

CHAPTER- 2

Elements of Trauma in *The Half Mother*

Insurgency in Kashmir was the main motivation behind the work, *The Half Mother*. It is one of the causes that left the residents with a traumatic memory. Disappearance is also one of the factors in the author's mind that compelled him to narrate a story about Kashmiri suffering. As per the Association of Parents of disappeared Person (APDP) report, since 1989, nearly 8000-10000 residents have disappeared in Kashmir. Due to these disappearances, victims developed a sense of absence. Adolescent boys were detained on suspicious grounds at the time of violence. For the last three decades, Kashmiris have constantly been in a state of trauma. As a result of insurgency, there was a rise in the activities leading to human rights violation, which resulted in victimisation of ordinary residents. The tense situation of insurgency in Kashmir is depicted by Shahnaz Bashir:

The year 1990. As the insurgency in the valley intensified the government resigned, paving the way for governor's rule. Tears, blood, death and war followed, as curfew, crackdowns, raids, encounters, killings, bunkers, an exodus of people, burning markets, schools and buildings. (Bashir 32)

Ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Pandits from the valley is one of the catastrophic incidents responsible for the traumatic memory of Kashmiri people. Their unprecedented migration from the valley to other parts of the state still haunts them. Some of them migrated to cities like Delhi, Pune, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Jaipur and Lucknow. They were deprived of their ancestral land and found themselves alienated. Their houses were burned down. Two room tenement structure called Jagti are constructed in Jammu to

accommodate four to five thousand Pandit families. Some of the Pandits live in government tenements at Purkhoo which is located in the outskirts of Jammu. Pandits living in the refugee camps found it difficult to survive. They live under the shadow of trauma and many of them suffer from psychological disorders. For the last three decades, they have been uncertain about their future. After that, the instances of human rights violation escalated tremendously. Women faced physical and sexual violence: one case is the incident of Kuna Poshpura, where twenty-three women were raped brutally. The young generation, especially students, were tortured and harassed by the security forces.

Shahnaz Bashir is a Kashmiri scholar, professor and journalist. He expresses his poignant feelings in his novel, *The Half Mother*. It is set during 1990s at the time of insurgency. The title itself evokes trauma and symbolises the memory of loss. It shows the state of mind and spirit of Haleema. The title also refers to all those mothers and widows who have lost themselves after losing their sons and husbands. Women have been reduced to halfness due to conflicts and violence. Moreover, the title raises the question of women's identity and their roles in the society as mother, daughter or wife. The prefix 'half' is employed to denote 'half of whole selves' of the women. Haleema protests at the word 'half mother' which describes her life. "Haleema is the embodiment of the unforgiveness". (Mehraj 2)

Shahnaz's writing is often compared to Saadat Hassan Manto and Russian writer Anton Chekov. He addresses the agony, suffering, pain and trauma of Kashmiris in his novel. Through his novel, he highlights the scattered and fragmented memory of an ordinary mother who has become 'half' after her son's disappearance. This disappearance brings gloom and misery in the lives of people. Haleema is the fictional character of Shahnaz Bashir, who becomes an inspiration for all half mothers and half widows in the

Kashmir valley. She is the protagonist of the novel, *The Half Mother*. She is a stoic and enduring character who suffers throughout her life due to her son's disappearance. "The Half Mother adds a nuanced layer to the local narrative, caught in the uncertainty of life and death. Bashir has painted the pain of Haleema, one among the thousands of relatives of missing people in Kashmir." (Rathore 59)

Haleema is a psychologically wounded woman who becomes the voice for all those whose sons have disappeared in Kashmir. She recalls her past when she faced the traumatic incident. Her crescent moon (her son) is taken away from her without any information. She falls on the ground and helplessly looks up at the sky. Her trauma grows after this terrible incident. It seems that she is always mourning over something. Everything appears to be fragmented in her life. Nothing in her life seems linear or uniform. She dreams of Imran as she experiences a sense of void in absence of her son. It is very difficult to understand her loneliness. She is constantly asking herself as to where in this world she should search for her beloved son. She mumbles Imran's words absentmindedly while walking around. She becomes numb after every possible search for her son. The absurdity of her life is depicted in these lines:

