of broken Glass* (2018), Mir Khalid's *Jaffna* Street (2017), Basharat Peer's *Curfewed Night* (2010), and numerous others, are now being acclaimed by critics and readers. Such writers and their writings have heralded the beginning of Kashmiri English literature and it is creating a niche for itself among South-Asian literature gradually through its positive reception among audience. These writings challenge the distorted truth of power structures in the contemporary world. The present study also highlights two of such Kashmiri narratives which bring forth the truthful depictions of horrifying events and issues like identity, justice, struggle, and oppression usually absent in mainstream narratives about Kashmir. The selected novels give an account of oppression, violence, pain, agony and human loss that arises out of the situation in which the Kashmiri society is fragmented and homeland is lost.

Since shared traumas are gradually realized through a collective process of cultural interpretation, this study significantly focuses on the trauma of Kashmiris at the level of collectivity while investigating how the selected indigenous writers interpret and articulate the traumatizing experiences of Kashmiris and their effects on their memories, group consciousness and ongoing routine life. Alexander states that when members of collectivity face a horrific event that leaves lasting effects on their group consciousness and memories, and irreversibly changes their identity, it results in Cultural Trauma (Alexander "Toward" 1). While investigating the social construction of Cultural Trauma for Western tragedies, Alexander foregrounds the relevance of highlighting the non-Western tragedies as well. As the trauma of Kashmiris is not largely established as a Cultural Trauma, this study also explores the different factors hindering the construction of Kashmir's Cultural Trauma and investigates why it is not broadcast to a wider audience so far.

The first selected novel, *The Half Mother*, is written by an indigenous Kashmiri writer Shahnaz Bashir in 2014. The novel is centered on a mother, Haleema, whose father is killed in front of her eyes by the Indian army. Later, her only son, Imran, is caught and taken away from her in the middle of the night, leaving her to survive and suffer alone in her home. This novel highlights the miseries of parents and their children under the direct suppression by Indian armed forces in the occupied Kashmir. Although the plot revolves

around the continuous quest of a mother for his disappeared son, there are many other instances that highlight the struggle of Kashmiris as well as the helplessness of people in sympathizing and assisting each other. The traumatizing events have badly influenced the bonds that attach people together and they are unable to help each other in their time of need.

The second selected novel, *Lost in Terror*, is written by another Kashmiri writer Nayeema Mahjoor in 2016. In this novel, Mahjoor presents the struggle of Kashmiri people, especially those working in the media. Mass media plays a vital role in the trauma process, that is representation of traumatizing events, and it can help in constructing Cultural Trauma for Kashmiris and evoking sympathy for a human plight in the world community. But journalists and media houses in the occupied Kashmir, as depicted in the novel, are controlled and muzzled by the Indian government, hence they are unable to adequately articulate the objective reality of the atrocities committed against Kashmiris. In this novel, the reader follows various characters who are suffering at the hands of the Indian armed forces after the insurgency erupted in Kashmir followed by never-ending chaos. Kashmir's collective trauma is narrated by Mahjoor to make tragic effects on society visible to readers. Furthermore, it largely showcases the reality that the Indian government is controlling the means of communication, curbing Kashmir's freedom of expression. Towards the end of the story, the protagonist of the novel, after struggling hard in the occupied Kashmir, finds a job in the United Kingdom and this parallels the hope that she may become the representative voice of Kashmir internationally which may get an opportunity to be heard by a larger audience.

The traumatizing events happening in Kashmir, as depicted in the selected narratives, qualify to be constructed as Cultural Trauma according to the definition given by Jeffrey C. Alexander but Kashmir's Cultural Trauma is not yet established and recognized largely by the world. The portrayal or narration of the sufferings of Kashmiris calls for focusing on the construction of their Cultural Trauma, so that their agonies may become visible to the rest of the world and some repairs are made in the society. Ron Eyerman emphasizes the importance of narration in the creation of Cultural Trauma as he states, "trauma emerges through narration" ("Cultural Trauma" 577). Alexander also

argues that events do not carry a self-evident meaning, rather they become meaningful and considered to be traumatic only after being interpreted and represented as traumatic. Hence, Cultural Trauma is a discursive process that involves interpretation or meaning-making, which is triggered as a response to a tear in the social fabric and when the traumatizing occurrences shake the foundation of an established collective identity, and repairs and re-narration is required to reconstruct their identity. This discursive process of meaning-making not only gives meaning to traumatizing occurrences but also articulates them to an audience.

Alexander asserts when the members of a collectivity feel that their identity is being threatened by some events, social agents as carrier groups decide to represent their social pain as trauma claims, through a trauma process, which helps in the construction of their Cultural Trauma ("Toward" 10). Alexander emphasizes that the process of claim-making determines the formation of Cultural Trauma. So, it is through such a trauma process that mediator groups, within a collective, define a traumatizing situation and distinguish the identity of victims and perpetrators, as to represent and establish a Cultural Trauma by the articulation of their trauma claims through different institutional arenas such as mass media, legal arenas, aesthetic, state bureaucracy etc. to a wider audience. A Cultural Trauma so represented, articulated and established not only makes a large audience recognize and extend solidarity with the suffering group, but also attempts to repair collective identity and prevent such sufferings in the future. Hence this process of trauma creation can be considered, at the same time, acting out as well as a working-through. This theory gives a framework of analysis to map the discursive process involved in the meaning-making of a traumatizing event. Using this theory of Cultural Trauma, as explained in Theoretical Framework, the present study attempts to make sense of the traumatizing situations happening in the Indian occupied Kashmir, by foregrounding how the selected texts interpret and demonstrate the permeating impact of Indian occupation on unarmed Kashmiris. Moreover, by tracing the trauma process of the social construction of Cultural Trauma for Kashmiris, I attempt to investigate various constraints that carrier groups confront in the occupied Kashmir during the articulation of their trauma claims.

1.3 Thesis Statement

The argument of my research project may concisely be stated as this thesis statement:

Some contemporary Kashmiri fictional narratives selected for this study seem to be calling for a need to trace an emergent aspect of Cultural Trauma in the context of a marginalized non-Western region of Kashmir.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To investigate how the selected indigenous Kashmiri writers have addressed the traumatizing social reality of the occupied Kashmir in their fictional narratives selected for the study.
2. To examine how the selected texts build a compelling framework for the social construction of Kashmir's Cultural Trauma.
3. To analyze the mediation of such trauma narratives as selected texts and their potential role in the construction of Cultural Trauma for Kashmir.

1.5 Research Questions

1. How do Shahnaz Bashir and Nayeema Mahjoor symbolically represent Kashmir's social reality inducing Cultural Trauma in their respective narratives selected for this study?
2. How do the selected texts for this study construct a compelling framework for Cultural Trauma?
3. In what ways do selected texts emphasize and contribute to the social construction and global recognition of the Cultural Trauma of Kashmiris?

1.6 Delimitation of the Study

The major focus of this study is to trace the social construction of Cultural Trauma in the context of the occupied Kashmir using the theoretical lens given by Jeffrey C. Alexander in his co-authored book *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004). Delimited to two selected novels written by Kashmiri writers, *The Half Mother* (2014), and *Lost in Terror* (2016), this study focuses on tracing trauma process in the context of

Kashmir, to investigate if Cultural Trauma for Kashmiris, who are subjected to horrendous events since late 1980s, has been established or not. Both the selected texts symbolically represent traumatizing occurrences in the occupied Kashmir and its collective effects on the victimized group, which are significant for the trauma process explored in this study for determining construction of Cultural Trauma for Kashmiris.

1.7 Significance and Rationale of the Study

Research, according to Catherine Belsey, uncovers something new and it involves "assembling ideas" in such a way that has never been brought together before. However, contribution does not necessarily have to shift the paradigm but can also be quite small like a piece of the jigsaw (Belsey 163). Kashmir issue has been addressed and discussed from different perspectives in numerous critical, political, fictional, anthological and scholarly works. My dissertation pivots around tracing the trauma process involved in the social construction of Cultural Trauma, as theorized by J. C. Alexander, by examining symbolic representations of Kashmir's traumatizing social pains in the selected texts. It investigates how the aggravated traumatizing social reality of Kashmir, especially after eruption of the armed struggle in 1980s, is perceived, interpreted and represented as 'trauma claims' by social agents, and to what an extent these trauma claims are effectively disseminated to a wider audience. It also investigates whether various institutional arenas and stratificational hierarchies facilitate or hinder the trauma process in the Indian Occupied Kashmir.

The theory of Cultural Trauma was put forth by Jeffrey C. Alexander in 2003 and he explained this idea in his different books and articles. Various other sociologists like Ron Eyerman, Neil J. Smelser, Bernhard Giesen and Piotr Sztompka also contributed in defining the process of Cultural Trauma. However, Alexander believes that the Cultural Traumas are significantly constructed for the tragic experiences of Western nations but a limited researches have been done to highlight the agony and trauma of non-western regions. So, using Alexander's theory, this explorative study highlights traumatizing pains experienced by a non-Western region, a largely neglected area of the world-community, that is the occupied land of Kashmir.

Kashmiri fictional narratives have not been given due importance and Kashmiri literature has been generally reduced to mere footnotes to the larger body of South Asian English Literature. However, the present study is of significance in highlighting the necessity to understand the role of emerging Kashmir fiction and to disseminate the voice of Kashmiris to a larger audience. This may help in establishing a Cultural Trauma for their collective traumatizing experiences which can eventually help the audience in developing a moral responsibility of acknowledging and sharing one of the greatest human sufferings which is an unchanging fate of almost every inhabitant in the Indian occupied Kashmir since 1947 partition.

1.8 Chapter Division

The first chapter of the dissertation introduces the study as it presents the background and rationale for the study. The ongoing situation in the occupied Kashmir and its impact on Individual and collective life of Kashmiris is outlined in the chapter which gives a context for the research. Moreover, the theory of Cultural Trauma and its relevance for the non-Western regions is briefly discussed to situate the theoretical framework utilized for the present study. This chapter also provides thesis statement, objectives, conceptual framework, significance, and delimitation of the present research.

The second chapter, titled Literature Review, provides an overview of some of the relevant literature produced about the Kashmir dispute and the struggle of oppressed Kashmiris. The researcher also reviews critical inputs in the field of Cultural Trauma and the selected fictional narratives for the study which helps in highlighting the significance and scope of the present study.

The third chapter deals with theoretical framework and research methodology. This chapter explains, in detail, the selected theoretical lens of Jeffrey C. Alexander that is used to trace the social construction of Cultural Trauma in the context of Kashmir.

The fourth and fifth chapters of the dissertation provide main discussion which pivots around the argument of the study. The fourth chapter basically analyzes the representation of Kashmir's traumatizing reality in the selected Kashmiri fictional narratives and determines if the represented social reality qualifies to be considered a

Cultural Trauma as defined by Jeffrey C. Alexander. This part of the study discusses both novels in detail to examine how the selected writers have articulated Kashmir's trauma at the level of collectivity. Utilizing Alexander's framework for the social process of Cultural Trauma, the researcher traces the social construction of Kashmir's Cultural Trauma in the selected narratives. Moreover, the fifth chapter substantially analyzes the dissemination of Kashmiri trauma narratives in different institutional arenas which may determine the ultimate success or failure of the trauma process. These chapters follow the framework outlined in Research Methodology in order to achieve research objectives and find answers to the research questions posed by the present study.

The concluding chapters provides conclusion and recommendations. Here the study highlights the findings of detailed analysis to see if the research questions have been adequately answered. Also, in the light of the concluding discussion, some recommendations are given for prospective researchers in this field based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the relevant literature in three parts, to situate the present study in the scholarly work already available in the area of the research. In the first part, I look over few of numerous books and articles written on the Kashmir conflict and its effects on the society and people of Kashmir to comprehend Kashmir's traumatizing reality and see how it is interpreted and represented by both Kashmiri and non-Kashmiri writers, critics and scholars. In the second part, the researches done in the field of Cultural Trauma, from Erikson's work on collective trauma in 1970s to the work of Alexander et al. in 2000s, are reviewed in order to develop an understanding of this theoretical concept and see the practical applicability of the chosen theoretical framework. Besides, it provides a brief account of Individual psychological trauma and collective trauma which may make the difference between these kinds of traumas clear for readers. In the third part, the reviews given and researches done on the selected primary texts are studied and analyzed for finding the gaps left to be filled. Although the review is not much extensive and delimited to the selective contemporary scholarship, it will significantly locate the gaps in the literature available in the field relevant to my research and establish the validity of my investigation.

2.1 Representation of Kashmir

After the partition of British India into two nation-states of India and Pakistan in August 1947, rulers of princely states had to decide whether they want to accede to Pakistan or India. The ruler of Muslim-majority Kashmir was a Hindu, Maharaja Hari Singh, who kept delaying the decision and consequently Kashmir has to exist as a disputable territory and a bone of contention between India and Pakistan till date. United Nations passed a number of resolutions regarding this situation and Kashmir dispute was brought before Security Council but it could not "allow direct compulsory actions" (Korbel 286). Josef Korbel was a Czech-American diplomat who served as his country's representative in

United Nation's commission for India and Pakistan. In his article, "The Kashmir Dispute and the United Nations" (1949), Korbel traces the history of UN Commission's various attempts of having negotiations between Pakistan and India regarding Kashmir dispute. He states that commission realized through its frequent failed resolutions that Kashmir dispute "was packed with dynamite which not only endangered the lives of the peace-loving Kashmiris but poisoned deeply the relations between the two young dominions of India and Pakistan" (Korbel 278-279). His observation and statement of facts show that the failure in having a neutral mediator between India and Pakistan and India's prejudiced intervention in delaying the plebiscite has caused irreparable harms to Kashmiris which are still making them endure severe repercussions even today.

The valley of Kashmir was known for its exceptional beauty but now it hosts one of the bloodiest and most vague military occupations in the world. In "Introduction" to a collection of essays *Kashmir:* The *Case for Freedom* (2011), Pankaj Mishra states that there has been and still is an everyday regime of arrests, raids and curfews enforced by more than 700,000 Indian soldiers which has led to more than eighty thousand innocent deaths in Kashmir (10). Pankaj Mishra is an Indian writer and journalist whose essays have been appeared in many publications. His work is centered on politics and literature. He states that the killing fields of Kashmir resemble those of Palestine and Tibet and majority of nations appear evasive about this issue. The demonstrators who raise their voice against the Indian oppression are silenced with force and their plight is deliberately ignored by the world and it barely gets "registered in Indian liberal conscience" (Mishra 10). Despite United Nation's frequent attempts to resolve the issue, the powerful nations in the world maintain "strategic public silence" on this issue because of India's emerging economy (Mishra 10).

The Parchment of Kashmir (2012) is an important work to be reviewed as it contains various interdisciplinary essays that address political, social, cultural and economic life of Kashmir. Edited by Nayla Ali Khan, this collection of essays projects the "voices, understanding and interpretations" of subaltern scholars, academics based in Jammu and Kashmir, who articulate the indigenous Kashmiri point of view. Dr. Nayla Ali Khan is an Oklahoma-based scholar and faculty member at Rose State College who writes extensively about history, politics and culture of Jammu and Kashmir and her works

critically analyze the sociopolitical discourse in South Asia especially those articulated by the people at margins but they fail to adequately project it to a larger audience. Discourse plays an important role in identity construction in any society. Dominant political powers use "discourse" (Khan *Parchment* 4) to mold the cultural and ethnic identities of the dominated which results in the fortification of domination and creation of gulf between "center" and "margin" (4). In order to safeguard the interests of the dominant class in power, the voices coming from the fringes of society is silenced just like the case with suppressed Kashmiris. Dr. Khan attempts to make the "lost voices of the margin audible" (5) by presenting a multiplicity of perspectives from well-known and well-established Kashmiri academics. Essays included in this volume debate upon many aspects of Kashmir that are also voiced in the selected primary texts and are major concerns in this research, as it traces the representation of the plight of Kashmiris in literature.

The effective censorship in the Indian media makes it sure not to taint the garish image of India as a vibrant democracy. Majority of the journalists, intellectuals and politicians tend to mislead the world by not showing the actual devastating reality of Kashmir and present a distorted truth to the world. Kashmiris are fully aware of Indian media's calculated censorship and they hold them accountable for "muzzling and misinterpreting them" (Mishra 12). Indians may succeed in misrepresenting the image of Kashmir and misconstruing the traumatizing reality of Kashmiris but, as in Basharat Peer's words, "Kashmir sees the unedited Kashmir" (44). Basharat Peer is a Kashmiri-American journalist and writer who is the author of an award-winning account of Kashmir's disputed land, *Curfewed Nights* (2008). In an anthology by Sanjay Kak, *Until My Freedom Has Come: The New Intifada in Kashmir* (2013)*,* the collection of various exciting writings coming from Kashmir voice the rage that sweeps through the valley.

In this volume, Basharat Peer in his essay "Kashmir Unrest: A Letter to an Unknown Indian" (2010) asserts that Indian journalists misconstrues the brutal incidents happening in the valley. Peer maintains that in order to hide their unscrupulous enterprise of terrorizing Kashmiris, they misinterpret the incidents to the world at large but every Kashmiri commits to their "memory, the deed, the date" (44). Peer states that face of "murdered boys" and "grieving fathers" may get disappeared from the headlines but these recurrent incidents have already acquired "a space in our collective memory" (44). In this

essay, the biased documentation of brutalities that are let loose on Kashmiris by the Indian government are criticized by the writer. Highlighting Indians' deliberate partiality and indifference towards Kashmir's unrest, he says that Kashmir remembers, they "have been remembering for a while, and you don't make it easy to forget" (Peer 44).

In an anthology, *Of Occupation and Resistance: Writings from Kashmir* (2013), Fahad Shah makes an attempt to go beyond the barriers and brings out the real stories narrated by the people who has experienced the trauma directly or indirectly within the Kashmir valley. Kashmir has always suffered a paucity of genuine representation and documentation in media to the point of being "the most unreported place on earth" (Shah 18). Fahad Shah is a renowned Kashmiri journalist and writer who contributed largely in voicing the suppressed and agonizing voice of Kashmiris. He is the founder and editor of *The Kashmir Walla* magazine and has also contributed in various national and international publications. Shah writes extensively on politics, current affairs, human rights, media and culture. In 2021, he won Human Rights Press Award for his reporting on Delhi pogroms against Indian Muslims in the year 2020. Kashmiris have struggled "politically and through armed uprisings" over the last two to three decades piercing "through every wall of oppression" (Shah 10). They tried to protest through art, literature, music and media but their voices could not reach to the world at large. This volume, being a collection of "numerous writers' interpretation of their memory of their experiences in the valley" (18), addresses various aspects of life in Kashmir, "stolen childhoods" of burnt Kashmiris during conflict, and the growing youngsters as they view "strikes, crackdown, killings, and beatings at the hands of the Indian forces" (19). This volume documents the first-hand experience of what happened in the valley, what is still being unfolded every day, and most importantly the perspective of the sufferers of traumatizing experiences in Kashmir. Memoirs, articles and essays included in this anthology serve as a complementary source of authentic information as it gives an opportunity to the indigenous voices to be heard by a larger audience which is a major concern in this study.

Samia Hanif and Dr. Inayat Ullah in their article, "War Trauma, Collective Memories and Cultural Productions in Conflict Zones: Kashmir in Focus" (2018), analyze a trauma narrative from Kashmir and investigates how the collective traumatic memories bring a compelling tale of eternal sufferings for Kashmiris. Their study underscores an

authentic experience of Kashmir's collective trauma by bringing to the front Kashmiri narratives. It concludes that it is not just an individual, but the collective that must bear the moral responsibility (Hanif and Ullah 9). Likewise, a large body of literature has been produced by Kashmiris in an attempt to fictionalize their narrative by revisiting the memories of past and their collective trauma. However, the present study goes beyond mere representation of individual and collective trauma as it investigates the social process of Cultural Trauma which also involves the mediation of trauma narratives. A successful trauma process may direct attention to the potential reforms in the suffering collectivity. Therefore, the articulation as well as the mediation of Kashmir's cultural trauma narratives in different institutional arenas is analyzed in this thesis to trace the construction of Cultural Trauma for Kashmir.

Questioning Idées Reçues: A Study of Interpellative Strategies and Environmental Ethics in Basharat Peer and Ghada Karmi's Memoirs (2020) is doctoral thesis written by Rabia Aamir, an Assistant Professor in National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad. In her dissertation, Aamir extensively revisits the established official narratives, Idées Reçues, built around Occupied lands of Kashmir and Palestine and questions them through historiographic analysis of selected memoirs from Kashmir and Palestine. Using tripartite theoretical approach, she not only gives an account of similarities between situation of Kashmir and Palestine, but also examines interpellation and environmental ethic in Basharat Peer's and Ghada Karmi's selected texts. Aamir's work provides a holistic background knowledge about Kashmir's history and also gives a fair idea about devised propagandas that have been lobbied against Kashmiris and Palestinians till now. Moreover, study of neocolonialism in Kashmir and settler colonialism in Palestine leads her to neologize 'impolonialism' which implies both imperialism and colonialism (Aamir 277). She asserts that this colonial-imperialism, or as she terms it as impolonialism, being aggressively involved in savage attacks, "uses a hammer against a fly phenomenon" (278) and has no consciousness for humanity and human laws.

