

Postmemory Among the People of Kashmir Through the Novel “*The Collaborator*”

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Abstract

Partition of India and Pakistan has provided a great legacy on the Indian Subcontinent. Since partition, the separation of two states has deeply wounded the people of Kashmir. The psychological and physical departure of the Kashmiris due to conflict has remained a dark historical event which has changed the social fabric and cultural values of the people practiced for centuries. War has captured the land since Independence, 1947. As the issue between Kashmir and Pakistan prevails for years together its impact has started to pass on from generation to generation. The saga of Kashmir carries mythological narration, the stories of war, conflict, loss of life, loss of home which passes along with the history of Kashmir. The people of Kashmir have experienced numerous psychological problems like anxiety, depression, suicides, loss of their home, loss of their loved once, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and so on. The depression that is in disguise is Post memory that passes through generation, which is traumatic and that appears in the form of stories which is inevitable in the life of Kashmiris. The purpose of this research paper is to analyze the traumatic experience of the people in Kashmir due to war and conflict. This paper examines the concept of Post memory, through the novel *The Collaborator* by Mizra Waheed. Finally, the article concludes, in light of the descriptive study, the people of Kashmir under goes serious traumatic experiences due to war and the memories narrated by their ancestors through stories for generations which made the future generation to be stuck in the past.

Keywords: Kashmir, trauma, post-memory, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder

1. Introduction

Anglophone Kashmiri fiction depicts the condition of shredding violence and fearful compulsion marked by massacres, disappearances, rapes, and repression in Kashmir, as well as the relocation and uprooting of people from the region (Chandak, Sujit R 2017). This application of diverse people is prompted by sources of force to either defend their rights or escape for their lives. During the freedom movement and armed confrontations, more than 100,000 Kashmiris lost their lives in the 1980s and 1990s (Nabi & Khan, 2014, p. 31). The traumatizing effects of these coercive Indian practices were transmitted to the people of Kashmir. In light of books like *The Collaborator*, *Curfewed Nights*, and other works, it is important to do more and more critical research on how power is used against Kashmiris and what happens as a result.

This study shows the Kashmiri point of view on the Kashmir conflict, which is different from the Indian point of view. According to Literature and Trauma by Hunt (2010), Kashmiri literature also helps readers understand the psychological effects of war and other painful events (Hunt, Nigel 2010). This research is significant because it may be available to the public. It is essential to understand that there are few books and critical works available on the Internet. Either the scholars refrain from working on Kashmiri books or they fall victim to publication politics. In lieu of such situations, it is hoped that this research will serve as a link in the chain of Kashmiri knowledge. Kashmir's ground realities are not only advantageous for academics, but also for social workers, NGOs, and human rights groups.

2. Literature Review

Rameez Raja and Shabina Fatima's (2020) research article, 'Chronicle of Displacement, Alienation, and Oppression of Women in *The Collaborator* by Mirza Waheed,' examines the displacement and alienation of people in Kashmir after the effects of conflicts in Kashmir through the novel *The Collaborator* by Mirza Waheed. The research paper evaluates the oppression of the women in the unending conflict-affected region. The constant quiet of women in the story is exemplified by the narrator's mother, who speaks only on rare occasions when she is upset. She desires to leave the village, but the patriarchal structure of her family and community prevents her from doing so. The novel illustrates the terrible suffering and oppression of women. The research highlights the birth of a baby with defective limbs after the harsh behaviour of Captain Kadian, who kicked her belly during an inquiry. The Kashmir controversy has depleted the lives of its inhabitants. People were shocked by the severity of the violence, and as a result, the identity of Kashmiris has been profoundly altered. In the novel, the dreary picture of never-ending conflict has been shown with sensitivity. Mirza Waheed's *The Collaborator* depicts the individual and collective psyche of Kashmiris living during the turmoil. It depicts heartbreaking accounts of agony and suffering from actual life events.

The Collaborator is a multifaceted work that presents a multitude of facets of the conflict and thus serves as the conflict's actual representative. This research article has focused on the suppression of women in Kashmir and the alienation of the narrator after the loss of his friends.