The colour of everything is sorrow

the colour of the moon is sorrow

the colour of streets is sorrow and

the colour of memories is sorrow. (Bashir 5)

Trauma blurs the boundaries between mind and body, memory and forgetting, speech and silence. "It traverses the internal and the external, the private and the public,

the individual and the collective” (Bond and Stefs 5). In general, forgetting is a common habit of human beings but in the context of trauma, forgetting may be considered as an abnormality. Here, in case of the novel, *The Half Mother*, when Bhuba asks Ab Jaan about “[w]hat we put into rojan josh” (9). Ab Jaan, with his fragmented memory, says cumin, cinnamon, clove, cardamom, fennel and then forgetting the rest, tries his best to recollect the ingredients. As Ruth Leys contends, “[t]he history of trauma itself is marked by an alternation between episodes of remembering and forgetting” (Bond and Stefs 5). Due to the traumatic past that the people have faced, they are unable to recollect even the small details like the ingredients for common recipes. They fail to live an organised life. Ab Jaan, for example, collects the daily news from newspapers to identify and observe such incidents minutely. Similarly, most of the Kashmiris read daily newspapers to look up any news related to traumatic incidents such as crackdown, gunshot, militant killing or any cease fire violations across the border.

Once Haleema says “Dear Collard green, apologies, for you shall be cooked without salt once again” (4). She had cooked Collard green without salt, which makes it tasteless. It is in a way equivalent to her life that is left with no taste without her son. She has no happiness or joy in her life. A vegetable (collard) reminds her of the happier times she spent with her husband, Ab Jaan and son, Imran.

Natipora is a town of Srinagar that symbolises the conflict in Kashmir. It is the place of ancestral graveyard. This place is fenced with barbed wire that makes it similar to the border of Kashmir which is fenced with electric wires. Nobody can cross this thorny wire. People are scared of it. Some rural villagers live around the fenced area. Residents of that area seek permission from the army and obtain their special fence card to gain entry to the other side of the fence. This card is only for those who have lands or

relatives across the fence. Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) is another common disorder found among the people living near borders. The horror of firings across the border has shaken every individual who lives at LoC. The mortar shelling echoes through the valley. In novel as Imran's killing the bird skilfully shows his skill and bravery while hunting, likewise terrorists too kill the Kashmiris bravely.

With reference to Imran's childhood, he is shown to have many injuries. He broke his bones jumping from high walls and tree branches, gashed his arms running through the bushes and scraped his knees while learning to cycle. These wounds eventually embedded into his memory and served as reminders in the present. Imran keeps recalling these traumatic events. His mother also remembers her son. The close bond that Haleema and Imran share can be seen in the novel, For example, Imran helps his mother with household chores. As a real life experience, in July 2020, a three year old boy was found sitting on the dead body of his grandfather; this serves as an example of the pain the innocents suffer from. It is a horrible scene to witness. Dr Syed Karrar said "We will monitor how the child will heal from the traumatic experience. Any disturbing behaviour pattern would require management by mental health experts." (*The Hindu*)

The rounds of troops fired across the valley generate fear and terror among the children, and owing to this, their memory is affected. When a child sees a soldier anywhere in the valley, he/she gets frightened and traumatised, imagining the worst. To them, the troops patrolling around are not only dangerous but also haunting. The noise from the troop's shoes generates fear and trauma in the child's mind. In the novel, a patrolling party led by Major Aman Lal Kushwaha represents the troops deployed in Kashmir, which often go in search operation. The Major shoots in warning and says "No one will come here, whoever does shall meet the same fate" (49). The angry troops begin

to indiscriminately beat those trapped inside their home. Gunpowder covers the shops and houses outside. Many houses are burnt and ruined after the encounter. Ab Jaan fears to cough, in case the soldier comes close enough to the house and happens to listen to him.