In another article "Impasse of Kashmir and Recurring Pretexts: A Historiographical Analysis for an Eco-Postcolonial Future" (2020), Rabia Aamir, through her historiographic analysis, traces the recurring deceptions in history of Kashmir that is "South Asia's

Palestine" (2), and locate the reasons behind impasse of Kashmir conflict. She also states eco-postcolonial ethic or environmental justice for the occupied land of Kashmir which emphasizes the need to acknowledge the resistance against the colonial oppression in a postcolonial age. "Global War on Terror (?) or Colonial Imperialism: An Eco-Postcolonial Historiographic Study for Peace and Justice of Kashmir" (2021) is a recent research paper by Aamir where she foregrounds the important facets of Kashmir's history, and through her historiographic study she dismantles Indian's Interpellative and hegemonic strategies that has impacted the life and identity of Kashmiris in various significant ways. Aamir's study endeavors to investigate the narrative of Global War on Terror which appears "to be Global War of Terror against a postcolonial space like Kashmir" (19) whose history dates back to the Dogra rule in Kashmir. This Global War of Terror, in Aamir's terms, can be an extension 'Impolonialism' as puppet rulers in Kashmir have always been blatantly negligent of any accountability for their actions. An extensive effort for bringing truth to the surface, her research works are undoubtedly a significant contribution not only to the literature produced on Kashmir and Palestine but also to the fields of environmental ethic and postcolonial literature.

Following the same vein, the present research can be considered an extension of above-mentioned research. My study also attempts to address the aforementioned marginalized region, but along with bringing selected Kashmiri fictional narratives to attention, it largely explores an emergent aspect of Cultural Trauma in the context of Kashmir. In next section, I address J. C. Aleander's concept of Cultural Trauma, which I have adopted as my theoretical framework to answer the research question for my study, and provides a basic understanding about the concept and its application.

2.2 Understanding and Analyzing the Concept of Cultural Trauma

Cultural Trauma, according to Jeffrey C. Alexander, is a socially mediated process that occurs when the members of a group suffer under horrific events that influence their consciousness and it brings a major change in their identity forever. Western nations have canonized and highlighted their own sufferings and traumas but the sufferings of the non-Western and the under-developed nations go unheard and unnoticed by a large audience. Kashmir is one of the regions where the life is a continuous struggle for humans but its

tragedy is known to and recognized by a limited audience. Alexander is of the view that by developing the cultural traumas, various social groups, nations and entire civilization recognize the cause of human sufferings and it compels them to share the suffering of each other. By doing so, possibility of preventing the traumas from happening again arises and repairs are made in the society. In the same vein it can be stated that in order to prevent the on-going sufferings of Kashmiris, the trauma of Kashmiris needs to be constructed socially, the world needs to hear their collective experiences and their issues are required to be resolved in due time.

2.2.1 Theories of Trauma: Difference between Individual Psychological Trauma and Collective Trauma

An American legal scholar, Angela Onwuachi-Willig, in her article "The Trauma of Awakening to Racism: Did the Tragic Killing of George Floyd Result in Cultural Trauma for Whites?" explicates that a layman understanding of trauma is restricted to mere individual or psychological phenomenon (8). They tend to think of trauma only in terms of the individual psychological conditions like PTSD etc. Eric Taylor Woods, in his article "Cultural Trauma: Ron Eyerman and the Founding of a New Research Paradigm", overviews the evolution of the concept of trauma. Woods expounds that the word trauma originated in seventeenth century and at that time it referred specifically to a physical wound. In nineteenth century, Psychologist created the concept of psychological trauma and the meaning of trauma was broadened to be used for a wound within the psyche. Likewise, in the field of sociology, trauma can refer to a collective experience and it may explain a wound at the level of a social group or community (Woods 261). Various sociologists like Professors Kai T. Erikson, Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ronald Eyerman, Piotr Sztompka, and Neil J. Smelser emphasize that trauma may have social or group dimension besides individual psychological dimension. Trauma can be experienced by a group collectively just like it is experienced by an individual (Onwuachi-Willig "The Trauma of Awakening" 8).

Kai Theodor Erikson, an American sociologist, in his book *Everything in Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood* (1978) conceptualizes the difference between individual and collective trauma by saying, "By individual trauma I mean a blow

to the psyche that breaks through one's defenses so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively. . . By collective trauma I mean a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality" (153-154). In his book, Erikson examines the effects of Buffalo Creek Flood on the people of West Virginia and explains how the community endured this sudden and tragic experience as a whole. With this publication, he became the first sociologist to examine how a community or group of people can be traumatized by a horrendous event collectively. In a chapter "Notes on Trauma and Community" from Cathy Caruth's book *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), Erikson embarks on the same subject of collective trauma as he says that "sometimes the tissues of community can be damaged in much the same way as the tissues of mind and body" (185).

2.2.2 Emergence of Cultural Trauma

In contrast to Individual or Psychological trauma, cultural sociologists have put forward the concept of Cultural Trauma that is essentially a group-based trauma. Although Individual or Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma both probe into crises of meaning and identity, but co-authors of *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004) emphasize that Individual Trauma occurs in individual psyche while Cultural Trauma is a social process. Professors Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka, in their collaboratively authored work *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004), expand on Erikson's scholarship of collective trauma and bring forward the trauma process through which a disconcerting tragedy becomes a Cultural Trauma. This book is one of the foundational books in the field of Cultural Trauma.

The cultural sociologists explicates that the understanding, interpretation and communication of a trauma-inducing event by collective agents, who are a part of the suffering collectivity, determines the construction of Cultural Trauma. Alexander says, "Traumas is not something naturally existing; it is something constructed by the society" (Alexander "Toward" 2). He believes that traumatizing events have to go through an entire trauma process which begins with a "claim" made and articulated by a "carrier group" to an audience. The "claims" are actually the group representation of a traumatizing event or interpretation of a group about an event, which is affecting members of a group as a whole.

The collective agents or meaning-making agents who initiate a trauma process by representing an event are named as "carrier groups" by Alexander (11). Alexander explicates that carrier groups narrate the destructive social suffering and demand for "emotional, institutional and symbolic reparation" while making a claim to "some fundamental injury" (11). First members of the suffering collectivity and then a wider audience is convinced of a traumatizing reality by creating "master narratives" about understanding the meaning and relevance of an event. By enabling a wider audience to sympathize with a traumatized collectivity, a positive social change can be brought through construction of Cultural Trauma in the society and traumatizing events might be prevented from happening again and again in future.

Neil J. Smelser in his article "Psychological and Cultural Trauma" (2004) defines culture as "values, norms, outlooks, beliefs, ideologies, knowledge, and empirical assertion, linked with one another to some degree as a meaning-system" (Smelser 37). He explicates that if any invasive event undermines these essential elements of a culture or the whole culture it can be referred as Cultural Trauma (38). Moreover, he differentiates between Social Trauma and Cultural Trauma by saying that a Social Trauma disrupts an organized social life and social institutions while Cultural Trauma affects the basic meaning-system, and eventually threatens their personal identities, within a society (37). Eric Taylor woods compares Social Trauma and Cultural Trauma with the two forms of individual trauma saying that Social Traumas can be more closely related to physical trauma, the former being an injury to the body while the latter is an injury to social structures. While Cultural Trauma can be said to be related to Psychological Trauma as it emphasizes meaning and identity (Woods 261-262).

As Alexander is of the view that Cultural Trauma is "a socially mediated attribution", Smelser believes that establishing and sustaining Cultural Trauma is also a highly contested process because of historical contestation, contestation over interpretation and affective contestation due to the possible presence of different groups in a society. This is what distinguishes Cultural Trauma from a Psychological Trauma in terms of mechanisms through which it is constructed and perpetuated. The mechanisms that are linked with Psychological Trauma are "intrapsychic dynamics of defense, adaptation,

coping, and working through", while Cultural Trauma is associated with "social agents and contending groups" (Smelser 39). It can be said that Psychological Trauma is something that occurs in an individual's psyche while Cultural Trauma is a social process.

Eric Taylor Woods reviews Ron Eyerman's contribution to the concept of cultural trauma, and he believes that the study of Cultural Trauma has gained the status of a research paradigm (Woods 260). Eyerman has published numerous essays and books on the subject and contributed a lot to its development. In his contribution to *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004), he provides a summary of his investigation on the formation of African-American identity using the concept of Cultural Trauma which was also discussed in his book *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (2003). Eyerman believes Cultural Trauma refers to "a dramatic loss of identity and meaning and a tear in social fabric" (Eyerman *Cultural Trauma* 2). He investigates slavery, "not as an institution or an experience, but as collective memory" (1). A collective memory is a form of remembrance that may result in formation of a new identity for the people. He explores trauma of slavery as a cultural process, through which collective memories are revisited and collective identities are reformed or revised. Moreover, Eyerman also emphasizes the role of emotions in the trauma process and he explicates that the process of Cultural Trauma begins with an emotional response to a traumatizing event. Such an emotional response eventually provokes efforts made by carrier groups for assigning meaning to the event, and without this emotional reaction to an event a trauma process cannot be initiated (Woods 264). Eyerman says that an event arouses emotions by breaking daily routines which eventually demands for interpretations and carrier groups try to make sense of what actually occurred (qtd in Woods 264). He suggests that emotions and affect remain important throughout the interpretive process. Consequently, trauma process can be seen as diffusion of emotions by carrier groups throughout the society (265).

Jeffrey C. Alexander and Rui Gao, in their article "Remembrance of Things Past: Cultural Trauma, the Nanking Massacre and Chinese Identity" (2012)*,* investigate the case of Nanking Massacre and its impact on Chinese identity through the concept of Cultural Trauma. Nanking Massacre, or Rape of Nanking, was an episode of mass rape and mass murder committed by Japanese troops against the residents of Nanking, a city in China, in

1937. A Chinese-American author, Iris Chang, characterized this event as "the forgotten Holocaust" as it was not given enough coverage to be broadcast around the globe. Alexander and Gao's investigation looks over shifting of the initial Western concern to later Western silence about the horrific incident as this event disappeared quickly from the literature produced, and national and international scenario. Because of the failure in affecting the collective consciousness, the event was not recognized universally and a moral responsibility was failed to be achieved. Since the symbolic means of communication were controlled by perpetrators, they destroyed the evidences of massacre, silenced the observers and disseminated manipulative counter-narratives in the occupied territories (Alexander and Gao 593). If any of the carrier groups had been successful in projecting this event to a wider audience, it might have left unforgettable marks on the collective memories of affected group and the world at large. In such a case, it would have given lesson to the world community about genocide and ethnic cleansing, and this might have lessened the atrocities in the world today.

Alexander's article, "Culture trauma, Morality and Solidarity: The Social construction of 'Holocaust' and other mass murders" (2016), is an endorsement and a reapplication of his theory of Cultural Trauma that he presented in his book *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004). In this article, he discusses the construction of Holocaust as well as the trauma processes involved in the sufferings of African Americans, colonial victims of imperialism, and victims of Maoist China and Soviet Russia etc. After the Holocaust, the recognition of the sufferings of Jews in the Holocaust by the non-Jewish people is an example of trauma process. It transformed the image of the victim, and anti-Semitic attitude of Christians was converted into empathy for Jews and they shared their sufferings (Alexander "Culture" 6). A powerful channel for this cultural expression was memoire, for instance Anne Frank's *Diary* and many other melodramas which narrated and dramatized the trauma of Jews. In the post Holocaust era, people also started recognizing the other mass murders that happened and had been happening in the world. For instance, the audience came to understand the Western imperialism and its evils, Vietnam War and its atrocities and many other mass murders. So, the construction of Cultural Trauma for one event may develop recognition of many other atrocities.

According to cultural sociologists, Cultural Traumas based on past event usually occur when unexpected and shocking experiences disrupt the cultural expectations. But an American legal scholar, Angela Onwuachi-Willig, seeks to extend the Cultural Trauma theory and explicates how Cultural Traumas can also arise when a routine harm or subordination is perpetuated, reinforced or reaffirmed in public or official manner. Onwuachi-Willig, in her article "The Trauma of the Routine: Lessons on Cultural Trauma from the Emmett Till Verdict" (2016), investigates murder of a 14 years old Arican American boy Emmett Till and explains how the verdict of this case cultivated a Cultural Trauma narrative for the African Americans. She argues that three elements are essential for materializing Cultural Trauma narrative out of expected and harmful routine occurrences. First, it should have "a longstanding history of the routine harm", second "a widespread media attention" and finally "a public discourse" about how the routine harm is perceived by the public (Onwuachi-Willig "The Trauma of the Routine" 336). The two white men charged for Till's murder were set free by the court but this acquittal was not a shock to the African American community. It was rather a judicial reaffirmation of African American's routine exclusion from the legal protection of their rights which enabled the narration of Cultural Trauma. This case and its aftermaths satisfy all the requirements of a master narrative for Cultural Trauma as defined by Jeffrey C. Alexander. Moreover, accumulation of a long history of regularly occurring oppression against African Americans, reception of this case by an audience worldwide, and a public discourse about the social interpretation of this routine harm cultivated a Cultural Trauma for African Americans. This narrative of injustice after the verdict made a wider audience see the reality and they tried to stand with the African American community in securing their civil rights in future.

Nicolas Demertzis and Ron Eyerman in their article "Covid-19 as Cultural Trauma" (2020), investigate the traumatizing situation of Covid-19 pandemic under the light of the theory of Cultural Trauma. Demertzis and Eyerman try to explicate what kind of trauma is this pandemic, who are the victims, and what can be the possible consequences. They illustrate the trauma process through the case studies of Sweden and Greece and investigate if this pandemic will evolve into Cultural Trauma for these regions. This pandemic is a social fact as it is traumatizing, global, mediatized and instantiates a risky and hazardous

situation (Demertzis and Eyerman 430). Cultural Traumas are studied generally in retrospect as to identify the discursive themes mediated by central actors over a period of time. Covid-19 is an on-going series of traumatizing events, but being a total social fact, it manifests most of the characteristics that circumscribe Cultural Trauma. The pandemic has led to a break in the routine life, loss of trust in social institutions and leaders, meaning struggle over determining what actually happened and who is responsible for it, negative attribution in media and contending narratives circulating on different forums (Demertzis and Eyerman 431). Demertzis and Eyerman believe several factors influence development of a Cultural Trauma such as Timing, Political context and authorities, Mass-media representations, carrier groups and collective memory. The researchers illustrate the interplay of these determining factors through short case studies of Sweden and Greece (436). Investigation of the role of carrier groups, political context and authorities in the selected countries shows that the traumatizing experiences of this pandemic have not evolved into Cultural Trauma in these countries. Majority of the components of cultural trauma, such as negative emotions, attribution of blame and struggle for meaning making, can be observed in both countries. But the absence of collective memory and unpredictability of indelible marks on group consciousness at this earlier stage make it difficult to view this pandemic as a proper Cultural Trauma (446). Observing that traumatizing effects of covid-19 are not only intense but global and immediate, the researchers have developed the concept of compressed Cultural Trauma that reflects "time-space compression" (Demertzis and Eyerman 430). Moreover, it is argued that it can safely be considered as Cultural Trauma-in-making since many uncertain events are still likely to be unfolded over the course of time.

In 2021, Angela Onwuachi-Willig in her article, "The Trauma of Awakening to Racism: Did the Tragic Killing of George Floyd Result in Cultural Trauma for Whites?" (2021), examines the incident of Floyd's tragic killing and the subsequent events in the light of the theory of Cultural Trauma. Investigating the killing of George Floyd, she argues that this horrendous slaying of a Black American pushed many Whites to reflect on themselves and the privileges given to them as Whites, nevertheless it has not resulted in the construction of a Cultural Trauma Narrative for Whites yet. Although the nature of pain and victim can be identified but the claims, with which the trauma process begins, remained

unspecified. For some Whites, the claim was the harm caused by "vicarious trauma", while for others it was the realization that they have been complicit in perpetrating racism (Onwuachi-Willig "Trauma of Awakening" 20). Moreover, Onwuachi-Willig explicates that there are different understanding of race and racism coupled with policing among the White community. Some groups do not acknowledge the reality of White skin privilege, and there is general silence about the topic which make it difficult to construct a common Cultural Trauma narrative which could have promised positive changes in the society. The shift in the perspectives, attitudes and feelings of Whites were not long lasting and the brutal racialized killing could not change them in "fundamental and irrevocable ways" (Onwuachi-Willig 21).

These studies help in understanding the concept of Cultural Trauma and validate that Alexander's theory can be used to investigate effects of traumatizing events on collective identity, consciousness, and collective memories of any victimized group. Furthermore, it can be argued that traumatizing experiences of Western nations, like Holocaust, 9/11 or similar incidents, are built into Cultural Traumas and have been recognized by a large audience but the tragedies happening in non-Western and marginalized regions are strategically made to disappear even from the consciousness of the victimized collectivities. Same is happening in Kashmir, the Indian government exercises absolute control on the lives of people of Kashmir and the means of communication are paralyzed in order to repress and restrict their voices to the occupied land of Kashmir. Anticipating the constructive end result of established Cultural Traumas, the traumatizing reality of Kashmir also calls for the construction of Cultural Trauma for Kashmir's pains, so that the sufferings can be minimized for the victimized and marginalized Kashmiris.

2.3 Review of Literature on Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother* (2014)

In this part, I review the research and reviews available on the selected texts for this study. Amid persistent chaos and illegal occupation, like in any other conflict zone, women in Kashmir are also the main victims being vulnerable to the war crimes like abduction, widowhood, and rape. Shahnaz Bashir's debut novel, *The Half Mother* (2014), contests the oppression unleashed on Kashmiri women by the Indian Army and it is one of the perfect

narratives that document the "pain and trauma of Kashmiri women" who live under the shadow of military occupation, injustice, and violence (Ahmad Dar 45). Bilal Ahmad Dar, in his article "The Half Mother as a Chronicle of Pain and Trauma of the Kashmiri Women" (2016), focuses on tracing the unending struggle of the protagonist Haleema as it serves as the microcosm of the macrocosm for the dilemma of every Kashmiri woman. Javeed Ahmad Raina, in his research article "The Half Mother: A Memoir of Misery, Misfortune and Trauma" (2019), keeps in his view the theoretical insights from Cathy Caruth's book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* and analyzes the text *The Half Mother* (2014). Raina in his research focuses on the individual psychological trauma of the protagonist and presents the novel as a retelling of the workings of the unconscious mind, as memories of horrific events leave deep marks on the mind of survivors and torment them through nightmares and flashbacks from the past. The effects of trauma at the social and cultural level are not investigated in this study whose representation in literature needs to be analyzed to explore the emergent Cultural Trauma of Kashmiris.

Mohammad Yaseen Pandith and Chari Chitra, in their article "The Curfewed Night by Basharat Peer and The Half Mother by Shahnaz Bashir depict Women as a part of the Resistance Movement of Kashmir" (2019), investigate the role of Kashmiri women in the resistance movement of Kashmir. Analyzing female characters in the novel, this study depicts how mental torture and sexual violence against women are used to suppress the resistance movements in Kashmir. But the women have stood against the oppression and formed different organizations under their own leadership and directly participated in resistance (Pandith and Chitra 10). Constant violence and aggression lead people to ultimate rebellion and resistance. Women, who are always at the receiving end of brutalities in war zones, often emerge as stronger beings and develop resistance against the harsh conditions. "Half Widows and Half Mothers" (2020), by Hanif and Ahmed, can also be considered an appreciation of the courage of Kashmiri women who bravely worked through the traumatizing pains during 1980s and 1990s and turned out to be more resilient in every moment than the previous one. Bashir in his novel portrays Kashmiri women as resolute fighters rather than mere victims in his novel.

These studies analyze the effects of traumatizing events on Individuals' psyche and explore the role of women in the resistance movement of Kashmir by investigating Bashir's *The Half Mother* (2014), leaving out the effects of traumatizing occurrences in Kashmir on the collective identity of Kashmiris and their cultural values. Moreover, the necessity to build their Collective trauma as a Cultural Trauma for Kashmiris is not given due importance in the mentioned studies.

2.4 Review of Literature on Nayeema Mahjoor's *Lost in Terror* (2016)

Lost in Terror (2016), written by Nayeema Mahjoor, is a novel about the plight of womenfolk in the Kashmir of 1980s. Mahjoor has taken the challenge to give voice to the helpless women of Kashmir. Mohd Nageen Rather, in his article, "Terribly Victimized Gender of Kashmir Conflict: A Women Centric Perspective of Nayeema Mahjoor's Lost in Terror" (2018), analyzes the mentioned novel and finds out that Mahjoor has presented the case of terrorized Kashmiri women during the freedom struggle in 1980s. He points out that it is the story of countless daughters, wives, sisters, and mothers whose lives are tortured in various ways. Rather is of the view that this novel portrays the bravery of Kashmiri women who lost everything but still hold a ray of hope for a bright future (Rather 53). Shagufta Yasmeen writes, in her review article published in DAWN, about *Lost in terror* (2016) that Mahjoor throws light on the patriarchal issues prevalent in the valley and depicts how patriarchy is subjugating even the already oppressed females in the conflict zone. She is of the view that Mahjoor has discussed her career as a journalist in her novel, recording the factual difficulty a female has to face while working in a male-dominated field (Yasmeen n.p.).

Besides, Mahjoor's novel also seems to engage with fissures created within the psyche of different individuals lodged in the turbulent political surroundings of Kashmir and it wells up the affects which might be turned into rigid and violent emotions. It offers the instances of "the co-habitation of rhizomatic assemblages, de-territorialized flows, and subjectless subjectivities" (Sinha and Roy 221). "Subjectless Subjectivities in Nayeema Mahjoor's Lost in Terror" (2020) investigates the representation of the effects of societal and political control on unarmed Kashmiris amid the chaos of 1980s and 1990s in *Lost in Terror* (2016). In this article, Sinha and Roy argue that violence deployed to subjective

spaces by the predatory forces threatens the liberatory ethics of being. The novel, by giving an insight into the social life of Kashmiris, depicts that constant surveillance by Indian Armed forces infiltrates their privacies which results in the deletion of civil space or breakdown of society's infrastructure. There is an air of skepticism and fear, and every person doubts their fellow citizens for the possibility of being an informer to the oppressors. This turmoil makes people lose their volition and take refuge in the dream of getting *Azadi,* a dream which is yet not realized.