3. Research Objectives

1. To understand the transmission of post-memory among the people of Kashmir through stories and memories
2. To investigate the impact of post-memory among the people of Kashmir.

4. Research Question

1. How has post-traumatic memory haunted the lives of Kashmiris?

5. Theoretical Frameworks

The term "post-memory" was first used in a 1990s article about Art Spiegelman's *Maus*. "Post memory" refers to the relationship in which the "generation after" bears the psychological, social, and cultural trauma of their ancestors' experiences, which they "remember" solely through the tales, depictions, and actions that surrounded them as children. However, these events were communicated to them in such a profound and emotional way that they appear to be memories in and of themselves. Thus, the true mechanism by which post-memory connects to the past is not recollection but rather imaginative investment, projection, and construction. If a person is brought up with dominant hereditary memoirs or is dominated by stories that occurred before they were born or when they first became conscious, their own life stories may be displaced, if not evacuated, by those of their forebears. Even so, painful slices of events that continue to resist narrative reconstruction and transcend cognition will have an indirect influence on it. Although these things happened in the past, their impacts are still felt today. This research paper examines the traumatic experience of post-traumatic memory due to war and conflict for more than seven decades through the novel "*The Collaborator*"

6. Conceptual Frameworks

The study of this paper is done through the lens of post-memory, where the novels taken for this paper have numerous incidents, experiences, and stories that bring out the causes of post-memory among the people in the valley of Kashmir.

7. Significance of the Study

This paper aims to communicate the violence that lingers in people's lives after partition and the deep wounds in Kashmiris' hearts after India and Pakistan's partition.

8. Research Methodology

The current study is based on an analytical approach with the inclusion of post-memory. Post-memory is used to analyse the depth of trauma among the people as the traumatic incidents pass down through generations through memory. This paper addresses numerous incidents that have caused post-traumatic memories in the protagonist of the novel.

9. Discussion

In Waheed's *The Collaborator*, the novel's narrator recalls a time when he lived a quiet existence without panic or fear, and people were free from the horrors of military occupations. According to Jay M. Winter, during the conflict and after the cessation of hostilities, remembrance therefore became a "multiform social project" (Winter 2006: 3), situated "on the borderline between the private and the public, between families, civil society, and the state" (Winter 2000: 59).

The novel is structured into three sections: present and past, past and present. The setting of the novel enhances the portrayal of Indian troops' violent acts, Kashmiris' struggle for freedom, historical facts, and a string of negative events that trigger the collaborator's memory, thereby illustrating the collectively traumatized self of Kashmiris through the narrator's accounts. The unnamed protagonist suffers from post-memory as his imagination travels to the past, present, and future. The valley had served as a playground for the boys in the village. They enjoyed spending their holidays in the valley; they swam in the river and rested themselves on the grassy land along with the flowers. Hussain wished to sing along with the music of the water falling from the mountain ranges. But now it has changed into a valley of corpses" where all the dead bodies of the soldiers and militants could be collected. According to Hirsch in *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*,

Postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation. This is not to say that memory itself is unmediated, but that it is more directly connected to the past. Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up, dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated. (Hirsch 2002: 22)

As Hoffman says, "The paradoxes of indirect knowledge haunt many of us who came after. The formative events of the twentieth century have crucially informed our biographies, threatening sometimes to overshadow and overwhelm our own lives. But we did not see them, suffer through them, or experience their impact directly. Our relationship to them has been defined by our very 'post-ness' and by the powerful but mediated forms of knowledge that have followed from it" (Hoffman).

According to a study carried out on PTSD patients seeking treatment at the Psychiatric Diseases Hospital, Srinagar, of Kashmir Valley by

Mushtaq A. Margoob MD, Akash Yousuf Khan MBBS, Huda Mushtaq MA, and Tasneem Shaukat MBBS in a research paper titled "PTSD Symptoms Among Children and Adolescents as a Result of Mass Trauma in South Asian Region: Experience from Kashmir," the nature of the trauma and frequency of the symptoms were as follows:

DISORDERS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
A. TRAUMA		
1. Witnessed	42	75%
2. Experienced	10	17.85%
3. Confronted		
B. RE-EXPERIENCING		
1. Distressing Dreams or Nightmares	48	85.71%
2. Distressing recollections	32	57.14%
3. Psychological reactivity	28	50%
4. Feeling of Reoccurrence	04	7.15%
C. AVOIDANCE		
1. Avoidance of people, places, and related activity	48	85.17%
2. Avoid thoughts and conversations.	24	42.85%
3. Diminished interest	32	57.14%
4. Inability to recall an important aspect of trauma	06	10.71%
5. Sense of foreshortened future	02	3.56%
D. HYPERAROUSAL		
1. Sleep problems	48	85.17%
2. Hyper-vigilance	38	67.85%
3. Irritability or outbursts of anger	32	57.71%
4. Exaggerated start	20	35.17%
5. Difficulty concentrating	14	25%
E. ONSET		
1. Acute	52	92.85%
2. Delayed	04	7.15%
F. LONGITUDINAL COURSE (as on first contact)		
1. Acute PTSD	16	28.57%
2. Chronic PTSD	40	71.43%

A number of psychological issues are depicted with realism. The protagonist suffered from numerous nightmares and psychological distress due to his duty as a collaborator. He was asked to collect the ID cards and firearms from the dead corpses in the valley as his first duty. He was unable to sleep at night and showered repeatedly, itching and scouring his chest and arms. He suffered from nausea and was unable to eat for several days. He constantly detected the odour of blood and the strain surrounding him.

Sometimes I think I have a permanent headache from the smell—it’s almost like a second skin. Sometimes I can’t get rid of it for days. I come home at night smelling of rot and death, which I simply cannot wash away. Even after the hot bath and scrubbing and scratching, it is always there: a dense, greasy stench that soaks deep into my skin, into my hair, into the creases of my pants, into everything. (C 259)

Post-memory is not identical to memory: it is "post," but at the same time, it approximates memory in its affective force (Hirsch). The protagonist recalls how young boys are recruited as militants. As the whole novel revolves around the escape of the young boys to the militant groups and the deaths of the militants in the valley, The speaker of the novel had once wanted to join the militant group, but before that, his four friends escaped from the village with the guidance of Moulvi Shabi, who recruited boys to the militant group from the valley. After the 1990s, the number of young men joining the militant group increased due to the imposition of past memories among the youths. In the novel, after Moulvi Shabi, it was Shaban Khatana or Shaban Chacha who directly recruited young boys to the militants from the village. The protagonist and his friend Gulla, with great effort, found the house of Shaban Khatana, who lived near the Line of Control. He and his sons recruited boys from the rural villages and took them to the militant camps. The protagonist tried a lot to get the truth from the mouth of Shaban Khatana. The past memory of his friends made the protagonist approach different recruiters in the village to either meet his friends, who have gone to the other side of the valley, or to become a militant.

Other than the memories of his friends, the protagonist also suffered from mental trauma that took place in the valley during his duty time. Two young militants were found in the valley among the bushes, tied to each other. One militant was half alive, and the other was dead. The experience and the stories of suffering narrated by the militant haunted the protagonist's memory and disturbed him often.

The last mission by Captain Kadian was the most traumatic experience of the protagonist in the Poshpur village. He was nervous about the innocent people in the village, as they were already vulnerable to the militants and the army. As he is always obsessed by thoughts about his friends, one of their faces flashed before him during the attack in the village. He took a few minutes to recognize who it was and found it to be the face of Ashfaq. He tried his best to save him from the gunshots, but his friend disappeared in the crowd. This incident ruined the memory of the protagonist and made him question the purpose of his job.

The protagonist had sleepless nights, thinking of his death in the war field and the state of his mother and father. This was the state of the Army soldiers on the border; they had no interest in killing innocents, but still did it in order to obey their commanders.