Cathy argues that “Freud describes a pattern of suffering that is inexplicably persistent in the lives of certain individuals perplexed by the terrifyingly literal nightmares of battle field survivors and the repetitive re-enactments of people who have experienced painful events” (Caruth 01). In this context, Haleema, rubbing her hands in fear shows her helplessness and loneliness. When troops come close to their house (and in it, Ab Jaan’s family), AbJaan becomes jittery with fear and anger while Imran’s mouth is dry with fear and terror. Troops call out the male members, order the women of the house around, and then search the entire house. Kushwaha, threatening to kill Abjan, also represents a threat to the youth of Kashmir. After Ab Jaan’s death, Shafiq’s house is raided and troops beat her husband. AbJaan tells the soldier: “the bunkers will be nuisance- you will always be intruding into our homes. Our women cannot come out of their houses. Please take the bunkers a little way from our houses” (26). These bunkers are often located close to the local population of valley. Some of the bunkers are also constructed in the middle of the valley.

Curfews, shutdown, crackdown, shelling, cordon and encounter are the traumatic elements that generate trauma and stress among the people. There are many such cases of traumatic incidents which are reported from valley almost every next day. All traumatic activities create dissociation. The title of the chapter, “Tempest” in the novel denotes the violent activities and the tragedy that follows. There is a wave of fear and terror running through the valley, from the plains to the hills and up to the border. One can see the tempest of curfews, crackdowns, horrible raids, encounters, killing, exodus of people and

the burning of markets, schools and buildings. “All these disturbances have inflicted trauma to the survivors by not only forming an integral part of their consciousness but also repeatedly rebuilding haunting layers of memory in the unconscious mind.” (Raina 03)

Crossing the border creates another type of trauma in the people from both sides. They are solely responsible for taking risk to cross the border. Later, they regret it because their whole family member is left behind on the other side of the border. Bashir remarks: “The war has begun...young boys had begun sneaking into Pakistan to fetch arms and rebel against the government” (23). In the novel, *The Half Mother*, Shaheen Bhat and Imran Bhat cross the border but end up regretting it. Later, it becomes very difficult to cross the border due to the fencing. Afterwards, they remember their homeland and their patriotism makes them regret the choice they made.

The unspeakable void becomes the dominant discourse in criticism of the function of trauma in literature. Shabeer Ahamed becomes speechless when twenty-three rounds of bullets fired by the troops hit him in the chest. He is brutally tortured and harassed. Likewise, many innocent residents of Kashmir and soldiers are killed due to firing in the valley. Shafiq's daughter, Rukhsana becomes the first female victim who is beaten in her own compound. Her parents are tied up and she is made to see the torture inflicted on her father. Ramzan refuses to hand over his son Rayaz to the troops because he knows they will torture him in the name of militancy. His ripe paddy crop is set on fire after this refusal. Hence, it seems that there is a game of hide and seek played constantly in the valley.

Hundreds of protests and agitations take place in the valley. Still, Kashmiris continue to resist against all atrocities. Many are injured and lose their eyes due to pellet

gun fire. There are numerous survivors of insurgency to be found in valley. Women and children suffer more than usual. Most of the time, Kashmir valley is shut down due to a constant critical situation; there are only a few days that allow the natives an opportunity to work for their livelihood. This shutdown of the valley is also a contributing factor in generating trauma and nostalgia for their peaceful past.

Chapter-6 “The First Attack” symbolises the insurgency attack which had a bad impact on the residents. Every attack seems new in nature. There is loss of life and property, while the survivors are left with brutal injuries. The survivors of these attacks suffer from its aftermath. After the attack, the whole valley is shutdown for days, and their day to day activities are suspended. No movement is allowed during curfew. The angry troops beat the protesters. Children cannot play in the streets and, at times, children who venture out during crackdown disappear without a trace.

The tragic scene of AbJaan is explained in these lines:

Three bullets were pumped into Ab Jaan one in the neck, one in the heart, one in the stomach...blood began to gurgle out of AbJaan throat...A pool of blood gleamed in the dull sun near AbJaan body. His throat was scabbed. His eyes remained open and his mouth agape. Blood had started to congeal around the charred bullet holes on his palm. (49-50)

Likewise, many soldiers and civilians lost their lives during encounters and cross-firing.