2.5 Conclusion

The above reviewed literature throws light on the works produced about Cultural Trauma, the Kashmir conflict, and also various explored aspects of the selected novels. The mentioned scholarly work takes into account the sufferings of Kashmiris during the freedom struggle, but the significant issue of investigating the representation or articulation of these sufferings on different platforms is not given due attention which is a major concern highlighted in the selected text. Moreover, reviewed studies do not adequately highlight different factors which hinders the objective or unbiased representation of a traumatizing reality faced by Kashmiris, especially in mass media which is the reason why Cultural Trauma could not be materialized for Kashmiris so far. Furthermore, this literature review also shows that Cultural Trauma construction for marginalized non-Western societies is comparatively underdiscussed as compared to traumas in Western societies.

The scholarly works mentioned earlier in this chapter show that, contrary to the already explored aspect of individual psychological trauma in the context of Kashmir, Cultural Trauma is relatively an underdiscussed concept. Cultural Trauma is a group-based trauma but it is essentially a socially mediated process that may produce such meanings out of tragic occurrences which alter the perception of the society and bring social, political and legal reforms in an affected society. Therefore, this study is of significance as it not only focuses on what happened in Kashmir but also examines how the collective social pain is represented by the suffering collectivity and articulated as cultural trauma narrative. This dissertation underscores how the traumatizing reality of Kashmir has been understood, interpreted and communicated by the carrier groups to the public. It also significantly examines the dissemination of Kashmir's cultural trauma narratives in different

institutional arenas and determines the ultimate success or failure of the social construction of Cultural Trauma. Such an investigation may assist in highlighting the bootless struggle of oppressed Kashmiris and showing the real contours of different institutions functioning in the occupied Kashmir. The present study also investigates the possibilities and constraints embedded in various institutional arenas for creating a space for translating Kashmir's sufferings into Cultural Trauma which may attempt to encourage a wider audience to take some responsibility for the suffering of others and expand their "circle of the we" (Alexander 1).

Moreover, a review of relevant literature also helps in understanding and locating the topic of this study in the already existing knowledge relevant to the development of Cultural Traumas and experiences of traumatized Kashmiris. It also signifies the scope of analyzing the selected novels, *The Half Mother* (2014) and *Lost in Terror* (2016), under the theoretical lens of Cultural Trauma, which is not yet explored, and calls for the necessity of constructing Cultural Trauma for Kashmiris and gets it recognized by the world community to develop a moral responsibility of sharing this human suffering.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The review of related literature and gaps found in the previous chapter gives me an understanding of the theoretical framework which I employ to analyze my selected texts. It also guides me to appropriate research methodology and helps me in selecting a relevant research method. The present research is qualitative. It is exploratory research as it investigates the issue of the Cultural Trauma experienced by Kashmiris in the selected texts. To analyze my primary texts, comprising two novels written by Kashmiri writers; Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother* (2014) and Nayeema Mahjoor's *Lost in Terror* (2016), I use J. C. Alexander's theoretical lens of Cultural Trauma given in his collaboratively authored book *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004). I analyze the selected texts through Textual Analysis given by Catherine Belsey. Some essays from different anthological writings about Kashmir and the plight of Kashmiris, book reviews on the selected novels, relevant scholarly articles published in different journals, and website articles are used as secondary source, which supplements and substantiates the arguments built in the analysis.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Here I explain the theoretical framework used for the literary analysis done in the subsequent chapters. The Introductory chapter to this study highlights that Kashmiris are suffering under the tyranny of Indian armed forces in the Occupied Kashmir not only at the individual level but also at the social and cultural level. The recurring traumatizing events happening in Kashmir negatively affect almost every individual's psyche but these events largely disrupt the social structures and undermine their cultural values, beliefs, ideologies, and identity. My research focuses on analyzing how these social sufferings are interpreted and their effects are mediated by social groups, like intellectuals, politicians, artists etc. through "symbolic-cum-emotional representations" or narratives (Alexander *Trauma* 2). The original traumatizing sufferings, its victims and perpetrators are not readily known but are established through a contested trauma process which eventually results in

the social construction of Cultural Trauma as theorized by Jeffrey C. Alexander for shared traumas in his Theory of Cultural Trauma. Social sufferings are required to be established as Cultural Traumas via narration and coding, as social conditions can be improved through trauma narratives and people may come to realize their moral responsibility in preventing traumatizing events from happening again. The current study traces this process of the social construction of Cultural Trauma, its success or failure, in the context of the occupied Kashmir.

Individual psychological experiences of painful injuries among Kashmiris are equally valid and their representations in literature have been extensively studied by various researchers. But the present study largely touches upon the trauma process for traumatizing occurrences in the occupied Kashmir that involves defining the collective experience of trauma-inducing injuries, the meanings that are associated with them, and the effect of these injuries on the collective identity and memories of the suffering group.

3.1.1 Individual Vs. Collective Trauma

There is a difference in dealing with traumatizing incidents at an individual's psychological level and for a group of people at the level of collectivity. Individual victims react to a traumatizing injury or event with "denial, repression and working through", while for collectivities it is a matter of "symbolic construction and framing" (Alexander *Trauma* 3). Alexander argues that individuals may suffer psychologically because of traumatizing injuries, but it is the threat to the established collective identity which leads to the gradual construction of shared cultural trauma. Jeffrey C. Alexander is an American social theorist who is also a founding figure in the field of Cultural Sociology. Currently, he is a professor of Sociology at Yale University, Co-Director of the Center for Cultural Sociology, and Co-Editor of the American Journal of Cultural Sociology. Politics, culture, and theory are his areas of interest and he has investigated various cultural codes and narratives to look into the diversity of social life. He won numerous awards including Clifford Geertz Award (2004) and Mary Douglas Prize (2008) for best article and best book respectively in Cultural Sociology.

In his book *Trauma: A Social theory* (2012), Alexander offers a social theory for collective traumas. For any community, he believes, the collective identity of "we" is symbolically constructed through narratives and coding, and any threat to this culturally constructed identity results in a trauma that is experienced by the whole collectivity. It is important to mention that collective identity is not something naturally "given" but conceived "culturally" (Alexander *Trauma* 1). Likewise, any harm to this collective identity is not realized naturally but conceived culturally through a trauma process that involves symbolic construction through meaning-making and interpretations. There is no denying the fact that loss and injuries are experienced individually, but the shared trauma is dependent on the collective process of "cultural interpretation" (Alexander *Trauma* 3). It can therefore be said that individual traumas can be transformed into collective trauma culturally through speeches, rituals, storytelling, narratives, and movies etc. As Alexander says,

> Collective traumas are reflections of neither individual suffering nor actual events, but symbolic renderings that reconstruct and imagine them. Rather than descriptions of what is, they are arguments about what must have been and what should be…It is people who make traumatic meanings, in circumstances they have not themselves created and which they do not fully comprehend. (Alexander *Trauma* 4)

3.1.2 Towards the Theory of Cultural Trauma

In a collaboratively authored work by various sociologists, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004), J. C. Alexander reviews the commonsense understandings of trauma which collectively constitutes "Lay Trauma Theory". According to the lay theory, events themselves carry an inherent power to shatter an individual's or collective actors' sense of well-being. It maintains that trauma potential is natural and intrinsic to certain events which directly traumatize people who encounter them. Alexander further explains the two versions of this Lay theory, namely "Enlightenment Thinking" and "Psychoanalytic Thinking" which share the same fallacious and naturalistic understanding that trauma exists naturally in certain events. Alexander's approach dismisses and distinguishes from these existing approaches having "naturalistic fallacy" of lay theory,

and he argues that "Trauma is not something naturally existing, it is something constructed by the society" (Alexander "Toward" 2). Moreover, the traditional approaches toward trauma have their limitations when it comes to considering the effects of horrific events experienced by society collectively. Alexander maintains in his work that the collective trauma is not caused by events naturally rather it is the collective meanings associated with trauma-inducing events, through a complex and contested process of social understanding by social agents, that make a suffering group and a greater collectivity gradually realize the traumatizing injuries and its effects on the society which eventually results in the construction of a Cultural Trauma. It is pertinent to mention that Collective trauma is an emotional state, while Cultural Trauma is a process involved in the meaning-making of trauma-inducing injuries affecting a collectivity. As Alexander also says, "Cultural Trauma is a socially mediated attribution" ("Trauma" 8), it focuses on contesting narratives to specify the suffering, its victims, and perpetrators which eventually makes the sufferers and the world at large recognize the horrors of any atrocious event.

In the same co-authored book, Neil J. Smelser explains that culture constitutes the meaning-making system of a group, and any threat to this system results in Cultural Trauma (37). But he maintains that not every catastrophic occurrence automatically qualifies to be Cultural Trauma in itself, rather it is constructed as traumatic. So, it may be said that cultural traumas are "historically made, not born" (Smelser 37). Piotr Sztompka in his essay "The Trauma of Social Change", included in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004), explicates that traumatizing conditions or situations are always "cultural constructions" (165), as the actual tragic occurrences are considered traumatic only if they are made visible and defined through framing and interpretive efforts by the suffering community. Social agents draw meanings from the already existing shared culture of the suffering community or society and apply them to the traumatizing events or situations (Sztompka 165). In other words, for a traumatizing situation to become Cultural Trauma it must be interpreted, defined and narrated as trauma. In the same book, Ron Eyerman says that Cultural Trauma refers to the loss of identity and meaning, and a tear in the social fabric that affects the people of a group (61). But Eyerman also asserts that Cultural Traumas do not occur just by the virtue of an event occurring but have to undergo a social process of construction. J. C. Alexander also emphasizes the same understanding that

traumatizing events at the level of collectivity are required to be constructed culturally as Cultural Trauma through a complex and contested social process. In another book, *Trauma: A Social Theory* (2012), he claims that his theory of Cultural Trauma deals with the traumas that become collective once they are considered as a "wound to social identity" which is a political and cultural work (2). It traces how the causes and effects of any social sufferings are mediated through symbolic representations and investigate how a cultural process channels powerful human emotions and what are its effects on a community. Such a symbolic-cum-emotional representation is a collective process that centers on meaning-making. Although the individual experiences of suffering fuel the cultural construction of collective trauma but what defines the trauma is its threat to collective identity rather than the individual identity (Alexander 2).

To trace the social construction of Cultural Trauma in the context of Kashmir, the present study utilizes the theory of Cultural Trauma put forth by Jeffrey C. Alexander as the main theoretical lens of inquiry. Alexander theorizes about Cultural Trauma in his essay, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma" in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004), a concept through which he later illustrates the social construction of the Holocaust and other mass murders in his article, "Cultural trauma, Morality and Solidarity: The Social construction of 'Holocaust' and other mass murders" (2016). The present study applies his theoretical framework to investigate the construction of the Cultural Trauma for Kashmir's traumatizing realities as portrayed in the selected novels, *The Half Mother* (2014) and *Lost in Terror* (2016).

Alexander defines Cultural Trauma as,

> Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways. (Alexander "Toward" 1)

This definition presents the Cultural Trauma as being comprised of five interwoven and significant elements. Firstly, it starts with a group of people who are subjected to what they consider "a horrendous event." Secondly, this event must be experienced by the

"members of a collectivity." Thirdly, if the event is to be considered a cultural trauma, it must be so deeply felt that it leaves an unforgettable or lasting impression on their "group Consciousness." Fourthly, this unforgettable mark on the group consciousness will forever influence the "memories" of the collectivity. Fifth, because of its effect on the collective memory of the group or collectivity, the existing cultural trauma will also change the "future identity" of the group, who are suffering because of the horrific event.

By constructing cultural traumas, social groups, national identities, and entire civilizations not only recognize the cause of traumas but also share the sufferings of each other. By doing so, they expand the circle of "we" and take the moral responsibility of sharing human sufferings and repairs are made in the society to prevent such traumatizing events from happening again. Those who fail to recognize the sufferings of others fail to achieve a moral stance (Alexander "Toward" 1). It is also relevant to state that this concept of Cultural Trauma is applicable not only to Western tragedies that are widely recognized as such, but to all the suffering societies around the globe. Alexander himself states, "Cultural traumas have no geographical or cultural limitations" (Alexander "Toward" 27). Hence it is justified to investigate and discuss the construction of the Cultural Trauma for Kashmiris in the light of Alexander's theory of Cultural Trauma.

Alexander maintains that "Events are not inherently traumatic. Trauma is socially mediated attribution" (Alexander "Toward" 8). This means that trauma is constructed socially in the form of mediation through representations that may involve the use of imagination, as "imagination is intrinsic to the very process of representation" (Alexander "Toward" 9). A sense of shock and fear is provided not by the events themselves but by the layers of meaning that are attributed to the original events through representations. Hence, the process of trauma creation can be better understood as an ongoing struggle for meaning-making by assessing and reassessing the effects of events. For instance, there are various factual, fictional and imaginative accounts of the originating traumas experienced by Kashmiris which may help in interpreting and making meaning of their traumatizing reality.

3.1.3 The Social Process of Cultural Trauma

Alexander says that society may experience massive destructions in its social system, like disruption or disturbance in social roles and institutions, but it may not be traumatizing for all the members of the affected society. "For traumas to emerge at the level of collectivity, social crises must become cultural crises" (Alexander "Toward" 10). It means that social suffering must affect the essential ingredients of a group's culture, like values, beliefs, norms, ideologies, identity and knowledge, that are linked with one another as a meaning-system. Moreover, shared cultural traumas emerge through a gradual process of mediating or articulating interpretations in the form of narratives. If the suffering collectivity comes to believe, through the representation of original collective sufferings, that their meaning-system and collective identity is being affected harmfully, only then do they attribute the traumatic status to the events. In other words, trauma is not a direct outcome of a group experiencing pain but when discomfort enters the society's collective sense of its own identity, it results in trauma. The collective actors, who experience social pain, decide to represent their social pain as a threat to "their sense of who they are,…where they come from, [and] where they want to go" (Alexander "Toward" 10).

The gap between an event and its representation can be considered as the "trauma process" (Alexander 11). The trauma process occurring between events and their representation depends on what Kenneth Thompson termed as a 'spiral of signification' and he considers it an intrinsically escalating way of signifying issues, which means "it increases the perceived potential threat of a problem through the way it becomes signified" (Thompson 16). Since Thompson's thrust is more towards the issues related to moral decline and creation of moral panics through moral discourse etc., the relevance of his theorization may lightly be referred to (the way I mention in this paragraph above). However, the implication of his theory may not be stretched further in the main argument of this thesis, and therefore, my main theoretical thrust is to adapt Alexander's theorization about trauma process involved in the social construction of Cultural Trauma.

Traumatic status is attributed to a certain event through a process that involves collective social agents who are members of the suffering collectivity and they ascribe meanings to the original suffering and convey it to an audience. This meaning-making or

representation by agents, in Alexander's words, can be seen as "claims" about a social reality, its causes, and consequences. With such a claim, the cultural construction of trauma is initiated. People who make these claims are collective agents of the trauma process whom Alexander calls "carrier groups", a term he borrows from sociologist Max Weber (Alexander "Toward" 11). They may be elites, from marginalized groups, or a religious group of the society and tell the story of the brutalities or wrongs, that threatens their collective identity, to their audience. They may include writers, mainstream media, celebrities, political authorities, intellectuals, poets, and even the general public using social networking websites today. The goal of the carrier group is like a speaker whose aim is to project the trauma claims to an audience while taking into consideration the symbolic resources, historical situations and various opportunities or constraints given by institutional structures.

The carrier groups are like speakers who, in the first place, try to persuade the members of the suffering group that they are in fact traumatized. When the members of the suffering collectivity are convinced that they are being traumatized, the audience is broadened to include other people within the "society at large" (Alexander "Toward" 12). For convincing a society at large that they too have become traumatized by an event or experience, the carrier group ought to engage itself in successful meaning work and a master narrative needs to be created. This master narrative carries a powerful message that reaches out not only to the group that is suffering but also to a wider audience. According to Alexander, there are four main essential questions to be answered while creating a new master narrative that determines the outcome of trauma process which is the successful construction of Cultural Trauma.

1. The nature of pain: What a particular group, or collectivity of which the group is a part, has actually suffered?
2. The nature of the victim: Who are the ultimate victims of the traumatizing pain? Is it a particular group or general people of the community or collectivity?
3. Relation of the trauma victims to the wider audience: How are the victims related to the greater collectivity? How the audience can identify with the representation of the experiences of the traumatized victim?

4. Attribution of the responsibility: Who are the perpetrators or antagonists? Who has victimized the particular group in reality? (Alexander "Toward" 13-15)

3.1.4 Mediating Trauma Process in Different Institutional Arenas

Through the representational process explained above, a new master narrative of a social suffering is created but it has to be mediated by the institutional arenas such as religious, mass media, aesthetic, legal, scientific, or state bureaucracy, which in turn are influenced by "stratificational hierarchies" within which any social action occurs (Alexander "Toward" 21). For instance, if the trauma process takes place inside a religious arena, it will link the trauma to theodicy and may generate questions about God's existence and His indifference towards evils done by humans. If the trauma process enters into state bureaucracy, it can utilize the governmental powers to manage the representational process. In the aesthetic realm, the meaning-making of a certain social reality is channeled by specific genres and narrative that aims at producing "imaginative identification and emotional catharsis" (Alexander 15). For instance, *The Diary of Anne Frank* and later "survivor literature" etc. played an important role in establishing the Holocaust as a universal tragedy. This study aims at looking into the mediation of the symbolic representations of the atrocities committed against Kashmiris in mass media, legal realm, literary texts, and state bureaucracy as portrayed through the selected novels for the study.

The institution of mass media is quite significant today and if the representation of events is mediated through mass media, it gains opportunities but becomes subject to certain restrictions as well. It not only enables traumas to be expressively dramatized but also allows some competing interpretations to gain prominence. There are certain restrictions as well, as the reporting demands concision, neutrality, and balance. When an event is reported as trauma, a particular group is considered as traumatized, and another group as perpetrators, politicians and the supporters of the perpetrators may attack the media and journalists (Alexander "Toward" 18). The selected texts present the same situation in which the people related to the media suffer under different restrictions imposed by the Indian government in the conflict zone of Kashmir and it hinders the trauma process.

3.1.5 Stratificational Hierarchies Influencing Trauma Process

The mediation of representation through the institutional arenas is further influenced by the stratificational hierarchies that refer to the uneven distribution of material resources and the social networks that discriminate in providing access to them. The following questions probe into the constructive or destructive intervention of stratificational hierarchies in the trauma process which significantly influence the ultimate construction of Cultural Trauma.

Who owns the media houses?

Are the journalists really independent of political and financial control?

Who controls the religious institutions and judiciary?

Who influences the policies made by the government? (Alexander "Toward" 21)

So, the trauma is experienced when a painful injury is defined to the collectivity, the victim is established and the responsibility is attributed to the perpetrators through a sociological process. During this trauma process, the collectivities look back at their past and it gives way to the revision of their collective identity. Identities are constructed continuously by reconstructing the collectivity's earlier life and by facing the present and future at the same time, as Alexander says, "memory is not only social and fluid but deeply connected to the contemporary sense of self" (22). Once the collective identity is reconstructed, the spiral of signification is slowed down, and lessons learnt from the trauma are commemorated in monuments, or museums etc. This reconstructed collective identity remains a fundamental source for resolving the social problems in future (Alexander "Toward" 23).

Furthermore, Alexander has mentioned, in his essay "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma", the traumatizing situations in Western, as well as non-Western, and developed, as well as non-developed societies. He says that his cultural trauma theory is also applicable to all the societies outside the Western world, as non-Western societies have suffered more in the previous century. He mentions Mayan Indians, Gypsies, American Indians, Kosovar Albanians, Chinese, and Cambodian peasants etc. He points out that the suffering and genocide happening in the non-Western world also needs to be highlighted, for instance,

Hutu massacre, Guatemalan military's ethnocide of Mayan Indians, and Maoist Khmer Rouge's brutalities in Cambodia etc. (Alexander "Toward" 24-25). Failure to recognize the traumas of the non-Western world stems from their inability to carry through the trauma process. This reflects that the carrier groups, as cultural agents, have failed in disseminating the trauma claims, perpetrators have not accepted the moral responsibility, social solidarity has not been extended, and sufficient persuasive and powerful narratives have not been created and broadcast to a wider audience. The trauma process needs to be tackled with responsibility to broadcast the collective suffering of non-western societies to a wider audience so that their sufferings should be recognized by a larger audience and moral lessons be drawn from it.

3.2 Research Method

The research method used in this exploratory study for the interpretation of selected texts is Textual Analysis. According to Catherine Belsey, textual analysis involves examining the minute details of the text through "a close encounter with the work itself" (Belsey 160) and then arriving at an interpretation. The textual analysis method, as presented by Catherine Belsey in her article "Textual Analysis as a Research Method" (2013), is used for investigating the trauma process involved in the social construction of Cultural Trauma experienced by Kashmiris, as portrayed in the selected texts. Belsey maintains that there is "no such thing as pure reading" (163) and that extra-textual knowledge is involved in the interpretation of a text. So, keeping the importance of context in mind and to avoid biased interpretations, various secondary sources of literature relevant to the aforementioned issue are studied and quoted as they provide context for the study. This helps in building well-informed and coherent arguments. Using the textual analysis method, the primary texts are analyzed through the lens of J. C. Alexander's theory of Cultural Trauma, to trace the trauma creation process and efficiently answer the research questions posed by this study.

3.3 Conclusion

The discussion about the theoretical framework and research method is going to help me in the following chapters for the analysis of selected texts for this study. The selected

research method complements my theoretical framework, and it gives me a clarity of thought as how to read my primary texts under the lens of the theoretical framework chosen for this study to answer my research questions.