Survival was more important than resistance, and the narrator became a reluctant collaborator. Survival is a natural and biological desire of every living being. Almost every activity of a living being is biologically interconnected for survival and evolution. The struggle for survival is universal, and humanity is unique as it strives beyond mere physical existence. The struggle for survival sharpens human intellect and leads to the invention of various strategies for survival. A survivor is someone who is determined and committed to facing any threat to their life and dignity. A survivor does not mean a superman or heroic warrior; he may look silent and weak from the outside, but he keeps on employing various strategies against the anti-life environment without losing his identity or human character. During his first visit down in the valley, he is horrified at the prospect of his job. The area is full of dead bodies, both intact and dismembered. These bodies are surrounded by yellow flowers, and some are gathered together while others stand alone. They are all in varying degrees of deterioration. The dreadful sight of the dead bodies makes him cry, and he wants someone to give a proper funeral to these rotting corpses. The description of the narrator's visit to the valley of corpses is written in most harrowing and haunting prose.

The work of Jan and Aleida Assmann on memory transmission makes clear what Hoffman refers to as the "live connection" between close generations and accounts for the intricate webs of transmission that the inter- and trans-generational catch-all term "memory" encompasses (Jan, Assmann). The past memories of the protagonist with Hussain haunted him frequently as Hussain refused to get back home after reaching the mountain. The whole village of Nowgam was in search of Hussain, as he belongs to the headman of the village, and finally found him under a tree. This incident injected a great fear in the hearts of the people about the future of their children. After this, the elders of the village took extra care of their children, as they would easily cross the border out of curiosity. The agony of those people could be seen when Hussain escaped from the village. This experience instilled great fear in the hearts of the village people to protect their children from the militant group. The boys' experience was passed down through generations in the form of stories.

The people in the valley always had sleepless nights, whether they would be alive to see the next day or not. On one such night, the whole village was disturbed due to the sound of the explosives, rockets, and bombs. It was because of the fight in the Loc between the army and the militants. They destroyed everything that was green in the valley; the pines, berries, and mossy grass were all burned into ash. The firing and the flashes of bombs were like firework displays in the sky, and though they are used to it, that night was so frightening to them.

The whole jungle must be on fire, with smoke and fumes and soot flying everywhere. What on earth are they doing, tearing the jungle apart, mixing limb with limb, branches with arms, grass with hair, sap with blood? Exploding the pine-needle surface, taking it to a boil. Sometimes, I do get very scared. (C 129)

All the mothers in the valley will have sleepless nights after this; their red, swollen eyes are the proof of their sleepless nights. The next day, the air smelled fetid and sulfurous, which was emitted from the explosive. The narrator had more work; he has to collect more ID cards from both Indians and Pakistanis. And the newspaper that came the next day was full of blood stains.

Many innocent boys were killed by the soldiers without even enquiring whether they were common citizens or foreign militants. They are just shot to death when they are seen at the border. And after few weeks, they informed their parents by writing a fake report on them, saying that their sons were trying to cross the border, and so they were encountered by the BSF near the Chongoora village. Captain Kadian told the protagonist,

So, so, so... Who wants to check if the filtrations are foreign or not before we shoot them? Although I would prefer every one of them to be a Pathan, Afghan, or Chechen son of a bitch! You know, when we lay ambushes in the mountain, waiting on thin rations for days on end, do you think we do that to verify if they are foreign or Kashmiri? You can be so native sometimes. We don't ask their nationality, man. We just gun them down." (C 96)

Seeing all these merciless actions of Captain Kadian, I tried a lot to convince his Ma and Baba to leave the valley and settle in the city. But his Baba refused to move out of the valley. The protagonist suffers a lot because of his job. But he managed to do that as it was his father's wish to remain in the village. His duty was as tough as the duty of the soldiers on the border. He has to go down to the route-less valley to collect the ID cards and weapons of the dead soldiers. Sometime while doing his duty, he would be disturbed by some scavengers, so to protect himself from those animals, he asked his captain to provide him with a pistol. The captain refused to provide him with the pistol, and with a great struggle, he got a pistol and practiced how to use it.