Imran has no expectations from AbJaan. There was a time when Imran expected his grandfather to offer him a bicycle or a wrist watch, but now he waits for the gifts at Ab Jaan’s grave. It is because of this tragedy that Imran is unable to perform well in his

exam. Tragedy leaves a bad impact on the memory of an individual. An entire family gets disturbed after losing one of their own.

Silence is one of the factors that cause trauma. The protagonist speaks up against silence. Further, “Kashmiri arouse to the ‘critical stage’ of consciousness- challenge the dictum that Kashmiris are the expressionless and have been historically reduced to silence” (Pandit 321). Haleema is a stoic character who bears the tragedy of AbJaan: “Haleema sold her cattle to Shafīqa for ten thousand rupees as well as her jewellery and more expensive copper utensils. The Joo house wore an empty look now” (69). She sells everything to search for her son. In her loneliness, she talks to walls and the lifeless things that once belonged to Imran. She also develops the habit of talking to herself. She keeps folding his clothes and irons his uniform over and over. At a later stage, she develops insomnia which triggers her traumatised memory. She counts bunkers, check posts and army camps and searches the cantonment. When Haleema sees other boys playing freely, she is reminded of her own son. One can understand Haleema’s helplessness through her thoughts. She asks herself the reason as to why Imran does not turn up behind her, covering her eyes with his hands. In addition, she keeps two plates of food, one for herself and other one for her son. All this shows her pathetic condition caused by trauma. Once Haleema dreams of Imran:

He sits on bench in Valley Hairdressers, waiting his turn for a haircut. His face is hidden behind a film magazine with two dolphins jumping out of an ice-blue sea on its cover. A barber turns around to call Imran...Haleema enters the shop and tries to persuade Imran to come home. He refuses with a jostle and frees himself as she grasps his arm. ‘you didn’t I look for me in the places where I was,’ he tells her. ‘Where didn’t I look for you, my

son? I looked everywhere, I searched for you like a mad woman. In all the places. Everywhere! Haleema tells him...She woke up, bathed in the sweat, repeatedly muttering, I looked for you! I looked for you everywhere....
(98-99)

When facing Imran's disappearance, Haleema listens to Fayaz Shaikh's song in order to pacify the agony she feels. Haleema also says how "It is better to live in a sewage pipe with your son than to live alone in this world" (123). Haleema searching for her son becomes a habit. "Jails and court became routine affairs like going to school." (127)

When Haleema goes to the market for vegetables, other women ask her if she has received any news of Imran to which she calmly says no. These repeated reminders generate trauma in her mind. Haleema becomes well aware of the human rights violations in Kashmir. As time passes, she thinks about the society and of relatives of the disappeared in Kashmir. They would all sit together to decide their future plans for the disappeared persons outside the court park. Haleema listens to the story of all the victims. After insurgency is enforced, disappearance becomes a common happening in Kashmir, and the number keeps rising. Haleema stands in support of Association of Relatives of Disappeared Persons (ARDP). Alone, Haleema is incapable of doing anything for the half mothers and half widows, but this organisation helps them fight for justice. The members of this organisation are unaware of the status of the disappeared, as they do not know whether they are alive or dead. The dilemma of these half mothers and half widows leads them a condition of complex trauma.

In this uncertain situation of Kashmir, woman and children are worse affected. With the help of ARDP, Haleema collects the photos and documents of all disappeared persons and keeps these as testimonies. Through this organisation, they come together to

demand for justice in front of the Chief Minister Dr. Aiyash Mir. Haleema stands by her window as she stares at the flocks of evening and morning birds which return to their nests. She is, too, waiting for her son and asks him to wait for her. Her loneliness and isolation is impossible to imagine. Due to her disturbed state of mind, she sometimes wears her Pheran inside out and forgets to dress properly.