CHAPTER 4

FOLDING[1] KASHMIR INTO KASHMIR'S IMAGINATIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF *THE HALF MOTHER* (2014) AND *LOST IN TERROR* (2016)

"Kashmir remembers what is done in your name, in the name of your democracy, whether its full import ever reaches your drawing rooms and offices or not. Your soldiers of reason carrying their press cards might dissuade you from seeing it, comfort you with their cynical use of academic categories and interpretations of Kashmir, they might rerun the carefully chosen, convenient images on TV, but Kashmir sees the unedited Kashmir."

(Peer 44)

In this chapter, I analyze the trauma process, as theorized by Jeffrey C. Alexander, for the horrific events that are recurrently happening in war-ridden Kashmir and victimizing Kashmiris collectively, especially after the armed struggle erupted in the late 1980s. Such horrific events are identified as traumatizing by Alexander, the main theorist for this analysis. I start off with an introduction to the selected novels, their authors, and a brief account of Alexander's concept of Cultural Trauma which directs the analysis. The primary texts are then analyzed to examine how social sufferings and their effects in Kashmir are perceived and folded through narratives and discourses in the imaginations of Kashmiris. The symbolic representation of their agonizing pain, as portrayed by indigenous Kashmiri writers in their fictional narratives selected for this study, peeps into the minds of Kashmiris and helps readers in understanding of how Kashmiris think of the chaotic situation prevailed in the occupied land of Kashmir. I trace this claim-making about the

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[1] Inspiration for the title of this chapter is taken from an Indian historian, Mridu Rai's essay "Making a Part Inalienable: Folding Kashmir into India's Imagination "(2013) in Sanjay Kak's anthology *Until My Freedom Has Come* (2013). In her essay, Rai discusses how Indian government has created Kashmir in India's imaginations through cartography and biased discourses etc. While I adopt her phrase as "Folding Kashmir into Kashmir's Imagination", which implies the ways in which Kashmir is perceived, interpreted and imagined by Kashmiris through their own narratives, hence folded in their imaginations.

traumatizing reality of Kashmir, in the selected narratives, in terms of four critical components defined by Alexander. These components develop the representation of events into "a compelling framework of cultural classification" (Alexander "Toward" 12), which determines the successful creation of compelling cultural trauma narratives and its impact on the suffering collectivity.

There is a difference in trauma as it affects individuals and collectivity as a whole. Shared traumatizing experiences are recognized gradually through a collective process of cultural interpretation. In such a cultural process as explained by Alexander, various representations of suffering groups are mediated as trauma claims and are linked to their group consciousness and collective identity, resulting in the construction of Cultural Trauma (Explained in Chapter 3). As established Cultural Trauma may ascertain possible repairs in the society, this study is significant in examining the construction of Cultural Trauma for Kashmiris by analyzing its representation in the selected narratives. I have delimited my study to two selected fictional narratives written by Kashmiri writers that is *The Half Mother* (2014) by Shahnaz Bashir and *Lost in Terror* (2016) by Nayeema Mahjoor. These writers, being members of the suffering collectivity, perform an important role of "carrier groups" (Alexander 11) in underscoring the bleak realities of Kashmir's civil society. These social agents or carrier groups broadcast the traumatizing reality of their suffering community to other societies or the world at large which is a significant step in the trauma process. These literary texts, depicting the traumatized society, are studied along with factual accounts of traumatizing events to give a holistic image of the representation of Kashmir's tragic history.

The fictional portrayals are more than just factual records, usually found in non-fiction, of killings, damaged infrastructure, or conflict between perpetrators and victims, as they provide an insight into victims' minds, the loss and pain they suffer, and the aftermaths of these sufferings. Along with narrating history, fictional trauma narratives also highlight the political, social, and cultural settings in which the events unfold. E. Ann Kaplan, in his book *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (2005), talks about the escalating importance of translating trauma and emphasizes on finding ways to interpret and communicate the catastrophes or traumatizing

events that happened to others or one's own self. As manifested by selected fictional narratives for this study, art and Literature are such ways of interpreting and communicating traumatizing realities. Once the trauma is experienced, those who witness or suffer traumatizing events cannot go back to how things were before traumatizing occurrences, but if the wounds of trauma are left open, the pain can be worked through by translating it via art (Kaplan 19). The writer of a work of literature does not present mere statistical data or facts about an event like journalists and historians, rather he looks beyond those facts at the emotional response towards events. This lends credence to the understanding that events may have underlying angles of perception which can be better portrayed in fictional narratives. In contemporary world, Kashmiri writers reflect on Kashmir's history of violence, injustice and oppression and bring forth the perspectives of people who are actually facing the oppression in the conflict zone. In the same vein, the selected Kashmiri writers also attempt to draw attention to the untold, unexpressed and unknown side of the Kashmir conflict manifested in its long-neglected stories. This way, they are trying to frame their native voice against the hegemonic discourse and narratives.

4.1 A Brief Introduction to Authors and an Overview of selected Novels

Since the present study pivots on tracing the social construction of Cultural Trauma for Kashmiris, I analyze the selected fictional narratives to investigate the symbolic representation of Kashmir's trauma and its articulation to a larger audience. To complement and substantiate the authenticity of the claims made by the writers as carrier-groups regarding Kashmir's trauma, I quote relevant scholarly works and non-fictional accounts of Kashmir's reality wherever required in the analysis. I hereby start with a brief introduction to selected fictional narratives and their authors to give an overview to the readers.

4.1.1 Introduction to Shahnaz Bashir and an Overview of his novel *The Half Mother* (2014)

Shahnaz Bashir is a Kashmiri writer and academic who was born and brought up in a small suburb of Srinagar called Natipora. Currently, he is a doctoral student and a teaching associate in Communication at the University of Massachusetts and also taught narrative journalism at the Central University of Kashmir earlier. His memoir essays, short

fiction, poetry, reportage, and articles have been widely published in various anthologies and magazines, as in *Of Occupation and Resistance: Writings from Kashmir* (2013), *A Clutch of Indian Masterpieces: Extraordinary Short Stories from the 19ᵗʰ Century to the Present* (2014), The Caravan: A Journal of Politics & Culture, The Byword, and many others. Bashir is a contributing editor at an independent media platform based in Jammu named "The Dispatch". Having seen and suffered the tormenting reality prevailing in his motherland, he writes extensively about Kashmir and was profiled as "one of the nine impact-makers to stand out in Jammu and Kashmir" in the January 2016 issue of the weekly tabloid *Kashmir Life*. His debut novel, *The Half Mother* (2014), won Muse India Young Writer Awar 2015 and it depicts the infinite plight of Kashmiri mothers which was widely lauded by the critics. It was translated into Marathi and French, and it is the first novel from Kashmir to be translated in a European language. His other book, *Scattered Souls* (2016), is a collection of related stories that also portrays the life of Kashmiris amidst the ongoing war and won *The Citizen*'s Talent of the Year Award 2017. A review article on one of the media websites about Kashmir i.e. kashmirobserver.net asserts that various literary critics proclaim similarities between Bashir's short fiction and works of great writers like Sadat Hassan Manto and Anton Chekhov ("Scattered Souls" n.p.).

By allowing reality to rub shoulders with fiction and create a connected whole, Shahnaz Bashir in his debut novel, *The Half Mother* (2014), artistically portrays the tragic happenings of the last decade of the twentieth century which are deeply imprinted on Kashmir's collective consciousness. The beginning of the armed struggle between Kashmiris and the Indian Army in the late 1980s aggravated their miseries, and rendered thousands of people disappeared, imprisoned, or dead. The continuous hardships of chaotic years seeped into every Kashmiri's heart and mind and it made many young writers from Kashmir depict their angst and tragedies in their work. Bashir's novel is also one of such efforts which encapsulate the unending struggle of a bereaved mother, named Haleema, whose father was killed in front of her eyes and her only son taken away by the Indian Army. Haleema's story reflects the helplessness of every Kashmiri who faces enforced disappearance or killing of his/her male family members during the void of chaotic conflict, especially Half-mothers (Half-mother - a term used for a mother whose son disappears and she does not know if he is dead or alive).

Haleema, just like the majority of women in war-ridden Kashmir, comes out to be a strong-willed woman who never loses hope even when subjected to violence under the brutal occupation. A woman living in Natipora who loses her mother at quite a tender age, gets divorced after a few months of marriage, witnesses her father being shot dead and her only son taken away by the Indian Army. Although physically bruised and mentally battered, but Haleema continues to struggle and never gives up. The story shows how she, after the disappearance of her son Imran, tirelessly keeps searching for her son and visits every media platform, police stations, mortuaries, and government offices in the hope to get any news regarding her only son. The author highlights Haleema's bootless struggles and the apathy of the authorities by limning the frustration that one feels after realizing that every organization and institute works directly or indirectly under the strong influence of the perpetrators of the traumatizing injuries. But nothing stops her, for she fights back and consistently tries to go beyond every obstacle and, through her story, the author aptly depicts how the unending oppression inevitably meets the infinite resistance.

Bashir weaves fiction with reality in his novel and he himself asserts that it is fictional but realistic. In his interview with The Dispatch Staff, he says that "*The Half Mother* is the reality of Kashmir" and portrays the life of "a woman who represents thousands of such women in Kashmir" ("Author Interview" n.p.) by keeping the narration and descriptions so vivid that it impels the reader to appreciate the "graphic artistic expression" of life in tyrannized or strife-torn Kashmir and "relive forgettable memories of the chaotic times" (Malik n.p.). Also, in his memoir essay "A Crackdown in Natipora" published in Fahad Shah's anthology *Of Occupation and Resistance: Writings from Kashmir* (2013), Bashir sketches the same fear an ordinary Kashmiri has to go through every other day when security forces barge in their homes and makes them feel doubtful of who they really are and get tormented by uncertainty. Besides, this novel symbolically represents the story of a Kashmiri woman, Parveena Ahangar, whose 17-year-old son became a victim of enforced disappearance in 1990 and died in the custody of the Indian security forces. Ahangar, being a courageous Kashmiri woman, mobilized a network of parents and families of disappeared people and founded the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) in 1994. APDP has been struggling for justice which

parallels Kashmir's struggle for independence, as Ahangar says, "*Azadi* for me is when we see our sons" (qtd in Bhan et al. 33).

4.1.2 Introduction to Nayeema Mahjoor and an Overview of her novel *Lost in Terror* (2016)

Nayeema Mahjoor is a fiction writer, columnist and a leading journalist from Kashmir. She is married to the grandson of Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor who is known as "Shair-e-Kashmir" - the poet of Kashmir. Earlier she worked with Radio Kashmir before she started her journey with BBC Urdu Service where she worked as a producer for more than two decades. She has also been serving as the chairperson of the State Commission for Women (SCW) in Jammu and Kashmir. Mahjoor's unique style of narration and fiction writing has made her emerge as one of the persuasive voices of Kashmir. Her two novels, *Dahshatzadi* (2011) and *Lost in Terror* (2016), are two compelling literary writings from Kashmir which were applauded widely by the critics and readers. Through her writings, Nayeema tries to realistically portray the underdiscussed side of Kashmir, Kashmiri Women, and unmask the sufferings of women amid eternal chaos prevailing in the strife-torn valley. In an interview, she asserts that although her books are "tagged as fiction, (but these) are based on the real events" (D. Staff n.p.). Just like any other unfortunate Kashmiri woman, Mahjoor also went through the same struggle and challenges during her life. Post-1989 turmoil made life unbearable in Kashmir, people would count the dead bodies every evening, and it was considered a miracle to get home safe. A plethora of writings picture their dilemma and Mahjoor engages herself with the subject of Women, which she thinks is a thread that binds the society.

Lost in Terror (2016) is a fictional account of late 1980s uprisings and consequent militarization in Kashmir that realistically expose the intensity of chaos through the eyes of a woman. This book weaves different accounts of oppressed women being abducted, killed, widowed, or raped continuously in war-ridden Kashmir. But it is not confined to women only, rather it talks about the loss, humility, liberation, uncertainty, and fear that prevails in Kashmir. Neighbors see each other in pain but cannot sympathize, they are forced to keep their emotions repressed and stay confined to their blacked-out homes, because of round-the-clock surveillance by the Indian Army. Being someone who has been

closely associated with media, inside the valley and internationally, Mahjoor strikingly depicts the challenges faced by media workers because of discrimination and injustices done against Kashmiris by Indian government. The Indian Armed forces place curfews and curb any form of resistance by force, Police proclaim to be helpless when victims knock at their door for help, media platforms are scared to report the objective truth because of intervention by the government, and politicians show indifference towards helpless citizens. This novel gives a simpler yet clear and lifelike picture of life in Kashmir after 1988, as the author herself has gone through all these social and psychological pains. Mahjoor in her interview says that "this is my own story" (D. Staff n.p.) and many other women who are like me and were victimized in every possible way after the insurgency started. The narrator ends the novel with the hope that she will show the world an actual picture of the miseries of her people when she is given an opportunity to join BBC.

4.2 Toward the Concept of Cultural Trauma

Social crises create not only disruption, stress, fear, and uncertainty in the society, but may also pose a threat to both individual and collective identity and create fissures in bonds that bind the society together. Cultural trauma is a form of social crisis that affects the individual as well as collective identities. The traumatizing events happening in Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir have largely disrupted every aspect of life in Kashmir, negatively affecting their memories, and threatening their individual and collective identities. But it cannot be considered a full-blown Cultural Trauma yet, because no matter how intense a social crisis is, it does not develop into Cultural Trauma on its own. Cultural Trauma occurs when the foundations of collective identity are shattered as a result of a traumatizing injury, initiating a discursive process to interpret and make meaning out of the situation. This meaning-making process focuses on understanding what has actually happened, assigning responsibilities for injuries, and finding ways to repair the damage caused in the social space. This discursive process may ensue a meaning struggle, as various social agents present their separate trauma narratives that often compete for acknowledgment and acceptance. Such a meaning-making is centered on what people of society suffer collectively which, in Alexander's terms, sets in motion a trauma process (Explained in the chapter Theoretical Framework).

It is important to mention that every Cultural Trauma is basically a collective Trauma but not every collective trauma develops into a Cultural Trauma directly but through a trauma process. Cultural Trauma is not a mere collection of Individual traumas but a form of collective trauma where every individual of a community is equally affected by a threat to their sense of collective identity, stability, and security. Kai Erikson, in his book *Everything in its Path* (1978), says that collective traumas damage the bonds of social life and impair "the sense of communality" but its realization is gradual and work insidiously into the awareness of the suffering group (qtd in Alexander "Toward" 4). Erikson further delineates that, as a result of collective traumas, the identity of "I' may continue to exist, though damaged or changed, "You" may continue to exist, though distant and not relatable, but "we" no longer exists as a connected community (qtd in Onwuachi-Willig "The Trauma of the Routine" 338). Therefore, the lost sense of security, stability, and collective identity can be regained only by recognizing the traumatizing situations by establishing Cultural Trauma, which eventually triggers repairs in the civic fabric. Humans have an ability to learn from their mistakes, adjust to the changes and make their surroundings a better place to live, and the construction of Cultural Traumas for traumatizing injuries gives them this opportunity to prevent the traumatizing incidents from happening again and make repairs in damaged societies.

Moreover, Cultural traumas are "usually studied in retrospect" (Demertzis and Eyerman 429), from a position where one can determine the origin and nature of any devastating incident along with its impacts on the social fabric and collective memories of suffering collectivity, and trace the discursive themes articulated through various forums as a result of meaning struggle, but Alexander believes attribution can be made in "real time, as an event unfolds" ("Toward" 8). In the context of Kashmir, there have been traumatizing occurrences since 1947 which got intensified after insurgency erupted in the late 1980s and Kashmiris are suffering brutal occupation and suppression even today. So, the construction of Cultural Trauma can be justifiably investigated for Kashmir's oppressed reality as it is happening.

Furthermore, it is important to remember that, according to Cultural Trauma theory, trauma is not caused by events themselves, rather through the meanings attached and

"claims" made about a traumatizing event by the carrier groups. "Claims" are made about what has befallen a group, what it means to them, and how it is perceived or interpreted by them. Therefore, this study looks at claims made by carrier group about the tragic reality of a war-struck region, Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The selected texts are analyzed, utilizing Jeffrey C. Alexander's theory of Cultural Trauma, and answers are sought for questions like,

1. What kind of pains and traumas did Kashmiris encounter?
2. Who are the actual victims?
3. Who is responsible for causing disruption in their collective consciousness and identity and what are the repercussions in the society?
4. How the collective trauma has been represented and articulated? and
5. How Indian state government influences the trauma process in the context of Kashmir, investigating whether it facilitates or impedes the process?

These questions help in determining if Cultural Trauma for Kashmiris, who are subjugated under the illegitimate control of the Indian government, has been established or not because Kashmir's prevailing social reality already has a majority of the characteristics to be considered a Cultural Trauma.

4.3 Translating Open Wounds of Kashmir's Never-Ending War: Representation of Kashmir's Plight as Cultural Trauma in the Selected Narratives

> "*The heady, rebellious Kashmir I left as a teenager was now a land of brutalized, exhausted and uncertain people…The Conflict might leave the streets, but it will not leave the soul*".

Basharat Peer, *Curfewed Night* (2010)[2]

According to Alexander's definition, as discussed in the chapter Theoretical Framework, an event, or a series of events, is required to have five interrelated and significant characteristics to be considered a Cultural Trauma. The characteristics, that lead

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[2] Courtesy of this quote: Taken from a doctoral Thesis, *Questioning Idées Reçues: A Study of Interpellative Strategies and Environmental Ethics in Basharat Peer and Ghada Karmi's Memoirs* (2020), written by Dr. Rabia Aamir, an Assistant Professor in National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad.

an event to be transformed into Cultural Trauma, include; "a horrendous event", which is felt by "members of collectivity", that leaves deep imprints on their "group consciousness" marking their "memories forever" and changing their "future identity" in irrevocable ways (Alexander "Toward" 1). Here, these elements of Cultural Trauma are analyzed in Kashmir's traumatizing reality as represented through the selected fictional narratives to determine if the prevailing situation in the valley qualifies to be considered a Cultural Trauma or not.

4.3.1 'Horrendous event(s)': Representation of Kashmir's Unrest

In the context of the Indian occupied Kashmir, it is not just a single event but a series of horrendous or devastating events that have traumatized every Kashmiri at the individual psychological level as well as at collective level. A similar concept that is termed as "accumulated trauma", by Ron Eyerman in his book *The Assassination of Theo Van Gogh: From Social Drama to Cultural Trauma* (2008), which refers to "an accumulating 'traumatizing potential' in relation to a series of events, such that several incidents experienced as a series and connected through a narrative adding to their cumulative effect might result in a Cultural Trauma" (166-169).

Lost in Terror (2016) gives a clear description of how Indian security forces infiltrated the valley in 1990s and disturbed everyone's private life by patrolling every street, shop, corner, and doorstep. The narrator mentions that one can find a huge number of Indian soldiers at "every crossroad, bridge, hotel, school and deserted building" and it feels like someone else has taken the reins of their lives in his hands (*Lost in Terror* 27). Their constant presence around makes every Kashmiri, be it a child or an adult, a man or a woman, feel uncomfortable and threatened, and there is always an air of uncertainty and unrest in which they manage to breathe. Moreover, they have "unleashed a reign of terror" (261) in remote areas but due to their monopoly and limited access, these atrocities cannot be reported or stopped from happening. Besides rape, raids, torture, and extrajudicial killings, "unnamed mass graves abounded" (262) in different areas twist the knife in wounds of already brutally injured innocent Kashmiris. Angana P. Chatterji, an Indian anthropologist, activist, historian and co-founder of the International People's Tribunal on Human Rights and Justice in Indian-administered Kashmir (IPTK), writes about atrocities

unleashed by the Indian state in the confiscated lands since 1947 in her article "The Militarized Zone". Her book "Buried Evidence: Unknown, Unmarked, and Mass Graves in Indian-administered Kashmir" (2009) documents the statistical and pictorial record of "collective burial" and display by India's military and paramilitary forces in creating "a landscape and habitus of mass burial" (21). Between 1989-2009, it is reported in the same book that, oppression of the Indian state resulted in "8000+ enforced disappearances" and "70,000+ deaths" which also includes innocent Kashmiris killed during "fake encounters" (9) or through extrajudicial means.

Having lived during the extremely turbulent days of 1990s in Natipora, Shahnaz Bashir in his novel *The Half Mother* (2014) also describes the ongoing traumatizing incidents after 1989 that gradually became a part of the routine. The bunkers built by the army from where they constantly observe what everyone is doing, is a major nuisance for people, intrude into their homes and privacy and make life uncomfortable for the residents. Kashmir seems to be obscured in the maze of bunkers, army camps, and checkpoints. During 1990s, after the armed resistance by insurgents is intensified, the political instability paves the way for the Indian army's despotic rule which is followed by "tears, blood, death, and war", and so does "curfews, crackdowns, raids, encounters, killings, bunkers, an exodus of people, burning markets, schools and buildings" (*The Half Mother* 32). Muhammad Junaid is a Kashmiri academic and he has witnessed all this massacre, oppression, brutalities, and bloodshed in the occupied Kashmir. In his essay "Death and Life under Occupation: Space, Violence, and Memory in Kashmir" included in Visweswaran's book *Every Occupations* (2013), he illustrates the situation as,

> Paramilitary patrols picked up young men and teenagers on the streets, beat them up, and left them maimed. They broke into houses, shattered windowpanes, harassed men, and molested women. No cases were registered. No deaths were investigated. No warrants were produced before making arrests. No assessments for compensation were made for the properties damaged. Given their long experience with state violence, Kashmiris expected no such gestures either (159-160).

Besides, the government makes it sure to crush every voice that is raised against their unjust operations, and announces "shoot-a-sight orders" (*The Half Mother* 39) for those who try to defy the curfews. Sounds of war was, and still is, the music of Kashmir. And such routine violence and chaos in Kashmir are supported by the legal and political networks which operate directly or indirectly in the valley. Haley Duschinski in "Reproducing Regimes of Impunity" (2010) argues that Kashmir being on the margin of the Indian state has become a shadow, and never-ending oppression is deliberately caught up under layers of invisibility (116).