The people of Kashmir were always in danger, either from the army soldiers or the militants, or from people who joined the militant group. It was the Gul's family that faced the torture given by the army people. The army jeeps entered the village with a dust storm, making the hens fly in the air. They were the black cats. The people in the villages suspected that they had come to arrest Gul, who had been hiding in his own house for long days. But what happened there was totally opposite; they arrested Farooq and took him along with them to inquire about Gul. Farooq's father, Sharafat Khan, tried a lot to stop them, but they forcefully took him along with them. The army people questioned them

before taking him into the private room and shouted at him, "You need Azadi, right? We will give you Azadi; come with us; we'll give it to you!" (C 56). He was kept with them for three weeks and tortured a lot in the name of investigation. Many started to spread rumors about his experience with the army people. Few people in the village said that he was not beaten because he divulged information regarding Gul and others, which is why he was released so quickly. Several said that he was subjected to day-and-night abuse by Pandit police officials in retaliation for forcing them to leave the valley. Some even described in detail how Farooq was tortured,

He was made to pee on an electric heater while they threw ice-cold water over him; they pierced a red-hot knitting needle through his penis and then gave him electric shocks; they stuffed a bamboo cane with hot chilli powder and threw it up his anus and then broke the cane; they made him drink their collective urine after keeping him thirsty for days; they ran a cricket roller over his feet and knees; no, they lost their big dogs on him, and that was the point when he broke, for he had always been scared of dogs; (C 186)

When Farooq returned home, the people in the village prayed that his thing should not repeat itself to anyone in the village. However, after a few weeks, the army personnel returned to take him alone with them. It was a great shock for the people in the village; they scolded the four boys who left the valley, as these were because of them. Everyone from the village gathered in Farooq's house to console his mother and sister. Though Farooq's sister was not aware of what had happened, she understood the situation when she saw her mother crying in the corner of the kitchen, as this incident has already taken place once. This time something different happened after two days: he was thrown headless near the river and his remains were thrown in the graveyard. The whole village was in deep sorrow after the death of an innocent boy who paid with his life for the deeds of his brother Gul. The family stayed in the village for forty days to mourn the death of Farooq and then moved out of the village. As a result of the army's actions, many ordinary people joined the militants as a form of retaliation.

Another family also felt the village's loss as they were depressed by the death of Farooq. It was Baba's friend Firdaus Ali who left the valley along with his two children and wife. Firdaus's son, who was six years old, was disturbed and started to hit the throat of his sister with a ballpoint pen; she was so injured that she refused to sleep in the night. She merely lay on her mattress with her hands across her throat and remained awake the entire night. She was given half a calm to sleep, though that was not the solution, and they made her sleep for a few hours. So Firdaus decided to move out of the village. Because of these things, people started to curse Hussain and remarked that it was the fault of those four boys. In the last day of mourning, Farooq's father became half insane and blabbed that, "People can talk as much as they want and say whatever they want, as long as it is someone else, someone else's son. I had two sons, two... "One ate the other, and you exclaimed, "Hai, hai...!"(C 199). Hearing these words from Farooq's mother Noor, she broke down in tears.

A new governor was appointed for the whole village the day he took charge. He imposed curfews for the whole valley. There were fake encounters, crackdowns, and arrests everywhere. He imposed a brutal statement on the anti-Indian insurgency. The government used army force against those who dared organize protests or funeral marches. Angara Chatterji, author of *"Violent Gods: Hindu Nationalism in India's Present,"* in which she criticizes the brutality of the Indian Army, has said that:

The fabrications of military-fake encounters and escalating perceptions of cross-border threat function as the truth-making apparatus of the nation. The Indian state's violence functions as an intervention, to discipline and punish, to provoke and dominate... The Indian force used violence on purpose, their tactics cruel and precise in the face of public outrage. (133)

The narrator always suffered due to his horrible job; he had a permanent headache because of the smell that came from the dead bodies. It stayed with him always, like a second skin. Sometime even with a hot bath, scrubbing and scratching, it always remained with him like a greasy, viscous odor that penetrates his skin, hair, palms, and everywhere else. But still, he chooses to stay there for his ma and baba. "Slowly and steadily, I realize, I seem to have become used to everything, as if it were normal, as if it were all inevitable, as if it were my destiny; and if it goes on like this, I won't even be able to tell whether I am mad or sane. What if I am already crazy?" (C 260).

The narrator decided to kill Captain Kadian when he came to know the reason behind the dead bodies in the valley. But he changed his mind once he heard the song, sung by Hussain. Here, it was the memory of his friend that made him alter his decision.