“Unspeakable has attained particular prominence in trauma narration”(Arthur, Paul et al. 15). Sometimes, she cannot narrate the extent (full version) of her suffering to others. So the gaps in her story are filled by Sheefiq and Rafiq. When Haleema sees the result of Imran, she abruptly bursts into tears. Similarly, many Kashmiris check results after their children’s disappearance. There are the instances which suggest that the children have disappeared before their results are declared. Parents keep their mark sheets safe, as they are the memories to be cherished. “Haleema saw limbless, fingerless, nail-less, hairless, toothless, eyeless, earless detainees- a variety of wriggling, howling, yowling amputated souls” (80). Haleema searches for Imran everywhere, in every prison from Srinagar to Tihar, and looks at every bed in each ward of all the hospitals situated in the valley. There is no trace of Imran. People tell her, “You are wasting your beauty and time in vain” (83). But few questions remain stuck in Haleema’s mind such as, “Where are the torture victims kept” (100). They could be in detention camps. While searching for Imran, Haleema sometimes forgets the place she has chosen to enter. For instance, one day she enters the shop of Gulzar Ahamed instead of Andul Salam (the barbar). Often, she forgets to carry her ID card.

Number of widows and half-widows are described by Jan Mohamad in his article: “The Women of Kashmir are in the tens of thousands of widows and half widows; wives of killed and disappeared men; as well as mothers and grandmothers of missing children.

Vulnerable, often impoverished, the sorrows, struggles and humiliation of these women of Kashmir are a catalogue of charges against the occupation of Kashmir” (Pandit 323). Salama’s daughter also becomes a widow. The pain of a half-widow can be understood through these words: “We half widows not only face stigma but our struggle for justice contradict with earning a livelihood for our children.” (Mehraj 5)

Some familiar words like crackdown, patrolling, grenades, guns, bunkers, curfews, detentions, I-card, firing, militants and militancy, etc stay on everyone’s lips and tongue. When security forces check the I-card individually, matching their faces with their ID, that moment evokes a sense of fear and terror among the people which haunts their memory and affects them psychologically. A long queue is seen at every check post all the time. The endless rows of army vehicles on the roadside also affect the children’s memory.

Haleema looks at his things and is reminded of him. She takes his clothes out and converses with them and kisses them. Moreover, she irons his uniform and waits for him to return. When Haleema sees Jasmine’s talcum powder, it reminds her of Imran’s childhood. The news headlines from Kashmir are generally frightened for the common people which has a bad impact on their psyche. Whenever there is encounter/ cease fire violation across border, the perpetrators are more prone to fear. Residents have no wish to celebrate Eid, Diwali or any other festival because they live with a fragmented memory. They face the trauma of disappearance and loss. They have faced many tragedies within their families.

Haleema forgets to take her medicine on time. She even forgets her prescribed schedule. Sometimes, she doesn’t remember to have food and ends up leaving food on stove which burns. Whenever she is called to search for her son, she forgets to lock her

house before leaving. Victims of trauma often forget to add salt to food and sugar to tea. Sometimes, they use sugar instead of salt. She cannot sleep properly at night, as whatever she faces during the day appears to her in her dreams. Haleema only spends her nights at her house, the rest of her time is spent in search of her beloved son. Haleema lacks interest in everything except the disappearance of her son. Whenever Haleema returns back home, her cow mooes loudly over and over. She rubs its horn and pats her back. She also sees tears in the cow's eyes. She says, "I am broke, I don't have a penny now" (109). Her face expresses her pain and sadness. Due to the violence and conflict, Haleema cannot even meet her husband regularly and she meets him occasionally. Both of them get united after long years of separation. When she meets him at Chest Specialist Clinic, he leaves her with cob webbed memories. The second time, she meets him at Natipora Shrine.

Sometimes, shopkeepers cannot lock their shops because of imminent danger. Security forces have doubt on people for keeping unattended weapons along with themselves. This doubt still exists. People search their homes for suspicious articles. Every time they see Kashmiris, they look at them suspiciously even outside the state. They don't trust them. Suvasis Das, in his article, says, "Kashmiri are kept hold under fatal gaze and surveillance, which in Foucauldian terms called 'panopticism'. It seems as if the Kashmiri civilians are constantly being watched and monitored. The constant feeling of insecurity, stress, death, loss and pain benumb the congenial current of their soul." (Das "Voice" 8)