In 1989, Kashmiris, after bearing Indian despotic rule since the partition of the Indian subcontinent, launched their freedom struggle against this oppression that has dominated their political, social, and cultural landscape for decades. Indian state tried to subjugate their resistance through counterinsurgency and deployed more than 700,000 armed forces in the valley (Bhan, Duschinski and Zia 3). This counterinsurgency remains and has produced a state of siege in which the majority of the Kashmiri population is subjected to oppression by armed forces and the Indian government. In Jammu and Kashmir under Indian military occupation, vicious cycles of enforced disappearances, brutal killings of unarmed Kashmiris, mass graves, abductions, fake encounters, curfews, and gunfights are a matter of routine but nothing gets registered in the consciousness of those who have the authority to stop it. Unfortunately, these ferocious operations are facilitated by the laws made by the Indian government such as Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act, which legalizes preventive detention without trial (Amnesty International 2001, 2011), and the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), which gives the military a supreme power to kill any suspect with exemptions granted on their own will. Victoria Schofield, a British author, biographer, and historian, also asserts in her book *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan, and the Unending War* (1996, 2021) that the nature of legislation in Kashmir was described as "draconian" by the International Commission of Jurists and extensive powers are given to the military "without redress" (170). Such acts or laws enable violence and provide impunity for offenders who work for the perpetrators of violence.

4.3.2 Victims of Traumatizing Incidents

A continuous and never-ending cycle of such arbitrary punishments under illegitimate military control victimize or target not a particular age or gender but all the people of Kashmir, especially Muslims. The receiver of these atrocities is not just one person, or a family but the majority population of a predominantly Muslim state. Kashmir has the majority Muslim population of "about 97 percent" (Khan *Parchment* 184). Muslims are the direct target of violence since they collectively demand liberation from Indian despotic rulership. Muslims, and other minorities used to live in harmony earlier but the partition in 1947 and later the armed struggle has turned them into enemies and mutual trust is lost in the society to the extent that Hindus avoid contacting Muslims as they doubt them for being insurgents. The insurgency and counterinsurgency spread everywhere, to everyone and every field of life, leaving no one and nothing unharmed and unaffected. The innocent minds of school children are tainted by hearing discussions only about fights, killings, curfews, detentions, and raids. So much so that instead of drawing flowers, animals, and fruits, they take to sketching "Kalashnikovs, Chinese pistols, grenades, bullets, and masked men" (*The Half Mother* 40). Because of the valley being shut down for a major part of the year, businesses get affected badly which in return disturbs the supply of basic needs like food, medicines etc. Haleema asserts that the governor has no mercy for his people and he "wants us to starve and die in our homes" (39). People in the war-impacted lands of Kashmir are enslaved, made to feel helpless and they are shut inside their homes for the fear of getting killed, detained, or abducted if they roam around freely in their own homeland.

Kashmiris, Kashmiri Muslims in particular as they are in majority in the occupied Kashmir, are the major target of brutalities of the Indian state as they fear their leanings towards acceding with Pakistan. Abdul Hakeem, in a biographical account of a Kashmiri leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani *Paradise on Fire* (2014), rightly states the tyranny of the Indian state for minorities that "Indian minorities in general and Muslims in particular" are equally, if not more, subjected to the oppression and sufferings at the hands of Indian rulers in the same way as they are "brutalizing and slaughtering Kashmiris" (xi). The sufferings of Kashmiri Muslims get aggravated when they are denied true representation of their

emotions as well. In *Lost in Terror* (2016), Mahjoor illustrates that there is a monopoly of Hindu men in media which makes it difficult especially for Muslim men and women, having no real representation in media, to get their voices and opinions registered or present their agonies to the world. More than "80 percent" (*Lost in Terror* 24) of the staff in the radio station belongs to the Kashmiri Hindu community and their domination in institutions is so undeniable that people believe there is an internal bond between Hindus and the Indian armed forces. Hakeem explains in the preface to his book that Muslims have been threatened with severe consequences if Kashmir seceded from India, but the truth remains evident that "Muslims have been slaughtered throughout the country since 1947" (xiii). Moreover, the prejudice and communal violence against Muslims have always been largely instigated by the Indian State.

Besides, trade and tourism are in shambles, and shops are either burnt or closed; immersed in the overwhelming hope of getting *Azaadi*, as we see Asad in *Lost in Terror* (2016) also ruins his business because he is obsessed with *Azaadi* (74). Victoria Schofield, in her book *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan, and the Unending War* (1996, 2021), states that the record numbers of "nearly 80,000 foreign tourists who visited the valley in 1989 were reduced to about 9000 in 1995*"* (186). Such a decrease in the number of tourists significantly has affected the local businesses of Kashmiris like houseboat owners, handicrafts sellers, taxi drivers, and hotel owners, and they have suffered accordingly. Every field of life has collapsed and the people of Kashmir are getting affected negatively; closed schools and offices, defunct commercial activities, and empty streets are the repercussions of growing bloodshed (*Lost in Terror* 131). People on the whole feel they are caught up in the vicious circumstances but they have no control over it, thinking as if "someone somewhere...has taken the reins of our lives in his hands" (*Lost in Terror* 27). The beauty of paradise seems to be blurred under the shadow of brutal and enforced military rule. Men, women, old, young, children; everyone regularly becomes a part of the stream of processions against the military's violence, and "a sea of *pheran*-wearing people" (*Lost in Terror* 37) collectively claim *Azaadi*.

Chatterji in *Buried Evidence: Unknown, Unmarked, and Mass Graves in Indian-administered Kashmir* (2009) is justified in pointing out that the Indian state's governance

in Indian-administered Kashmir makes use of "discipline and death as techniques of social control" (9). Victoria Schofield in her book *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan, and the Unending War* (1996, 2021) also gives graphic descriptions of atrocities and oppression meted out by Indian security forces in Kashmir. Torture of "militants and suspected militants" has been a common tactic in 1990s to counter insurgency and to extract information, coerce confessions and punishments (169). Schofield believes that severe tortures like sexual molestation, electric shocks, use of heavy rollers on leg muscles and other severe tortures is the main reason behind the "appalling number of deaths in custody" (169). The constant military presence, surveillance, abduction, rape, detentions, custodial killings, display of death through massified killings, and various other brutal punishments instill fear, doubt, and a sense of alienation in the minds of the innocent inhabitants of confiscated lands of Kashmir.

4.3.3 Imprints on Group Consciousness

From a cultural-sociological aspect, consciousness is not only individual, but groups also have collective consciousness of their own, composed of symbols, and it exerts power as a social structure. These symbols that construct collective consciousness are organized "by binary codes that compose variations on "us" and "them", and "by the narratives" that convert the division between the sacred and profane into "stories about the struggle between protagonists and antagonists" (Alexander and Gao 584). In occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the group consciousness is fragmented, and the bonds between members of family and society seem to be weakened because of growing confusion in the surroundings. No one knows what to talk about in such a state of chaos and everyone is filled with rage mixed with bafflement as a result of the military invasion in their vicinity. Whenever the civilian population confronts any incident of gunfire, raids, or curfews, everybody gets so confused and tortured mentally that they are concerned about saving their own life only at that moment and find themselves unable to offer help to others, not knowing how to handle the situation properly. In such a scenario, army personnel threatens them to meet the worst ends if anyone dares resist their orders, "The gunfire continued to roll. Everybody ducked, dodged, scampered and sprinted" (*The Half Mother* 43). Sense of strangeness, indifference and silence can be felt everywhere, Haleema hates the moon for

being "cold, still, and silent, and indifferent" to her sufferings (*The Half Mother* 3). It may parallel society's silence, stillness, and coldness towards each other's miseries as everyone is also trapped inside the halo of their own chaotic life. They have become strangers for each other in their own streets that are studded with the army's bunkers and checkpoints and people have to live under constant surveillance by the Indian security forces.

For Kashmiris, insurgency and counter-insurgency unleashed a regime of terror and grief that shredded the everyday fabric of life, "having the highest concentration of soldiers in the world" (Kak x). People are no longer connected as they were in the past and the societal bonds are in shambles. Lack of communication in the society make them lose everything; Mahjoor questions, "our friendships, our relations, our secrets. Who has robbed us of everything?" (*Lost in Terror* 68). The victims look at mob, who are made to behave like mere spectators in such scenarios, with utter helplessness when armed forces batter them or their family members during search operations. The crowd does not blink, or let their tears flow under soldiers' watchful gaze (*Lost in Terror* 102). Turmoil gradually turns them into a "lawless society" which has lost all moral barriers (*Lost in Terror* 76). Estranged from each other, suspicion seeps in their minds and mutual trust is lost, as we see Asad doubting even his wife's closest and trustworthy friend Nina for being an informer. Kai T. Erikson, while addressing the same effects of shared or collective trauma on a community in his seminal book *Everything in its Path* (1976), also asserts that though damaged or permanently changed but "I" continue to exist after experiencing a collective trauma, hard to relate and distant "You" continue to exist, but "We" ceases to exist as a connected pair in a communal body (Erikson *Everything* 154). Following Erikson's elucidation, it can be argued that the selected narratives show that Muslim Kashmiris with an identity of victimized "I" still exist but their identity is tainted, damaged and notably changed from what they were before in the valley, 'You' being the minority communities like Hindus and Pandits retreated and are made to leave Kashmir so they exist in distant space and Majority Muslim Kashmiris cannot relate to them anymore, and the broken social bonds show that the connected pair of 'we' no longer exists in the society. Moreover, the government also exacerbates the growing tussle and alienation between different ethnic and religious groups in the community. Mona Bhan et al. in "Introduction" to *Resisting Occupation in Kashmir* (2018) explicates that amid all the political and social turbulence

and uncertainties, the Indian state plays a critical role in shattering communities more and provokes interreligious unrest and anxieties in Kashmir (Bhan, Duschinski and Zia 6).

4.3.4 Kashmir: A place of Blood and Memory

Haleema, after losing her father and son, feels indifferent to everything in her surroundings to the extent that she hates the fact she is alive and breathing. She has bitter memories attached to everything around and things remind her of her only son, her loss. Only sorrows linger in everyone's memory since everyone has lost something in this war. Shahnaz Bashir portrays the situation as,

> The color of everything is sorrow,
>
> The color of moon is sorrow,
>
> The color of streets is sorrow; and
>
> The color of memories is sorrow. (*The Half Mother* 5)

Memories of harsh times never fade and they keep lurking in the background, buzzing in the memories and haunting the survivors forever. Haleema's untrimmed and unpruned lawn in the novel shows her indifference to everything and her sense of despair and loss. If the traumatizing pain is not recognized by others, quiet remembrance of unarticulated pain helps in working through a traumatizing pain. Kashmiris, having seen the unedited Kashmir, are committing every atrocity and violence to their collective memories, as Basharat Peer states in "Kashmir Unrest: A Letter to an Unknown Indian" (2013) that they have been remembering the traumatizing injuries inflicted on them since ever. And it is the constant oppression by perpetrators, that does not let them forget anything. For Kashmiris, every new atrocious event is "a reminder of the previous one" (Peer 44). In the novel *Curfewed Night* (2010), Basharat Peer is pointing to the painful reality ensuing enforced disappearances and abductions when he writes that "absences and their reminders stand on every other street" (127). The mourning families of the dead or disappeared people live a tragic life remembering those who are killed, detained, or gone missing.

Mourning the dead and being killed with the label of terrorist is a habitual practice in Kashmir civil society. Angana P. Chatterji, in *Buried Evidence: Unknown, Unmarked, and Mass Graves in Indian-administered Kashmir* (2009), along with reporting routine

killings and unmarked mass graves, expresses the emotions of a wailing mother mourning for her son killed in a fake encounter. A mourning mother in Srinagar implores, "My son was killed in a fake encounter. Buried by the police as a Pakistani terrorist. We want justice. We want his name restored. We want his memory healed" (9). Unmarked, unnamed and undecorated graves can be commonly sighted in the occupied lands of Kashmir, survivors keep lamenting the loss of their loved ones, and keep cherishing the painful memories until they meet the same destiny.

4.3.5 Impact on Future Identity

The memories and identity of Kashmiris have been tainted as a result of the tussle between insurgents fighting for freedom and the Indian state trying to legitimize their occupation. Kashmiris are suspected as militants and they are made to feel like strangers in their own lands. Their collective identity is threatened while living in a place they identify as their homeland, and this makes it obvious that these traumatizing injuries qualify to induce a Cultural Trauma. But these injuries, according to Alexander, must be narrated as an assault on collective identity for creating cultural trauma narratives. Bashir in his novel elucidates how the identity of Kashmiris is tainted and threatened inside their own lands. When Haleema, during her quest to find her son, goes out of Natipora, she faces discrimination everywhere because of her identity of being a Kashmiri. "We Kashmiris are unwelcomed everywhere outside of our lands", says Haleema (*The Half Mother* 119). In Bashir's novel, it can be noticed that 'Kashmiris' are not allowed to visit the jail, hotel staff refuses to give them rooms on a lease, courts deny justice, and they cannot even use a public telephone freely for a call. Parveena's husband, like male members of hundreds of other Kashmir families, was taken away and killed by the Indian army and after failed attempts of seeking justice in the Supreme court she expresses her disappointment that "we do not have the right to expect justice when crimes are committed against us" and this visibly shows that "justice and Kashmiris are poles apart" and "Kashmiris have no rights at all" (Mathur 90). Indian government with its biased and prejudiced policies has always oppressed, marginalized and disrupted the life, and identity of Kashmiris.

In addition to that, Alexander believes that the present identity of any group or collectivity is structured continuously not only by facing the present and future but also by

"reconstructing collectivity's earlier life" (Alexander "Toward" 22). A sense of belonging and unity is created within a group through present representations or discourses of a shared or common past in retrospect, which deeply influence the identity of a group having a shared collective memory. So, the role of discourses or narratives and memory is quite significant in the construction and deconstruction of identities, which is also involved in the construction of Cultural Trauma. But the young generation in occupied Kashmir, who is the future of a nation, is made to feel obscure about their past or history as they find no opportunity to revisit their common past which makes them feel alienated in their own lands. In schools, they may memorize historical facts about Indus Valley, Mesopotamia, Harappa and many other historical sites, but history books include nothing to educate them about their own place; Ab Jaan asserts that those in power do not want Kashmiris to know themselves and don't want us to learn "who we are" (*The Half Mother* 34).

As Nyla Ali Khan in *The Parchment of Kashmir* (2012), a Kashmiri academic in the US, argues that dominant powers often use biased political, cultural, militaristic, or religious discourses to spread such values which shape the cultural and ethnic identities of the oppressed as well as oppressors. Such a strategy of creating dominance, with knowledge structures, fosters a fissure between "center" and "margins" (Khan *Parchment* 4). While promoting their own narratives, oppressors may attempt to curb the counter-narratives and discard them by any means. Mridu Rai, in her essay "Making a Part Inalienable" from Sanjay Kak's anthology *Until My Freedom Has Come* (2013), mentions an article "Rising Kashmir" (2009) by Umar Ahmad published in Kashmir Daily, and she says that Umar's article points out that in 2009, India has censored 31 issues of Weekly British magazine *The Economist* for publishing "a map of Kashmir that does not accord with the government's version" (Rai 263). This shows how the Indian government maintains its illegitimate control over public imaginations, narratives and discourses through censorship and manipulation or distortion of the truth.

The narrator's father in *Lost in Terror* (2016) is very concerned about the beginning of turmoil and chaos, fearing that it can take an ugly turn the way it did in past, and he is worried about the possibility of this violent chaos becoming a permanent part of their future. They are frustrated at getting repeatedly enquired in their own homes, streets, and

lands, which leaves them with fears, doubts, strangeness, and a lost sense of who they actually are. All that the civilian population wants is land for themselves that they can proudly identify as their own. With the partition of the Indian subcontinent, they lost their identity when the reins of rulership were given to the hands of puppets of the Indian government and now everyone is "brimming with enthusiasm about *Azaadi*" *(Lost in Terror* 7). The cultural identity of Kashmiris is disrupted by the gradual destruction of autonomous institutions in the valley (Khan *Parchment* 4), and by the regime of terror, traumas and uncertainties created by insurgency and destructive strategies of the Indian state to contain the resistance. But the reality of Kashmir is still disputed today and Kashmiris resisting to regain their collective identity exists as a powerful ground for believing that Kashmiris are trying to keep the memories of the past alive. The following line from the prologue to *The Country Without a Post Office* (1997), a collection of poems by a Kashmiri poet, expresses the nostalgic longing of Kashmiris for their lost land.

"Let me cry out in that void, say it as I can, I write on that void:

Kashmir, Kaschmir, Cashmere, Qashmi, Cashmir, Cashmire, Kashmere" (3).

Moreover, the chasm between people in the society, that was created because of their political affiliations, has also made them oblivious and divided on the matter of their identity. For instance, Mahjoor writes in *Lost in Terror* (2016) that there are *Shers* - people who follow Sheikh Abdullah and support his decision of signing an agreement with the government, and there are *Bakras* who are loyal to Mirwaiz Farooq who supports Kashmir's accession with Pakistan (*Lost in Terror* 11-12). The novel also portrays how the antagonism between these two sections often results in violence.

There is no denying the fact that Kashmiris have been facing discrimination and alienation because of their identity in the past and present. But according to Alexander, the notable "identity revision", that has determining effect on their future, is carried out only if the traumas are experienced after its successful representation and construction as Cultural Trauma through a sociological process ("Toward" 22). So, it is possible to observe effects on their future identity only if Cultural Trauma is successfully established for Kashmiris and acknowledged by the world at large. It can therefore be concluded that traumatizing occurrences and their effects on members of the society in the Indian occupied

Jammu and Kashmir, as portrayed in the selected narratives, satisfies all the essential characteristics mentioned in Alexander's definition of Cultural Trauma. But qualifying events, to become a recognized Cultural Trauma, are required to be defined, narrated, and effectively mediated or communicated as a trauma to the audience, as trauma does not occur naturally but it is recognized or realized through a trauma process and "socially mediated attribution" (Alexander "Toward" 8). Ron Eyerman, in his book *Is This America? Katrina as Cultural Trauma* (2015), expounds in simplest words that Cultural Trauma is 'cultural' as it invokes "meaning and identity" and it is 'trauma' because it invokes "powerful emotions" (131). In the following section, I hereby analyze the selected texts to trace the steps involved in the trauma process for constructing a Cultural Trauma narrative and conclude if the meaning-making for Kashmir's Cultural trauma-inducing injuries has been successful in creating and disseminating compelling narratives for Cultural Trauma or not.

4.4 The Creation of Trauma through 'Spiral of Signification' or 'Cultural Classification': Putting Cultural Trauma Theory to Work

Suffering groups do not make claims about a social reality collectively and initiate the trauma process as such, rather it is some social agents who signify and represent the reality, and communicate their collective pain. As discussed in the theoretical framework, social agents, termed as carrier groups by Alexander, are members of the suffering collectivity and, being collective agents of a trauma process, broadcast the symbolic representation of a tragic reality. Carrier groups have a particular position in the social structure and discursive talent for the articulation of their claims or symbolic representation of traumatizing events. It is called meaning-making, to interpret the event and significantly project trauma claims to an audience, and this is how the social construction of Cultural Trauma is initiated. The trauma process that occurs between events and their representation can be considered what Kenneth Thompson termed as 'spiral of signification'. This is an intrinsically escalating way of signifying problems and issues, which means it increases the potential threat of a problem through the way the problem is signified (Thompson 16). Alexander believes a symbolic representation of trauma is dependent on the construction of "a compelling framework of cultural classification" (Alexander "Toward" 12), which

requires four essential critical representations for successful meaning-making or creation of a master narrative.

1. The nature of the pain
2. The nature of the victim
3. Relation of the trauma victim to the wider audience
4. Attribution of responsibility

Various fictional and non-fiction works are written about Kashmir by Kashmiri as well as non-Kashmiri authors. The selected fictional narratives are authored by Kashmiri writers who are members of the affected social group which is a region of concern in the present study. Shahnaz Bashir and Nayeema Mahjoor, being writers from Kashmir, can be considered "carrier groups" for interpreting Kashmir's traumatizing reality and articulating or projecting the trauma claims to the public as mediators. In this section, I analyze their selected novels, *The Half Mother* (2014) and *Lost in Terror* (2016), to study how they address Kashmir's traumatizing reality and make claims about its causes, victims, responsibilities, relevance, and effects, and for this, I utilize the framework given by Jeffrey C. Alexander for a master narrative.

4.4.1 The Nature of Pain

The meaning-making regarding *the nature of pain* can be understood and determined by answering such questions as What has befallen the traumatized group or the wider collectivity it is a part of? And how does the affected group perceive the traumatizing pain (Alexander "Toward" 13)? I will trace and determine *the nature of pain*, in the context of Kashmir especially after 1989, by investigating how authors define the painful injuries to a collectivity in the selected narratives. Various individual and collective painful experiences of Kashmiris reverberate through the texts.