Gathering all his confidence, the protagonist stood before Captain Kadian and questioned him as to why he had done such an inhuman thing to those innocent souls. He answered that he is in no need of those bodies, and so they have been thrown down into the valley. As there was no proper answer from Captain Kadian, he decided to form a big ritual for all the dead bodies. Kadian was killed in an encounter for helping the militants, who were hiding in the village. During the third day of crackdown, the governor visited Nowgam on a Republic Day. He spoke about the people whom he had ordered to crack down on. As the people in the village did not understand English, they were in confusion. His speech emphasized the bond between Kashmir and India, which, according to him, is unbreakable and exists despite the convulsions and tribulations of history. He concluded the speech by emphasizing that Kashmir is a sacred part of the Indian nation.

At Sarpanch's house, the villagers started to put forward reasons for leaving the village. They thought it was risky to stay in a militarized village. People were taken away by the army and thrown into jail, where they never returned. The valley became dark with the multitudes of dead bodies. Almost all the families from the village moved out except the headman's family. They were compelled by the circumstances that prevailed in the valley. After the death of Kadian, there was no one to stop the protagonist, so he prepared a big grave and placed all the dead bodies in it. There were lads from all walks of life: the wealthy, the poor, the only child, the city, the saffron fields, the mountains, the plains, the weak, the strong, the huge, the singer, the thinker, the naked, the fearful, the martyr, the orphan, the guerilla leader, and more. They were all thrown together to be burned. Before firing, he recalled all his memories of time spent with his friends in the valley. Then he poured kerosene on them and burned them. There was a huge flame from the fire. By doing this, he had the satisfaction of knowing that he had saved the corpse from the wolf and dogs and provided them with their last ceremony. As a token of respect, he prayed to God and left,

In the name of the Most Gracious and Merciful God.
 Praise be to God, the Lord of the Universe,
 The most Gracious, the Most Merciful,
King of the Day of Judgement.
 You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help.
 Guide us to the straightway;
 The way of those whom You have blessed,
 Not of those who have deserved anger,
 Nor of those who stray.
 Aameen. (C 304)

10. Conclusion

The above discussion gives a new perspective on the impact of war on affected areas. The sufferings and sacrifices of the people haunt their memories for years together and are passed down as stories to generations. The narrator of the novel and the characters who revolve around him are stuck with the memories of the past and struggle to come out of those memories. The author of the novel has used the unnamed narrator to visualize the geography, different forms of people, and the history of Kashmir during conflict. The paper discusses the unhealed wound and the traumatic condition in the land of Kashmir due to continuous war and conflict between the militants and Indian Army. The suffering of the protagonist in the novel clearly portrays the hardships and suffering undergone by the ancestors during the conflict, which has changed into a trauma in the hearts of Kashmiris. The job of the unnamed protagonist of the novel is to collect the ID cards and weapons from the corpses in the valley; similarly, new jobs have been created in the Kashmir valley during and after war or conflict. Over a period of time, all the childhood memories and normal lives of the people in Kashmir have changed into post-traumatic memories. Most of the people move out of the valley to lead a peaceful life, but they hold on to the memory of the land. Few people, however, stay within the valley as they don't want to abandon the land and hold on to the memories of the past as a source of pain and pride. Mirza Waheed stresses the point that Pakistanis and Kashmiris have good relations and express solidarity among themselves; the conflict is not between the people; it is between the political parties. He also states that there are different shades within the Kashmiri struggle for self-determination. A large section of Kashmiris want independence. A segment of the population wants to join Pakistan. Another segment, because you must always consider Kashmiri Pandits, the people in Jammu and Ladakh, want to remain in India.

11. Limitation of the Study

The current study was restricted to a specific novel and a range of people in Kashmir. Furthermore, it was just limited to the post-memory of the people.

12. Scope of the Study

The study is a contribution to literature which brings out the main causes of Post-Traumatic Stress disorder and speaks deeply on the situation of insurgency in Kashmir, which has ruined the life of common people in Kashmir. It also brings out the inner feeble voice of Kashmir who has been suffering for past seven decades; for liberty, education and for a safe life.

Conflict of Interest

The author has no conflict with this research paper.

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