Imran is an innocent character in *The Half Mother* who also waits for her mother. The trooper shoves Imran into the Gypsy and picks him up like several other Kashmiri youth, who are picked up during crackdown and cordon in valley. His mother begs but

the troops refuse to leave him. Later, Haleema and Shafiqa decide to go to the Saddar Police Station to report the incident. Both come to know that Mohd. Shafi's son is also detained in the camps. "There would be children too, in the courtrooms with pacifying toys and lollipops in their hands. They were bored with long discussions and when they grew restless, they would begin to wail throw the toys away and wanted to be taken outside." (139)

Novel also mentioned that, in some cases children lose their fathers before their birth. They recognise their father only through the photos that their mothers safely keep with them. Some children fall asleep during court proceedings. They are bored of the long discussions there. In their childhood, children draw Kalashnikov and masked men, instead of painting flowers and fruits. They also play a militant game where they used wooden guns for shooting the enemy.

Further, Das says "Bashir is witness to the human massacre and bloodshed and this witness is not a dehistoricized one but finds a poignant reflection on the dreadful account of human life and existence" (Das 11). Papa 2 interrogation centre of detainees also generates trauma among the people. They are tortured and harassed inside the centres, detainees are asked about their crimes and receive punishment. In the Valley, during emergency, people face difficulty when they are hospitalized because of shortage of hospital beds. Many a time two patients share one bed. Moreover, people face difficulty at the Line of control of Jammu and Kashmir. Native people residing close to the borders are victims of cease fire violation. There are many land mine amputee survivors who are struggling for existence. The killing of Rehbar in an encounter generates trauma in the life of Jana's family. He is accused of having RO with him, he is imprisoned. "Savages threw his body in the forest. It was found by local Shepherd". (106)

Kashmir is known for its beauty and greenery but now, Gardens of Kashmir are no longer a source of happiness and enjoyment. People are scared to sit together in parks and gardens. Earlier, these gardens were a source of peace, people used to mourn their losses, their despair, their situation in life and sometimes, their happiness. In recent times, these were have turned to be sit together and reflect on their trauma. Now, tourist places are empty, nobody prefers to go to the conflicted valley. Tourism industry in Kashmir has almost collapsed. People throughout the world are deprived of the privilege to visit the paradise of beauty.

Haleema and Shafiq's visit to almost every jail from Central Jail, Srinagar to Tihar is a journey filled with trauma. "Hundreds of boys were detained...in the valley, overcrowded the local jails and detention centres... shifted to jail outside the valley to make space for new arrivals" (114). People who have spent more than one month in the dark and rat-infested cells of the valley are shifted to other jails of India. Haleema and Shafiq beg the gate-keeper to allow to enter the jail. The Guard sends them to the Chief Warden and gives them a pass. They state that they are looking for their sons. Haleema places the photo of her son on the warden's table. Shafiq offers crates of apples, almonds and walnuts, which she has brought for Shaheen, to the warden. They are asked to take off their pherans at the gate and are refused to carry anything inside the Jail. Haleema also faces a prisoner's trauma while searching for her son. She observes that the prisoners are shifted from one jail to another as per convenience. The parents of the prisoners follow them with washed and ironed clothes and essential things for daily usage. Haleema accompanies Shafiq and Rafiq on their visit to meet Shaheen at Tihar. "Shafiq picked up blanket, soap, a pair of nylon slipper and some other essential things for Shaheen." (114)

Haleema says: “I can never forget the journey, I can never forget its purpose” (118). She never dreamt of such a journey from her heaven like home. Unfortunately, due to the loss of her son, she is compelled to take action. She is also sympathetic towards other prisoners. She imagines her son Imran staying in a strange prison. Her search for Imran has become her passion while jails and courts have become routine affairs. “Six days a week she locked the wooden gate at dawn and went to the court. Sundays were official holidays”. (127)

People in Kashmir listen to announcements very carefully, paying close attention. Even in dreams, people are tormented by the news of kidnapping. People get shocked after listening such announcements. After the announcement is over, people mull over and discuss the matters as a routine affair. The localities of the valley are scared about the life of their children. People pay ‘nazrana’ (act of giving or bestowing) for their good luck and safety. They also pray for people who have disappeared and are injured during conflict and violence.