Both the novels realistically illustrate that every child, man, or woman in Kashmir is subjected to one or other horrendous event(s) as they try to breathe and live in the suffocating and vicious circumstances while facing one torment after the other. Army has sieged stadiums, streets, roads, offices, markets, orchards and schools. Indian armed forces have been carrying out numerous such executions as abductions, fake encounters, search

operations, curfews, crackdowns, for enforced "disappearances", "torture", "arbitrary detentions" and "custodial killings' (Human Rights Watch 2006), which are routine abuses in the valley even now. These incidents are so recurrent that one can easily lose the count of incidents of rape, kidnapping, murder, and crackdown and not a single day passes without violence around (*Lost in Terror* 103). Since 1990, Kashmiri newspapers have been regularly reporting news about innocent civilians who are "killed in an encounter" between troops and militants (Duschinski 111). But Kashmiris are aware of the fact that these fake encounters are rather extrajudicial executions of the Muslim majority labeled as foreign militants, and they are targeted solely for death and then buried under false identities or names. In the early 2000s, Police performed DNA tests to ascertain the identity of dead Kashmiris killed in encounters under the pressure from families of dead and non-governmental organizations. People rose in mass processions to express their anger against injustice after the tests concluded that the dead bodies are not of foreign militants but Kashmiri civilians – a shopkeeper, an Imam, a carpenter and the likes (Duschinski 111). Since the 1989 uprisings against Indian rule, eight thousand Kashmiris got disappeared and seventy thousand are reported to be killed along with other less visible war crimes (Kak x).

Women are suffering the most amid this chaos, it has turned them into stone, and most of them have severe mental ailments just like Shaista's mother in *Lost in Terror* (2016) who is turned into a statue, devoid of any expression and life, after her daughter's murder. Among many other traumatized women, children, and men, Shahnaz Bashir in *The Half Mother* (2014) also portrays the agonizing journey of a representative Kashmiri mother who faces "tragedy over tragedy over tragedy" (180). Haleema hates the fact she breathes or exists, and that she is conscious. While undergoing severe psychological stress and loneliness, she finds solace in talking to walls and associating memories with things as she is the only survivor in the Joo family.

The Kashmiri war-ridden society portrayed in both novels shows that the weakened societal bonds, as a result of growing oppression and consequent resistance, aggravate their sufferings. Earlier they used to share their sorrows, pains, secrets, and joys but after 1989, the armed struggle between insurgents and the Indian military intensified and it rips them off their sympathy, solidarity and social bonds that kept them together. Everyone is scared

of the Army, and it is out of this fear that they cannot extend help even to the neighbors living next door. Mutual trust has become "the first casualty in the rebellion" (*Lost in Terror* 24) and everyone is "besieged by fear and paranoia" (25). There is no communication and connection left between the members of family or society as they are made to feel like strangers in their own homes, streets, and lands. Moreover, alleged atrocities committed by security forces are relatively high in remote areas, but since these areas are inaccessible, such news remains largely hidden from local and international media. They have unleashed "a reign of terror in the border villages" but the government has not looked into a single complaint (Mahjoor 261).

Moreover, Kashmir seems to be undergoing metamorphosis, including climate, nature, and society. It has lost its beauty and peace; "vegetable farms, paddy fields, bush lands, poplar grooves and plum orchards" (*Lost in Terror* 11) are taken over by security forces and what is left are unpruned lawns, orchards with wild grass, streets studded with army bunkers and a soldier standing at every ten paces. This illegitimate intrusion is the reason why they feel that discomfort has seeped into their lives, the daily routine has been disturbed, and families have fallen apart. Shrieks of men and women whose loved ones are being taken away or killed, strange silence in the streets at night, and deafening explosions are the new music of Kashmir; "the business of blasting is horrible", says Ab Jaan (13). Soldiers humiliate the civilians and brutally kill their self-respect, Mahjoor portrays how mothers wail for their sons in the streets or request security forces to let them meet their relatives in jails, Fareeda touches the soldier's shoe and request him to set her husband free but they never listen. "This longing is a pain, an eternal torture. It kills us every day and resurrects us to kill again" (Bashir 151), says a woman waiting for her disappeared son. Detainees from Kashmir are like amputated souls, trampled over by cement rollers, being treated in the worst way possible during interrogation. Haleema sees "limbless, fingerless, nailless, hairless, toothless, eyeless, earless detainees" (*The Half Mother* 80) in an interrogation center.

Kashmir, as Linda Green aptly puts it, lives amid a 'culture of fear' triggered by pervasive and continuous fear of arbitrary arrests, detentions, illegal killings, and enforced disappearances (Green qtd in Duschinski 119). Security personnel kills civilians

extrajudicially but their actions are protected by impunity given by the institutions working under the aegis of the Indian government. Muslim Kashmiris are being significantly killed since the beginning of the conflict and the situation seems to follow the catch and kill rule. A security officer while talking to *The New York Times* in 1993, discusses illegal security operations like extrajudicial killings during the early years of insurgency and he says that we do not have any custodial deaths, we have "alley deaths". He proclaims if they get suspicious of someone for being an insurgent, they pick him up, take him to another alley and kill him, and then take him to the police station where the dead body is released (Gargen 1). Tariq Ali, in his essay "Afterword: Not Crushed, Merely Ignored" included in the anthology *Kashmir: The Case for Freedom* (2011), states that after the incident of 9/11, the liberation movement in Kashmir "was conveniently subsumed under War on Terror" and Israeli military officers "were invited to visit Akhnur military base for seeking advice on counter-terrorism measures" (76). Their advice was, "Do as we do in Palestine, and buy our weapons" and for the next six years since 2002, Ali proclaims that "New Delhi had purchased $5 billion worth of weaponry from Israelis, to good effect" (77). Amnesty International has also repeatedly shown its concern about extrajudicial killings, disappearances, torture, and rape of Kashmiris in the custody of the Indian state. But the state authorities maintain their consistent silence over the calls for independent inquiries, and they do not allow Amnesty International or the UN's human rights mechanism to visit the state and investigate the situation which feeds the aura of impunity in Kashmir valley (Amnesty International April 2001).

4.4.2 The Nature of Victim

The victim of these traumatizing pains can be determined by probing into such integrated questions as; Who is actually afflicted with the traumatizing pain? Is the trauma limited to a particular group or do "the people" in general get affected by it? (Alexander "Toward" 13). Here, I investigate the selected texts to trace how authors, being cultural agents of the trauma process, have established victims in their trauma narratives.

Lost in Terror (2016) depicts that ever since Army has taken control of everything, be it people, streets, houses, or innocent children, Kashmiris live in a constant state of despair and frustration. Every single person has to submit before soldiers during

crackdowns, curfews or search operations and be a meek lamb. Fear and terror loom over their heads, as they keep their curtain drawn and lights are kept switched off, giving the impression that no one is home, to avoid any confrontation with the army (Mahjoor 38). Men, women, old, young, children, and Adults; every Kashmiri is subjugated by the Indian Armed forces, especially members of the Kashmiri Muslim community as they are in majority and demand independence and some are bent on acceding with Pakistan. The insurgents who stand against the oppression are called either "militants", "terrorists" or "Pakistan-trained bastards" (Mahjoor 129) by the security forces. Shahnaz Bashir narrates an incident in his novel when twenty-three rounds were pumped into the chest of a blacksmith's son when he refuses to take a Pakistani flag down a telegraph pole (*The Half Mother* 32). Religious and racial violence against Muslim and pro-Pakistani Kashmiris is quite eminent in innumerable episodes of atrocities meted out to Kashmiri life and identity. Hilal Bhatt's "Fayazabad 31223" is an essay included in the anthology *Kashmir: The Case for Freedom* (2011) in which he illustrates a real and horrifying account of a Muslim teenager who escaped his death at the hands of "Kar Sevaks (Hindu Nationalist volunteers)" (52) who were returning after the demolition of Babri Mosque. He survived the massacre by faking his identity as a Hindu Pandit. Kashmir valley has been turned into "a theater of warfare" (Duschinski 118), where the lives of inhabitants seem to be worthless and Kashmiris breathe at the mercy of state agencies or the armed forces.

In *Lost in Terror* (2016), it is illustrated that there is a monopoly of Hindu men in media which makes it difficult especially for Muslim men and women, having no real representation in media, to get their voices and opinions registered or present their agonies to the world. Other than the narrator being in a respectable position, there are only a few Muslim employees in media, and that too on the posts like orderlies or peons usually. One can walk past "the forbidden premises" (*Lost in Terror* 20) of the radio station only after clearing competitive exams. Her Hindu colleagues are prejudiced against her until she proved herself a woman of supreme professional excellence. Muslims are not usually given any respectable position in government offices. More than 80 percent of the staff in the radio stations belongs to the Kashmiri Hindu community (*Lost in Terror* 24) and people believe there is an internal bond between Hindus and the Indian armed forces.

Following political instability, the state government resigns paving the way for direct rule from New Delhi. The new governor is a Hindu nationalist, he appoints people from outside Kashmir to notable posts and local Muslim officers get transferred to less significant departments (Mahjoor 30). During the early years of 1990s, most Hindus and almost the entire Pandit community flee the valley (62), and the Indian government facilitates their escape, as Mahjoor mentions in her *Lost in Terror* (2016) that security forces helped them pack their belongings and arrange vehicles for taking them away from the valley in the dead of the night (*Lost in Terror* 91). This makes it justified to state that the Muslim community is deliberately left behind as they are the real target and major victims of atrocities and oppression. After resistance movements intensified in the occupied Kashmir, the then Governor of the state Jagmohan's policies facilitated the migration of Hindu Pandits so that they could "deal with the Muslims with an 'iron fist' and work toward larger designs of occupation" (Shah 16)**.** Mridu Rai, an Indian historian, in her essay "Making a Part Inalienable: Folding Kashmir into India's Imagination" (2013) mentions that neutral estimates in 1991 suggested that out of 1,40,000 Kashmiri Pandits, 1,00,000 left the valley after 1989 (272). Some of these departures were considered to be a designed exile and were attributed to the political maneuverings of the Indian government. Rai asserts that the reasons behind the mass exodus of Kashmiri Pandits at the same time are mired in a lot of controversies. However, many believe that Jagmohan and his appointed governor in Kashmir encouraged the non-Kashmiri population to leave and made arrangements for their exit, as to make a clear way for indiscriminate and lethal military actions against those whom they identify as "terrorists" (Rai 273).

Kashmiri Muslims have been disregarded and marginalized during its Hindu rulership in past as well. Mridu Rai argues in her aforementioned essay that in 1885, after the death of Ranbir Singh, the Dogra rule reinvented the religio-political landscape of Kashmir as Hindu. It was so widely registered that in 1931 Walter Lawrence, an eminent civil servant, declared that Kashmir is "Holy ground to all Hindus of India" (Rai 267). The way Kashmir was reimagined as originally Hindu contributed to the marginalization of Kashmiri Muslims and neglect of their culture and disregard of a dominant religion in Kashmir. Rai in "Making a Part Inalienable" (2013) also discusses that after the partition of the subcontinent, the Kashmiri Muslim majority demanded freedom and claimed their

recognition, but their demands were disregarded and got labelled as "secessionist" and "communal", hence it was doubly delegitimized (271). Muslims are targeted by stereotyping them as pro-Islamists in Kashmir but Mridu Rai argues that barring a few marginal groups, Kashmiri Muslims have never clamored for Islamization but only for freedom and a legitimate government (277). However, their demands have always been neglected and they were pinned in a state of helplessness. Arundhati Roy in her essay "Azadi: The Only Thing Kashmiris Want" proclaims that the Indian state, "known amongst the knowing as the Deep state", has gone to the extreme to "subvert, suppress, misrepresent, discredit, intimidate and snuff out" the voice of Kashmiris (37). Through their "interpellative strategies" (Aamir *Questioning* iv), draconian laws, and unjust policies, the Indian state has been trying to curb the voice of Kashmiris and enforce normalcy through the barrel of gun but Kashmiris have always registered their resistance through peaceful protests and non-violent uprisings.

4.4.3 Relation of Trauma Victim to the Wider Audience

After determining the nature of pain and establishing the identity of the victim, according to Alexander's cultural trauma theory, it is required to establish the relation of a traumatized group to the wider audience. It influences the creation of a persuasive cultural trauma narrative. Such a representation answers the questions like, what is the relationship between the victimized group and greater collectivity? and to what extent the audience for the trauma narrative can identify themselves with the victimized group and symbolically experience the trauma under discussion (Alexander "Toward" 14)? A compelling narrative about the meaning of an event is created by carrier groups not only to determine the significance of an event but also to excite the public imagination by clarifying its relevance to them. A shared base of values may convince the audience to identify with a particular narrative about a social injury and extend their solidarity. J. C. Alexander in another book *The Meanings of Social Life* (2003) asserts that the audience mourns mass suffering only if they can identify with the victims, and this happens when the meaning-making process is carried out in the right way (4).

The audience for the selected narratives includes not only suffering Kashmiris but also extended to people living outside the occupied lands of Kashmir. The selected fictional

narratives, Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother* (2014) and Nayeema Mahjoor's *Lost in Terror* (2016), look at lived experiences of armed struggle and counterinsurgency. Authors address the universal themes of pain, struggle, and survival in a conflict zone. Nayeema Mahjoor in her novel, *Lost in Terror* (2016), delineates the experienced reality of garrisoned Kashmir studded with bunkers (32), where there is blood, tears, smoke, fear and death looming everywhere (158). Being a journalist, Mahjoor gives a fictional account of her factual firsthand experience of working in the valley. This female perspective coming from Kashmir about the struggle of Kashmiris contribute significantly to the literature already available about the occupied Kashmir. Likewise, Shahnaz Bashir's novel *The Half Mother* (2014) exquisitely narrates the plight of Kashmiris under Indian military occupation after the eruption of the Armed struggle in the late 1980s. A place where the entire sylvan landscape seems to be garrisoned (*The Half Mother* 86), and life seems to come at a standstill with the Indian army infiltrating the whole valley. Unending war and death, along with curfews, raids, crackdowns, killings, and disappearances are routine affairs, causing despair and frustration in Kashmiris (*The Half Mother* 32). The rage, frustration, terror, the fear of unknown, uncanny strangeness, constant anxiety, and feeling of absurd existence that every Kashmiri experiences, also seeps into the heart and mind of a reader, as the description of agony and pain is so vivid that it carries a universal appeal. His novel may be considered an effective effort to evoke sympathy and create awareness in a wider audience regarding the brutalities and oppression taking place in Kashmir, and the relentlessness of the Indian government. Javeed Ahmad Raina in his research article also concludes that Bashir's novel successfully showcases "the agony, misfortune and pain" of Kashmiris (Raina 5). Such narratives seem to recount universal loss, grief and agony. This may add to the slowly emerging awareness, as Shubh Mathur asserts in *The Human Toll of the Kashmir Conflict* (2016), that road to peace in South Asia lies through Kashmir and it can be materialized through remembering and justice for the oppression and subjugation of Kashmiris (Mathur 4). Therefore, people specifically living in South Asia, who are indirectly affected by the chaos emerging through the atrocities committed in an occupied region, can identify and sympathize with the victims of traumatizing events described in the selected narratives.

Moreover, the narratives selected for this study trigger an emotional response in readers by highlighting the basic human rights violations in Kashmir. Mahjoor and Bashir depict in their novels that Indian armed forces keep suppressing the rights of Kashmiris, for instance, their freedom of speech, right to live and move freely, right to recognition and equality, and a majority of the fundamental human rights laid out by the United Nations in its official document of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Kashmiris are restricted to their blacked-out homes and roads in Kashmir appear to be long sentence punctuated with bunkers, check posts, or army camps (*The Half Mother* 115). Under constant surveillance by the security forces, people collectively feel uncomfortable and a sense of strangeness seeps through the society. Mahjoor says that Kashmiris are left at the mercy of a large number of security forces who seems to have taken control of everything (*Lost in Terror* 34), and everyone in Kashmir appears to be besieged by "fear and paranoia" which gradually enters into their minds and hearts (25). This seems to breach their right to "life, liberty and security" (Article 03, Universal Declaration of Human Rights). Besides, Kashmiris have to face discrimination and subjugation, as Bashir says Kashmiris are "unwelcomed outside Kashmir" (*The Half Mother* 119). This denies them their "right to recognition everywhere" (Article 06, Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

Article 09 and Article 19, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, assert the prohibition of arbitrary arrests and detentions, freedom of opinion and expression respectively. These basic rights are violated by the Indian Armed forces and the Indian state in the occupied Kashmir. Mahjoor emphasizes that killings, arrests, raids, detentions, disappearances, and crackdowns are routine in Kashmir (*Lost in Terror* 103) and such violations consume numerous lives every day (178). Shubh Mathur also proclaims, in her book *The Human Toll of the Kashmir Conflict* (2016), that peaceful protests in Kashmir against killings, abuses, raids, detentions or disappearances meet with gunfire by police and Army (Mathur 5). Bashir depicts in his novel that the freedom of expression is curbed by the Indian government, and access to international media is restricted through censorship or interruption in frequency (*The Half Mother* 23). Indian armed forces consider "timeworn women, fragile old men, innocuous children" (*The Half Mother* 175) a threat to the peace and security of the regions, and innocent Kashmiris are tortured, lynched, humiliated, and murdered by the army. Shahnaz Bashir in *The Half Mother* (2014) depicts

oppressed Kashmiris as they are being "watched like criminals" (185), "treated like dogs" (136), and deliberately left to be mere "spectators of their own helplessness" (186). The consequent despair, angst, anxiety, fear, and frustration prevalent in Kashmir, as represented through the selected narratives, stimulates the imaginations of the audience and creates a possibility for them to identify and participate in traumatizing experiences of suffering Kashmiris.

Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother* (2014) has been applauded by critics and reviewers for its realistic portrayal of the traumatizing reality of Kashmir in fiction. Suvasis Das in his article "Voice from the Margin" (2018) argues that Bashir's artistic voice renders a horrific tale of pain and agony to the outside world, and he calls this novel a "universal tale of loss, pain, trauma, and voicelessness" (7). Kishwar Naheed, a Pakistani poet, in an endorsement on the back cover of Mahjoor's *Lost in Terror* (2016), applauds the novel for its insight into the universality of pain and the way it transcends boundaries in making readers identify with the characters. Naheed emphasizes the relevance of the novel and states that Mahjoor's stories remind us of freedom movements in other oppressed and occupied regions of the world (blurb). So, the universal appeal of these representations to the audience and artistic portrayal of truth makes it justified to state that authors of selected texts, as carrier groups, have created relevance for readers in their narratives and established the relation between trauma victims and the audience.

4.4.4 Attribution of Responsibility

According to the Cultural Trauma theory, a successful narrative is required to attribute responsibility and identify perpetrators of a defined traumatizing pain. It refers to the questions like, who injured the victim and caused trauma? Who is the oppressor or perpetrator of afflicting these traumatizing pains? (Alexander "Toward" 15). In this section, I study the selected texts to identify whom the authors establish as antagonists and perpetrators.

Blacksmith's son falls to "Indian army bullets", Haleema's father is killed by the army, Her son Imran is arrested by the army, Shafiqa's daughter is stripped "by a trooper" (*The Half Mother* 32), and protestors marching in processions are "beaten and dispersed"

by the army (68), Fareeda's husband is taken away by the security forces in Mahjor's novel *Lost in Terror* (2016), and numerous vicious atrocities fall upon innocent Kashmiris at the hands of India army backed by the central government. There seems to be no comfort zone in Kashmir, as Indian armed forces are spread everywhere. Mahjoor asserts that nobody knows who is the master and who are subjects in uncertain circumstances that prevail in Kashmir, as she says, "We were at the mercy of soldiers and it was they who decided who would live and who would die. They decided how many breaths we could take" *(Lost in Terror* 135). Haley Duschinski, an Associate Professor at DePauw University, argues that the Indian government preserves its illegitimate supremacy through a massive state-security apparatus, comprised of more than half a million troops, including the Indian Army, CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force), JKP (Jammu and Kashmir Police), Indo-Tibetan Border Police, and other structures like SOG (Special Operations Groups of the Police and the reformed militant militia (Ikhwan) run under the aegis of the Indian state. This intense militarization and patterns of marginalization make Kashmiris feel a sense of strangeness, humiliation, and alienation from society and government in an occupied zone (Duschinski 118-119). Sanjay Kak in "The Fire is at My Heart: An Introduction" (2013) also proclaims that India came to Kashmir with its mask of security forces, which has made it a region with the "highest concentration of soldiers" in today's world (Kak x). Such constant surveillance and fear make Kashmiris feel alienated and strange in their own lands.

Even though writers, journalists, and critics have to pay the price for saying the truth but numerous Kashmiri and non-Kashmiri writers and academics plainly demonstrate India's strategic violence in Kashmir. Arundhati Roy, in "Azadi: The Only Thing Kashmiris Want" (2011), writes that after 1989, the Indian state has done everything to "subvert, suppress, represent, misrepresent, discredit, interpret, intimidate, purchase and snuff out the voice of Kashmiris" (37). They have used a lot of "money, violence, disinformation, propaganda, torture, collaborators and informers, imprisonment and rigged election" to subdue the will of the people for *Azadi* (Roy 37). Kashmiris are denied their basic human rights by the Indian state and its agents spread in the valley. Among various state agents, Nayeema Mahjoor in her novel mentions the ruthlessness meted out by Ikhwanis in Kashmir who are former resistance fighters but the Indian state turns them into

civilian informers to create fear, helplessness, and suspicion in the Indian occupied Kashmir. Kamala Visweswaran, a writer and Professor of Anthropology at the University of Texas-Austin, in "Introduction" to her edited book *Everyday Occupations: Experiencing Militarism in South Asia and Middle East* (2013) validates their presence in Kashmir and states that the Ikhwanis are feared by the people as they can assume "many bodily functions of Indian security forces" and may resort to "beatings, harassment, forced disappearances, torture, and execution" (26) to suppress the innocent and unarmed Kashmiris. They are armed and funded by the Indian government and they kill, maim or torture anyone who they doubt to be favoring freedom or separatist movements.

Arundhati Roy, an Indian novelist, gives an account of the armed struggle transforming into unarmed uprisings and mass processions in Kashmir after 2008, and unmasks the showpiece of Democracy in the Indian state, which has suppressed Kashmir's freedom, as she quotes a protestor's words who says "Democracy without freedom is Demon-crazy" (40). Roy asserts he must be referring to the insanity that allows the world's largest democracy to direct the world's largest occupation and contain Kashmir's resistance and movements for freedom, and still calls itself a democracy. Government, which poses to be democratic, is significantly complicit in tormenting Kashmiris, as it runs the dirty business of tears and blood, using the armed forces to curb the resistance, claiming innocent lives of the civilian population during the conflict. Shahnaz Bashir illustrates the cold-blooded enemy in *The Half Mother* (2014), Haleema files a case against the army in court but she is denied the justice she deserves, as the court protects the vicious deeds of the perpetrators. The Army officer asks her to move on and offers her money but she refuses as it cannot assuage her pain, she tells him "You are incapable of justice" (*The Half Mother 153)*. Besides, after killing Ab Jaan, the army officer says "see what happens when you rebel against us" (50). Justice is denied to the victims, and their struggles for freedom are suppressed by the Indian state, as Roy in her critical essay "*Azadi*" (2011) says what is a freedom struggle for Kashmiris is considered a terrorist campaign by the Indian state (40).

Although it is repeatedly illustrated in the selected narratives that the oppressors are operating openly in Kashmir, they are not usually named in the newspapers, to keep their identity obscured, because the Indian government exercises absolute power over the

sources of information and they publish biased news only. "Five More Dead in the City" (*The Half Mother* 78), reports a newspaper, "Shaista was shot dead" (*Lost in Terror* 96), leaving the murderer unnamed. It is obvious that the print media is under the complete control of the central government, and it writes what the assassins of innocent victims want them to write (*Lost in Terror* 98). The narrator's baba, in *Lost in Terror*, keeps saying that somebody somewhere "has taken the reins of our lives in his hands" (27), but he never reveals the identity of this "somebody" leaving the oppressor unnamed here as well. Everyone is uncertain and confused about the growing mess in the valley as everything has collapsed, the administration is nearly invisible, and only the Armed forces and insurgents can be seen at the forefront. Mridu Rai in her essay, "Making a Part Inalienable: Folding Kashmir into India's Imagination " (2013) in Sanjay Kak's anthology *Until My Freedom has Come* (2013), discusses that Kashmiris have expressed their frustration in a meeting with members of Indian all-party delegation in 2010, as they referred to the irony that India insists on Kashmir being an integral and inalienable part of India but still suspects Kashmiris for working as Pakistani agents and use military actions to justify its suspicions. Every Kashmiri wants to ask Indian defenders of integrity, "Why don't you feel our pain if we are a part of your body?" (Rai 278).

4.5 Conclusion

Carrier groups make such claims to define, symbolize and dramatize original traumatizing events, on the behalf of a suffering group, but they must convincingly articulate and project their trauma claims to a broader audience. Numerous literary figures, political leaders, intellectuals, and symbol creators emerge from the suffering group, acting as carrier groups, make competing claims about social reality and weave narratives by identifying antagonists and protagonists. If the narration significantly addresses all the essential representations specified by Alexander for master narrative, the success of trauma interpretation will give carrier groups the power to institutionalize their interpretations in powerful ways. The discussion about the representation of Kashmir's traumatizing reality in the selected narratives has shown that recurrent horrendous events, impacting every aspect of Kashmir's life, have all the required characteristics of being classified or established as a Cultural Trauma. Shahnaz Bashir and Nayeema Mahjoor depict their

claims about Kashmir's unrest, and their narratives under discussion significantly represent Kashmir's collective trauma and seem to be effectively contributing to the trauma process. But the ultimate success of such cultural trauma narratives is determined by the role of social structures that mediate these claims, interpretations, or representations, which is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5
UNFOLDING TRAUMA PROCESS: MEDIATION OF CULTURAL CLASSIFICATION

"I suppose the most revolutionary act one can engage in is… to tell the truth." (Zinn 4)

I'm the rebel of the streets that been eulogized in blood
Dramatized in politics duly hated with no love
Demonized in the news with their fabricated tales
While sodomized young kids are still screaming in their jails

Lost and never found in this facade of peace
Reflected in thoughts, that Dajjal1 now breathes
He speaks to his puppets and silhoets now tremble
'Cause the brave men are dead and all cowards resemble

MC Kash, "Why We Rebel" (2011)

All the critical representations of the traumatizing reality of Kashmir which are analyzed in the previous chapter are required in the meaning-making process and lead to the construction of a persuasive framework of claim-making for any social suffering. This meaning-making work or cultural classification results in the creation of a cultural trauma narrative which in other terms is the outcome of a successful spiral of signification. Alexander calls it a "master narrative" ("Toward" 12) which compels a larger audience to acknowledge and identify the traumatizing pains of a suffering group. But even the most compelling narratives or claim-making, constructed as a result of successful cultural classification, is necessarily required to be mediated and it must reach a wider audience outside the suffering collectivity as well. If trauma narratives are successfully disseminated within society at large, a Cultural Trauma for suffering collectivity can be established. This will allow a wider audience to participate in others' pains and make them extend their sympathies by broadening the realm of their social understanding (Alexander "Toward"

24). However, the creation of a master narrative, according to Alexander, is similar to a linguistic action that does not unfold in an ideal or transparent speech situation, rather it is unfolded or "powerfully mediated by the nature of institutional arenas and stratificational hierarchies within which it occurs" (15).

In this chapter, these institutional arenas are investigated, in the context of the occupied Kashmir, in which carrier groups articulate or unfold their trauma claims or narratives in an attempt to make them reach a large audience. Also in this chapter, the invidious influence of various stratificational hierarchies is analyzed on the articulation of trauma claims or narratives. Institutional arenas for the articulation of narratives can vary from narrative to narrative, for instance, it can be mass media, government, literature, law, or religion. While Stratificational hierarchies, being prominent social and political structures, play a significant and most influential role in the trauma process. It is these institutional arenas and stratificational hierarchies that direct or condition the ultimate social construction or deconstruction of any traumatizing suffering as Cultural Trauma.

5.1 Curfewed Kashmir: Meaning-Making Process as it Unfolds in Different Institutional Arenas

In this sub-section, I analyze the unfolding of the meaning-making process of Kashmir's traumatizing realities in such institutional arenas as Mass media, state bureaucracy, legal, and aesthetic realm, as to investigate whether they facilitate or hinder the trauma process.

5.1.1 Mass Media

Firstly, I probe into the representational process as it is carried out in the media, analyzing the selected narratives for highlighting the challenges, opportunities, or restrictions faced by the carrier groups while mediating their trauma claims through media. The authors, being members of suffering collectivity, illustrates how Kashmiris are denied representation and face restrictions in media. Shahnaz Bashir is a Kashmiri academic who teaches journalism, and Nayeema Mahjoor is a journalist who worked in local as well as international media. They realistically portray how media is controlled and manipulated by the central government to serve its own purpose of muffling victimized Kashmiris.

Numerous traumatizing incidents remain unreported and unheard. Haleema keeps going from one station to the other but her voice is never heard or given an opportunity to be represented in the media. The producer of the news bulletin at a desolated and empty non-functional radio station refuses to help Haleema, as he says we do not air "this kind of news" (*The Half Mother* 72), and people at Television Station refuse to broadcast her news calling it a "dangerous and unconventional" stuff (73). Indian corporate media is complicit in denying legitimacy to resistance and protests in Kashmir, as they keep amplifying the false and deceptive Indian intelligence agencies in the valley who shift the blame of their committed crimes to Pakistan and Islam. The effective censorship ensures a lack of Kashmir's perspectives on mediascape which leads to a sense of alienation and repressed anger in Kashmiris and they hold journalists accountable for silencing and misinterpreting them (Mishra 12).

Both the selected narratives depict that the central government exercises absolute control on media houses and people working in media cannot report with "concision, ethical neutrality, and perspective balance" which is essential for the smooth claim-making or construction of Cultural Trauma (Alexander "Toward" 18). Employees are thoroughly "searched and frisked" (*Lost in Terror* 92) by paramilitary forces before entering the premises of the radio station. In the novel, *Lost in Terror* (2016), the narrator, who works in a media agency, feels a sense of satisfaction and happiness at the mere mention of *Azaadi* but she never expresses it openly as she thinks she "would have lost the chance of working in the media that was controlled by the government" (*Lost in Terror* 11). Independent and impartial journalism remains an unrealized dream for her until she leaves the country.

Media offices are seen to be just a masquerade in Kashmir's Press Enclave as most of the programmes are developed in Delhi, under central government policies, and in media stations situated in Kashmir, there is "no broadcast to produce" (*Lost in Terror* 180) amid chaos, making it difficult to cast media spotlight on the repressed indigenous social groups. The newsroom is shifted to Delhi along with the Hindu staff, leaving the radio station practically non-functional in Kashmir. Nyla Ali Khan in *The Parchment of Kashmir* (2012) also asserts the same predicament that local media persons in the valley were made to stay confined to their homes because of curfews while those coming from Delhi were given

armed protection and absolute freedom to move. The story of Kashmir could only be "entrusted to the narrative skills of journalists enjoying the stamp of official approval" (Khan *Parchment* 219). This reflects largely the prejudiced and discriminatory behavior of the government-run media houses towards the Kashmiri Muslim community, as most of the Hindus and the entire Pandit community is evacuated from the valley already. The newsroom, being the only source of information for Kashmiris, is in complete disarray, as it is nothing more than "the mouthpiece of government propaganda and the secret hideout of intelligence agencies" (*Lost in Terror* 92). The manipulation and constraints imposed on the representation of Kashmir's reality tell that reporting is extremely biased in the Kashmir valley. In "Indian Media and Kashmir Coverage" (2007) Ather Zia asserts that the Indian state agents report the cases of rape, torture and killings etc. as the outcome of insurgency, hiding the fact that it is actually an offshoot of the Indian occupation (Zia n.p.), hence not attributing the responsibility adequately and encouraging the perpetrators.

There is no true representation of Kashmiris in media, and the content published or broadcast is far from the truth as it is "manufactured on the advice of the intelligence agencies" (*Lost in Terror* 132). Everyone has their own version of the causes of every killing, enforced disappearance, or any atrocity, and every version clearly dismisses the truth, blames the victim and justifies violence. Unbiased journalism that sympathizes with victims is discouraged by the government and they do not facilitate the media platform that publish any Human rights stuff (*The Half Mother* 76). In a comment made to *The New York Times* in 1993 (early years of Armed struggle), a former High Court Judge who later chronicles human rights abuses in Kashmir valley says that everybody is afraid, scared, and feels insecure in Kashmir, "especially someone like me involved in Human rights work" (Gargen 1).

Despite being considered one of the most militarized regions in the world, the brutalities occurring in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir remain underpublicized because of constraints and censorship imposed by the government on the media. The perspectives of the victimized Kashmiris regarding Indian occupation and human rights violation on a large scale have been largely silenced and censored by the Indian state and media. Danish Zargar, while analyzing Indian print media in "Partial Journalism" (2014),

calls Indian media's lack of reporting on Kashmir's perspectives a "partial journalism" (13). Goldie Osuri in "Kashmir 2016: Notes Toward a Media Ecology of an Occupied Zone" (2019) analyzed that various international news media like *The Washington Post, The New York Times, The Guardian, Al-Jazeera* etc. mention Kashmir being a conflict zone but the fact that there occur regular human rights violations or it is an intractable and world's longest-running geopolitical dispute does not figure enough in local or international media (3).

5.1.2 Legal Realm

In accordance with Cultural Trauma theory, when the cultural classification or meaning work for a traumatizing pain enters the legal realm, it demands distribution of "punishments and material reparations" among those who are responsible for causing trauma (Alexander "Toward" 17). In the Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir, there is no justice provided to the victims from either law enforcement agencies like Police and Intelligence Agencies, or court of law. It communicates that a Kashmiri's life means nothing to those who embody the task of enforcing the law in occupied Kashmir. Both the selected novels illustrate that there is a stronghold of the Indian government and the Indian Army on local Police as they themselves mention clearly that their job is confined to identifying and delivering dead bodies only. Police do not file an FIR for Haleema's son, as they say, "we cannot lodge an FIR against Army" (*The Half Mother* 63), and Mahjoor labels or describes them as "defanged snake" (*Lost in Terror* 257) when the local police refuse to lodge an FIR for the missing employee at the station and Aunty Ji's son saying they are not given an authority to do that. Moreover, when Haleema finally seeks help from the court of law, Justice does not come on the day of the hearing, clearly facilitating the army. It is illustrated by the authors how legal institutions fail in providing security and justice to innocent civilians and in punishing the oppressors.

5.1.3 Aesthetic Realm

When the representational process is unfolded in the aesthetic realm it is channeled by various narratives and genres, aiming at producing identification with imaginative trauma narratives and emotional catharsis (Alexander "Toward" 15). The authors of the

selected texts illustrate in their novels, the misrepresentation of Kashmir's past and present in history books available to Kashmiri children in schools. The narrator in *Lost in Terror* (2016) and young Imran in *The Half Mother* (2014) can be seen feeling confused about the fabricated account of Kashmir's history. Ab Jaan tells Imran that we have a very firm history but it has "never seen the light of day" as he believes, "Some people don't want us to know ourselves" (*The Half Mother 34)*. Mahjoor also gives an account of the contrast between the narrator's baba's narration and history written in textbooks. She asserts, "Most of my chronicles were false and had been written at the behest of my oppressors" (*Lost in Terror* 163). The false representation and discourses about past and present make the suffering collectivity remain oblivious of who they are, what they went through, and what is going to happen to them, hence disturbing and hindering the representational process. In Kashmir, it is not easy to raise voice against the government, and those who defy meet the wrath of the armed forces. The author of one of my selected novels *The Half Mother* (2014), Shahnaz Bashir, tells in an interview with *The Dispatch Magazine* that he had to face difficulties in getting his work published just like any other writer in occupied Kashmir. Bashir maintains that it is always "difficult to get published when you are unsolicited" (T. D. Staff n.p).

Moreover, narratives and discourses affect the construction of identities and dominating powers often use them to fortify cultural and ethnic identities for the oppressed which in turn mold their own identities as well. Nyla Ali Khan, in *The Parchment of Kashmir* (2012), also asserts that academic, cultural, or political discourse of power coming from a monolithic center can silence the voice of people from the margins or perspectives of people who are on the fringes of society (6).

5.1.4 State Bureaucracy

When the trauma process enters the state bureaucracy, executive branches of the government may utilize their powers in channelizing the representational process, and have a decisive effect in "handling and channeling the spiral of signification that marks the trauma process" (Alexander "Toward" 19). The meaning-making can be tilted in powerful ways by taking such actions as the creation of "national commissions of inquiry, investigative committees, state-directed police investigations, or new national priorities" (Alexander "Toward" 19). The previous discussion about claim-making inside different

institutional arenas elucidates the failure of media, courts, and police in facilitating the trauma process and constructing a successful cultural trauma narrative for Kashmir's traumatizing pains. The same is the case with state bureaucracy as well, as the government fails in protecting civilians and their rights. The members of Parliament manipulate the victims and look at each "help-seeker as a future voter" (*The Half Mother* 81). When Haleema and many other victimized Kashmiris request Chief Minister for assistance, he tells them he "can't do anything. I can just pray for you" (*The Half Mother* 151). Instead of having their traumas dramatized and recognized by the governmental arena, Kashmiris are denied even their freedom of speech, as we see Home Secretary, in *The Half Mother* (2014), ordering his subordinates to silence people with bullets. It is justified to state that the state and central government occupy a position of dominance over victims, but do not play a positive role in the representational process because they are actually the ones who cause trauma for Kashmiris and attempt to justify or whitewash the violence and oppression.

It can therefore be argued that since Kashmir is occupied by the Indian government, the trauma creation process is subjected to control by the very hands that unleashed a reign of terror against Kashmiris. Observers are silenced, victims are subjugated, and biased narratives are disseminated inside and outside the occupied territory. Human rights activists are not allowed to report what actually happens there and constrained means of communication are under constant surveillance by the perpetrators. This makes it impossible to declare events as traumatizing and represent them as evil as long as means of symbolic communication and the occupied lands are under the control of perpetrators.

5.2 Politics of Exclusion: Whitewash Effect of Stratificational Hierarchies

The constraints or restrictions imposed by institutional arenas, according to Alexander, are mediated by "uneven distribution of material resources" and inaccessibility to the social networks ("Toward" 21). Since the local, provincial and central governments exercise significant power over the trauma process, it must be examined who occupies "the position of dominance" where the trauma process is being unfolded (Alexander "Toward" 21). Governmental bodies may interfere and use their powers against the traumatized

parties in "whitewashing the perpetrator's actions rather than dramatizing them" (Alexander "Toward" 21). In marginalized territories of Jammu and Kashmir, writes Nyla Ali Khan in *The Parchment of Kashmir* (2012), people from the margins lack same access to the institutions and process of creating political, academic or religious discourses as those who hold a position of dominance and powerfully influence the structures of knowledge (7). To identify this problem, such questions must be considered and investigated as Who controls media? To what extent are journalists independent of political influence? Are courts independent? And who controls the government? In this section, I analyze the role of governmental bodies by investigating how the selected narratives address these problems in occupied Kashmir.

First of all, both the selected novels depict that, in Kashmir, as discussed earlier media is not independent of political influence as it is directly controlled from New Delhi under the directions of the central government. Secondly, media houses have a majority of prejudiced Hindu employees and there is a negligible representation of the victimized Muslim population who are in majority in Kashmir. Kashmir has always faced inadequacy of authentic representation on mediascape to an extent that Fahad Shah, a Kashmiri journalist, calls Kashmir "the most unreported" region of the world (*Of Occupation and Resistance* 18). Bashir asserts that journalism was once a name of resistance, but everything is changed now. Journalists are threatened and suffer censorship if they say anything against the state government (*The Half Mother* 169). A journalist Izhar, in the novel *The Half Mother* (2014), considers himself helpless while reporting and feels "like a joker in a solemn audience" (167). Mahjoor's narrator works in the media and she illustrates that radio station misinforms the audience and dismisses the truth as it works under the control of the Indian government completely. She goes to the extent of calling it a "mouthpiece of government propaganda" (*Lost in Terror* 92). Moreover, the government censors BBC news and interrupts its frequency, making Kashmiris lose connection with the outside world. Karl Marx, a legendary philosopher, writes about the implications of a free press in *Rheinische Zeitung* on May 15, 1842, in an article "Censorship", in which he says that for humankind, lack of freedom is a real danger. A free press is the "vigilant eye of people's soul", a link "that connects individuals with the state" and the "spiritual mirror in which

people can see itself" (Marx n.p). But in occupied Kashmir, the Indian government does not allow freedom of speech, and the press is censored which leaves demoralizing effects.

Besides Media, other government organizations like State Human Rights Commission (SHRC), controlled by perpetrators, are also not functional in Jammu and Kashmir. The chairman tells Haleema that we are a state government organization and our commission is just like "a toothless tiger" (*The Half Mother* 132), failing to investigate or represent her pain and provide justice. Police refuses to file FIR on numerous occasions in *Lost in Terror* (2016) and Mahjoor call them "defanged snake" (*Lost in Terror* 257). Going to Jails and courts was Haleema's routine affair, but all in vain because no one assists her due to the fear of repercussions they may face at the hands of the Indian military. The relatives of disappeared people swarming the courts for getting justice, including Haleema, face protracted listlessness as courts are not independent enough to resolve their issues and provide justice in time. Every aspect of life is deteriorating in the valley but the administration is in slumber (*Lost in Terror* 208), concerned only with destroying the Kashmiri generation.

Likewise, any claim, political, social or legal, that foregrounds India's subjugation of Kashmir is considered unpatriotic and suppressed by the Indian state. A renowned Indian novelist and human rights activist Arundhati Roy was threatened by Police when she publicly proclaimed at a conference in New Delhi that Kashmir was "never an integral part of India" (qtd in Bhan et al.). In response to such threats, Roy responded to these threats by saying that it was notably a call for justice for Kashmiris "who live under one of the most brutal military occupations in the world" (Bhan, Duschinski and Zia 8). Several public figures and journalists, who dare to defy and write or say anything against the government's illegitimate occupation or challenge India's false narratives, have been silenced and face charges of betrayal or exile. Indian invasion of Kashmir operates not only through dense militarization and institutionalized impunity but also under the farce of democracy.

Moreover, Laws or acts like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act of 1958, modeled on the British Empire's laws which were designed to suppress the Indian Independence movement, are introduced by the Indian government to enable violence and aggravate the sufferings of the victimized group by legitimizing oppression and protecting

perpetrators through impunity. While impunity, in human rights discourse, is a condition where perpetrators are exempted from the punishments for their committed crimes. To protect their oppression, as Haley Duschinski asserts, modern states also claim the legitimate use of violence to protect law and order in the public interest (Duschinski 121). Walter Benjamin expounds on the State's insistence on the monopoly over the use of violence and he argues that such an insistence is not made to preserve public interests but to protect its own 'claim of law', as violence unleashed outside the law threatens the very existence of the law, not the state (Duschinski 113). This way, the life trajectories and condition of Kashmiris is structured inside and outside the valley, through domination and control over occupied landscapes.

5.3 Conclusion

It can be justifiably stated that various instances, where media, courts, police, and every organization seems to work under the control of the central government, illustrate that the power to interpret and investigate the evidence of trauma is clearly vested in the hands of perpetrators. This intervention by the Indian government hinders what Alexander calls the spiral of signification, the cultural classification or the trauma process. Nyla Ali Khan in *The Parchment of Kashmir* (2012) argues that academics, institutions, and government, in such a polarized society, ratify the practices of political domination (4). Having dominance over the structures of knowledge, the powerful oppressors generate a gulf between a monolithic center and the margins through discourses of the center which are biased and manipulative, and create hegemonic order that ensures their authority. Moreover, the discussion about controlled trauma narratives shows that the Indian state amounts not only to surveillance, control, authority and separation, but also the isolation that is created through limited means of communication between Kashmiris and the outside world. Hameeda Naeem proclaims, in her essay "Politics of Exclusion" (2012) in the aforementioned anthology, that Indian state machinery confounds the world by deliberately keeping them in the dark about the real contours of the Kashmir conflict (Naeem 219). This implies that by refusing to positively participate in the process of trauma creation, they fail in identifying the cause of trauma and restrict their solidarity, leaving marginalized victims to suffer alone.

Following the above discussion on the symbolic renderings that reimagine and reconstruct Kashmir's traumatizing reality in the selected fictional narratives, it can be argued that even if the victim is identified, pain is defined, consequences are distributed, and responsibility is attributed, the actual problem arises when the trauma narratives are mediated in different institutional arenas working under the constraints imposed by the stratificational hierarchies. Because no matter how compelling a trauma narrative is, a spiral of signification must be mediated by social structures. Cultural Traumas are meant to be culturally constructed through a trauma process, and not historically realized in the distant past. In Kashmir, strong political influence on all the institutions, that mediate the trauma process, leads to the failure of the social construction of Cultural Trauma. Alexander theorizes that a successful trauma process culminates in trauma being experienced by a wider audience, and "the collective identity" becomes "significantly revised" as a consequent effect ("Toward" 22). This means that identity is constructed and secured by a "searching re-remembering of the collective past" and connecting it to the future and contemporary sense of self (Alexander "Toward" 22). But the present study shows that the trauma process is interrupted and stopped in Institutional arenas and Cultural Trauma is not established for Kashmiris, as the Indian government directly and indirectly subjugates and muffles the voice of the victimized group, and there occurs no revision of collective identity which usually occurs after a successful trauma process. The failure to recognize Kashmir's collective trauma stems from the inability to carry through and unjust interference of power structures in the trauma process. The carrier groups, be it journalists or writers, are unable to emerge with the resources and authority to disseminate their trauma claims and articulate their interpretations. Many of the trauma claims or narratives are nonetheless powerful and compelling, illuminating the regime of terror in Kashmir, but they cannot be successfully disseminated and broadcast to a wider audience because perpetrators of trauma have dominance over the victimized collectivity and significantly exercise their powers on trauma process.

If the carrier groups had been successful in projecting Kashmir's trauma experiences, it might have become known worldwide today. The successful dissemination of Kashmir's trauma drama might have compelled the Indian leadership to confront its responsibilities and recognize social sufferings, leading to an expansion of solidarity and

empathy of the audience from outside the occupied territory. This would have far-reaching effects on contemporary Kashmir and World community would have searched for lessons as well.

Besides, Onwuachi-Willig, in her article "The Trauma of the Routine: Lessons on Cultural Trauma from the Emmett Till Verdict" (2016), theorizes that usually cultural trauma narratives arise out of unexpected or shocking events, but they can also be materialized out of the 'routine' injuries. She asserts that Cultural Trauma may when routine injuries get "reaffirmed in a public and official manner" by defining "a longstanding history of routine harm", ensuring "widespread media attention", and the creation of "a public discourse on the meaning of routine harm" (Onwuachi-Willig 336). In such cases, cultural trauma narratives emerge because the official or public sanctioning of routine subjugation of the marginalized group reinforces that their rights and freedom are curbed and no more respected in society. Although the traumatizing pains have become a routine in Kashmir, even the routinized injuries can be translated into a Cultural Trauma using the framework given by Angela Onwuachi-Willig, but in contemporary Kashmir, which was stripped of its constitutional autonomy in 2019, social structures are largely controlled by perpetrators of trauma so the essential characteristics that enable Cultural Trauma to emerge out of routine injuries seem impossible to be materialized either. But Kashmiris are still hopeful that their voices and perspectives will be heard and acknowledged by the world someday, as the narrator in *Lost in Terror* (2016) says that even if she is unable to help to ease the pain, that her people have been suffering during a longstanding occupation and which is invisible to the world outside, but she will herself "show it to the world through her eyes, heart and soul" (*Lost in Terror* 305). It is pertinent to mention that although massive social suffering cannot be prevented by illuminating such cultural structures and social processes, some of the horrific outcomes can be prevented or minimized by allowing victims, audience and even perpetrators to gain critical insight into traumatizing and horrendous sufferings.

CONCLUSION

AN UNDERLYING HOPE

The greatest sufferings bring the greatest hopes, the greatest miseries greatest patience,
and the greatest uncertainties lead to the greatest quests (*The Half Mother* 3).

To conclude the present research, I have given a brief account of Cultural Trauma theory and its significance and relevance to the prevailing traumatizing situation in the region under discussion. I have categorically stated answers to my research questions and after establishing the link between these investigations and their consequent discussions, I have also articulated the conclusion of the present study. Towards the end of this chapter, recommendations for future researchers are also given.

Jeffrey C. Alexander's theory of Cultural Trauma maintains that if a painful injury to a collectivity is defined, the identity of the victim is established, responsibility is attributed and consequences are distributed through a socially mediated process called 'trauma process', only then does it result in the successful construction of Cultural Trauma, as Cultural Traumas are not born but historically 'made' (Alexander et al. 37). Once a Cultural Trauma is so experienced, it allows members of the wider public to "participate in the pain of others" (Alexander "Toward" 24), broaden the realm of sympathy and social understanding, and create a moral basis for civic repair by taking significant responsibility for the suffering. This reflects that Traumas can be constructed, not only as threats to the social bonds and collective identity but also, as a symbolic vehicle to allow them to be revised and reformed (Alexander and Gao 9).

In the same vein, the selected Kashmiri fictional narratives portray the traumatizing social reality of Kashmir and bring forth the sufferings of oppressed Kashmiris in their own homeland. Alexander asserts that the social process of Cultural Trauma begins with making a claim about fundamental injuries affecting society at the level of collectivity. The present

study has investigated selected novels for the representation of horrendous events and their impact on the group consciousness, collective memories and future identity of Kashmiris. The investigation of both novels in the fourth chapter shows that the writers, being members of the suffering group and social agents of the trauma process, have successfully articulated their trauma claims and they have realistically portrayed social pain in a way that it satisfies the basic components of Cultural Trauma as defined by J. C. Alexander. The study shows how routine violence in Kashmir has torn the social fabric and affected their group consciousness which has made Kashmiris doubt each other and question their identity amid prevailing air of uncertainty and helplessness. Thus, the study provides answers to the first research question posed earlier in the first chapter that aims at examining how writers have symbolically represented Kashmir's social reality inducing Cultural Trauma in their selected narratives.

After tracing the symbolic representation of the disorienting occurrences and resultant sufferings of Kashmiris in the selected narratives, one concludes that writers have successfully represented Kashmir's traumatizing reality and it qualifies to be constructed as a Cultural Trauma. But Alexander asserts that to convince and evoke the sympathy of a larger audience for a traumatizing reality, there must be constructed a compelling framework of cultural classification. The discussion in the fourth chapter also shows that both selected writers convincingly define the nature of pain and horrific events in Kashmir, identify the victims of these traumatizing pain, attribute the responsibility of trauma, and establish the relationship between victims of trauma and the audience. Hence it may be said that a successful meaning-work is being done by Kashmiri writers as evident through the investigation of the selected texts, and this answers my second research question which focuses on exploring how the selected texts construct a compelling framework for Cultural Trauma.

The second research question, in conjunction with the third research question, provides an understanding and underscores the significance of Cultural Trauma narratives in the context of Kashmir. Alexander believes that compelling cultural trauma narratives, if disseminated successfully to the world at large, may bring social, political and legal reforms to society. However, the meaning-making process of Kashmir's trauma is brought

to a halt when carrier groups unfold it in different institutional arenas for mediation. Discussion in the fourth and fifth chapters shows that media houses, Police, Intelligence agencies, legal courts, publishing agencies, and local government has failed in facilitating the trauma process as every institution in the valley works under the control of the central government. Being a discursive process, Cultural Trauma significantly requires the mediation of the interpretations or claims made by carrier groups, however, these stratificational hierarchies largely hinder its mediation which eventually leads to the failure of carrier groups in disseminating the trauma claims to a wider audience. The restraints exercised on the trauma process attempt to distort and erase the Cultural Trauma of Kashmiris from the official accounts of history. Social institutions are contaminated by the practices of injustice and inequality that dismisses and trivializes the sufferings of marginalized Kashmiris. Such distortion and trivialization make it more traumatizing for the members of the suffering collectivity who live in a culture where their sufferings are ignored.

Since Kashmir's trauma has not yet been established as Cultural Trauma for the world at large, therefore the perpetrators are not compelled to accept the moral responsibility for the collective sufferings, no moral lessons are drawn from the afflicted pain, and no repairs are made in the society for the betterment of future. The governmental bodies, that occupy a position of dominance over marginalized and victimized Kashmiris, pretend to be what Alexander calls "bystanders of horror" who claim "we did not know" and "we did not see" (Toward" 8). While in reality they are enablers of all the injustice and violence in Kashmir, and they work for the perpetrators to demean the subordinated group as to make them feel excluded, powerless and hopeless. The selected narratives illustrate Kashmir as a place where life is so uncertain that returning home safe in the evening is no less than a miracle and natural death seems to be a rare phenomenon (*Lost in Terror* 100). It can be said that Kashmir has turned into a place where everything changes but the fate of oppressed and victimized Kashmiris remains constantly the same. Likewise, Suvir Kaul states in "Introduction" of his anthology *Of Garden and Graves* (2017) that years pass but traumatizing reality seems to stay the same in the valley, as each year goes by, one form of violence is repressed only to replace it with another, and "interludes of peace are punctuated by periods of intense civic unrest" (5). The knowledge-making and cultural

institutions facilitate the perpetrators of trauma in Kashmir and they distort or trivialize the sufferings of innocent Kashmiris which makes the real image of occupied Kashmir invisible or negligible to a wider audience.

Illustration of numerous traumatized Kashmiri women in *Lost in Terror* (2016), and Haleema's bootless struggle for her son in *The Half Mother* (2014) depict that the Indian state uses its power either to facilitate, protect or whitewash the perpetrator's oppressive actions. E. Ann Kaplan, in his book *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (2005), argues that politics does intervene in the process of cultural trauma. Powerful and dominant groups may engineer a "forgetting" through controlled narratives or discourses which assist the perpetrators in getting away with their committed crimes and violence they unleashed on victimized and marginalized groups (Kaplan 66). Arundhati Roy in her essay "*Azadi*: The Only Thing Kashmiris Want" (2011) argues that Indian narratives and Bollywood films, while misrepresenting Muslims and their struggle for freedom, have brainwashed people into believing that all the sorrows of Kashmir can be laid at the doors of insurgency, largely whitewashing their own evils.

Besides, the two selected narratives delineate that the Indian government engages itself in the same strategies and tactics to curb Kashmir's resistance, which were used in the past by colonial masters, turning Kashmir into what Achille Mbembe, in his book *Necropolitics* (2019), termed a "late modern colonial occupation" (Achille Mbembe qtd in Bhan et al. 2) in which violence committed by state is obscured and justified through claims of good governance and rule of law. Likewise, Rabia Aamir, in her article "Final Impasse of Kashmir and Recurring Pretexts" (2020), positions her critique from Gayatri Spivak's viewpoint stated in her article "Attention Postcolonialism" (1997), and argues that India, having inherited administrative structures from the Empire, can be considered "a possible beholder of Empire's administrative traits" (5). Marginalization, racism, violence, and erasure meted out by the Indian government in occupied Kashmir since 1947 are visible indications of their colonial strategies.

Justice denied by the government to victims and no accountability for the perpetrators gives an impression that the Indian state not only condones the abuses and enables violence in Kashmir, but also attempts to erase representations of their committed

violence through further repression and censorship. Mahjoor projects the silence of tightly controlled mediascape on social sufferings as it is "tight-lipped on the issue of crackdowns, disappearances, water shortage, basically, the dead administration" (*Lost in Terror* 132). Moreover, the international communities also show indifference in recognizing the sufferings of Kashmiris because of India's garish image of an "economic powerhouse" and "vibrant democracy" (Mishra 12). Arundhati Roy in her book *Capitalism: A Ghost Story* (2014) rightly points out, as she mentions President Obama's speech during his visit to India in 2010, that although he "spoke eloquently about threats of terrorism" but "kept quiet about human rights abuses in Kashmir" (69). Shahnaz Bashir in his novel also puts it aptly that "Kashmir is mentioned everywhere – in books, news reports, political reports – but it has disappeared from the world, an enforced disappearance of its own" (*The Half Mother* 165). Those who maintain silence or remain inactive when the routine oppression takes place are also guilty of being unjust to innocent Kashmiris. There are no innocent bystanders in times of conflict, for instance, the mother of a 14 years-old African American boy Emmett Till, who was lynched in Mississippi in 1955 on the accusation of offending a white woman, puts it aptly as she proclaims after seeing people's silence on the acquittal of her son's white killers, "No one could plead ignorance. Everyone had to take responsibility for what our society had become. Anybody who did anything to make it happen. Anybody who did nothing to stop it from happening. There could no longer be any innocent bystanders" (Till-Mobley and Benson 200). All the violence and brutalities are getting carved into the memories of Kashmiris and they remember even if the world forgets. Murdered boys, blood on their shirts, and grieving families can disappear from headlines but "the deed, and the date" (Peer 44) is being committed to the memories of Kashmiris.

It can be argued that although the world maintains its silence on Kashmir's sufferings, Kashmiris kept fighting through armed uprisings and unarmed political resistance for their freedom. It doesn't matter if it is universally recognized or not, they keep fighting in an attempt to register their protests against the unjust oppression and occupation. The narrator's father in *Lost in Terror* (2016) is a representative voice of all Kashmiris when he says that "we have a long history of not aligning with our oppressors" and that they have "never made any compromise with anyone on the matter of

subjugation", regardless of how powerful the opposing force is (162). Kashmir has lost everything, be its beauty or peace, and the world seems to have forgotten them and is unaware of what they are going through, but the battered hope still lives in the heart of courageous Kashmiri men and women. Mahjoor in her novel portrays a woman protesting against the rape of a girl by Indian soldiers in Kupwara, as she proclaims,

> "Five soldiers raped her in front of her neighbors… Why are people silent over this heinous crime? Why is the world so mute over our constant suffering? How long are we going to suffer this subjugation? Perhaps leaders think they can weaken us, weaken our resolve. Let me tell them, we are fighting for our freedom and we will fight for another hundred years. We will never give up on our right of self-determination" (*Lost in Terror* 203).

Media has an all-encompassing role in the contemporary world, as it not only reports but also powerfully facilitates and mediates the narratives of conflict. But the present study reflects that scant and restricted coverage of Kashmir's oppression in the media houses run by the Indian government shows that articulation of the truth can hardly be anticipated for Kashmir. Ather Zia in "Indian Media and Kashmir Coverage" (2007) discusses Kashmir's coverage in Indian media and argues that Indian media has reduced the struggles and suffering of Kashmiris to mere statistics (Zia n.p), and without any qualms, its reporting is significantly selective, biased and manipulative. It is pertinent to mention here that such biased and constrained articulation of the narratives and sometimes misrepresentation of the reality, in the narratives or discourses spread by perpetrators, is what hinders the social construction of Cultural Trauma for Kashmiris. As Achille Mbembe notes in *Necropolitics* (2019) that in a colonial occupation, the dominant colonizers derive the claims of legitimacy and control from their own "particular narratives of history and identity" (80). The Indian state, holding the position of dominance, legitimizes its occupation by publishing and reporting biased narratives and news, and discards the truth. The right thing to do in such a situation, suggests Ather Zia in his article "Indian Media & Kashmir Coverage" (2007), is that Kashmiris should continue to strengthen their own local grassroots media and befittingly answer the "money-minting" forces who manipulate and wrongly present Kashmiris, their sufferings and struggles (Zia n.p.). Even while facing all

the difficulties, I have mentioned so far, there are courageous Kashmiri journalists and writers who cut through the barbed wires and try to march towards the darkest and silenced corners of the valley for reporting the truth. But despite their continuous struggle for peace and freedom, their resistance, the sufferings and traumas of Kashmiris are not mediated and get registered in the consciousness of the perpetrators and the world at large because of invidious political intervention. The truth is kept under wraps on purpose to mitigate the turmoil through paralyzed and frozen means of communication. Numerous carrier groups have been successful in interpreting and representing the grief and angst of Kashmiris by defining the traumatizing pain and identifying victims and perpetrators, but they are unable to communicate, mediate or articulate a cultural trauma narrative that can possibly promise a better future.

The successful construction of Cultural Trauma for victimized Kashmiris could have set in motion a significant process of moral and political action, by compelling the perpetrators to accept their responsibilities, ensure social solidarities, and consequently minimize or terminate the ongoing collective sufferings in Kashmir. But since carrier groups could not emerge with adequate resources and authority for disseminating their claims for Kashmir's traumatizing pains to a broader audience because of hegemonic order and social structural reasons, Kashmir continues to suffer and the world largely seems to be indifferent toward their agonies. A recent arrest of a prominent Kashmiri human rights activist and journalist, Khurram Parvez, on November 23, 2021 stands as an example of the persistent subjugation of Kashmiris who, being members of suffering collectivity, raise their voice against oppression. Mr. Parvez is Chairperson of the Asian Federation against Involuntary Disappearances and keeps criticizing the human rights violations committed by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. He got arrested from his office by an Indian governmental agency on baseless charges of unlawful activities. Amnesty International's official account on Twitter calls it a misuse of anti-terror law to criminalize human rights work, and calls out authorities to "focus more on bringing accountability for human rights violations" instead of targeting HRDs (International n.p). Such a malicious attitude and constraints imposed by the Indian government curb the voice of Kashmiris and make them more invisible to the world at large. Therefore, as Alexander suggests that if non-western tragedies are given the same recognition and remembrance that Western tragedies do,

subaltern and marginalized populations may also suffer less than they presently do at the hands of dominant oppressors.

Prevalent discourses in Kashmir after 1989 undermined the self-representation of Kashmiris and their struggle for freedom. This triggered narrative creation which aimed at opposing the discriminatory discourse that marginalized Kashmiris and reconstruction of their history, but their voices were repeatedly made to dissipate and it continues to happen to date. Such narratives or discourses in which natives or marginalized groups "refuse to follow the trajectory charted out for them by the discursive practices of colonialism" confounds "the fallacy of racial and cultural privileging of dominant power" (Frantz Fanon qtd in *Parchment* 5). The selected narratives depict that such opposing narratives could not be adequately materialized and disseminated to a large audience in the context of occupied Kashmir. The analysis of primary texts shows that limited access to the structures of knowledge for marginalized Kashmiris, repression of the resistance, and the presence of stratificational hierarchies controlling every aspect of the life of Kashmiris become the major causes of such a failure. These predicaments also hinder the successful mediation of cultural trauma narratives, which otherwise could have contributed to the construction of Cultural Trauma for Kashmiris and brought civic repairs to Kashmiri society. The deliberate disregard of Kashmir's sufferings, and suppression of their narratives and voices can be overcome by creating more and more spaces for subaltern scholars, academics, and cultural agents to question the status quo, to deconstruct the false dominant discourses, and analyze the intricacies of Kashmir issue, and to effectively disseminate their voices, perspectives, and interpretations to a large audience globally.

Various fictional and non-fictional narratives, created by carrier groups, about ignored traumatizing experiences of marginalized Kashmir give an extensive insight into the lived realities of the region. However, their trauma narratives are required to be adequately mediated as Cultural Trauma to a wider audience, as Alexander believes traumas are "socially mediated attribution" (Alexander "Toward" 8). Such a process might have ensured that the perpetrators who are causing traumatizing injuries are identified, Kashmir's suffering gets recognized by the world globally, and some repairs are made in the civic sphere. This could also lead to the gradual awareness that peace in South Asia is

possible only if there is peace and freedom in Kashmir, as peace is based, says Shubh Mathur in *The Human Toll of the Kashmir Conflict* (2016), on "justice and remembering" and not on "silence and forgetting" (4).

Moreover, the selected fictional narratives and numerous factual accounts of the life of Kashmiris reflect that, even on their darkest days, the flame of hope keeps flickering in their hearts. This makes us hope that the voice of Kashmiris, which is being silenced by the Indian government, will mass into a deafening roar in near future. For they have been mocked and disposed of by democracy, failed UN resolutions, militarization and armed struggles, and now they deserve to get what they yearn for. They deserve to be given a right to dignity and a right to an existence in which traumas, oppression and demoralization are nothing more than things of the ruthless past. Nayeema Mahjoor also closes her novel with a glimmer of hope in her heart that she will open her injured heart to the cruel world. The world, which has always remained tight-lipped witnessing painful years of oppression in Kashmir, will eventually see, recognize and stand for the agonies of bruised Kashmir that is silently enduring the pain. A Kashmiri poet, Agha Sahid Ali, beautifully makes this hope eloquent in these lines from his poem "A Pastoral" included in his collection of poems *The Country without a Post Office* (1997).

> "We shall meet again, in Srinagar,
> by the gates of the Villa of Peace,
> our hands blossoming into fists
> till the soldiers return the keys
> and disappear. Again, we'll enter
> our last world, the first that vanished
> in our absence from the broken city" (36).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since a literary text may be interpreted in multiple ways, the selected novels can be studied through various other theoretical lenses. For instance, as the plight of Kashmiri women has been effectively addressed in both selected novels by the writers, a comparative feminist analysis can be done to examine the individual traumas of Kashmiri women, from

male and female perspectives. Besides, other contemporary fictional and non-fictional narratives and discourses of traumatized Kashmiris can also be analyzed through Alexander's theory as to trace the trauma process and the hurdles during articulation of trauma narratives may also be highlighted. Moreover, narratives coming from any of the oppressed and marginalized communities who are subjected to traumatizing events that affect their collective life can also be analyzed in the same way to give them due attention.

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