When Haleema and Rafiq introduce themselves as Kashmiris at an ordinary hotel in Paharganj, the receptionist looks up, pauses and drops his pen. He tells them, “Sorry no room is available look in some other hotel”. Likewise, many Kashmiris face difficulty in searching for a temporary shelter. It is a big challenge for all Kashmiris. They need someone to vouch for them. Even when they are offered a room after the recommendation of local dwellers, the owner of the house remains suspicious of the Kashmiri tenants. After that, the hotel manager or landlord notes down the full address of the Kashmiri tenants and collects their ID card.

Khizir’s post-mortem job is also traumatic. Haleema meets Khizir at the Police Control Room (PCR) mortuary where he has performed over ten thousand post-mortems

in thirty years of his service. Khizir narrates how, when he took home fruits, he had bought from Jahangir Chowk, his younger daughter would tell him how his hands smelled like dead bodies. During the post-mortem, Khizir removes bullets from Kalishnov's stomach, chest, head and other body parts. It is a horrible job that requires great courage. The term post-mortem in itself sounds haunting and traumatic. It requires a brave heart to perform post-mortems on a daily basis. Haleema also asks Khizir about her son and shows Imran's photo to him. Terrible act of post-mortem Khizir narrates as—

I have stitched heads on bodies; heads, which anyway failed to form a face-so defiled, so disfigured. You must bear me out...I have spent years with dead. Thirty bloody years...In the beginning, my hands would tremble and the scalpel would go off the mark. Just touching the skin of the dead would give me jitters...I lost my sleep...The bodies at the morgue were everywhere. They invaded my dreams...then there was a young-in whose stomach I found coals and strips of cloth. His gut smelt of kerosene. When I probed his nails I found something sticking to them. The forensic report later said they were traces of his own skin. (134-135)

Haleema shows Imu's photo to officers, security guards and other people. This act of showing the photograph around also generates trauma among people. Many houses are left empty due to disappearances or kidnappings. Mothers seek their sons and widows hope for their husband's return. No authority is ready to take responsibility of the disappeared persons. The Chief Minister, Dr. Aiyaash Mir makes excuses, claiming how the disappeared persons must have crossed the border and are not likely to return. Likewise, other officers also offer excuses if someone reports disappearances. "Major Aman Lal Khushwaha was killed long ago in an attack on the border"(154). Many

soldiers and localities are killed across the border during encounters and cease fire violations. Rahbar is also killed in an encounter. Those injured may heal but still carry psychological trauma.

The author wrote this novel very diligently. Writing about a conflicted and traumatised situation is also resistance. He pens down his imagination and thoughts while in suffering and pain. *The Half Mother* Haleema's story, spans three generations, from Ghulam Joo/ AbJaan to his daughter Haleema and to her son Imran. Similarly, many Kashmiris narrate their stories of several generations. These are the stories of persons who lived and lost their lives in the conflict-ridden Kashmir. People from Kashmir share a traumatic memory and pass it down to generations. No one can deny Haleema's struggle for her son's search. She approaches everyone from the army to the police, and from politicians to journalists. She knows all bureaucrats, politicians, lawyers and officers, whom she met several times in search of her son. She picks up legal language and gains political knowledge during her search. She begs everyone for her son. Haleema shows Imran's picture to every officer. Engrossed with her pain, she stands up confused, and indecisive. Whenever she sees someone who resembles Imran she is reminded of her own son. When someone knocks Haleema's door, she imagines "It is him (Imran) maybe it is him". (112)

Just as relatives and friends ask Haleema about any news of Imran, those related to the disappeared face such questions every day. People who reside outside Kashmir ask about the situation of Kashmir on a daily basis ("*Haalat Kaise Hain*") while greeting them. Some of them remain silent and some state how the situation remains the same as always. If there is any encounter or ceasefire violation then people from outside call their

friends and ask what the matter is- What happened? Was there any loss? Sometimes close friends ask Kashmiris about the ground reality of Kashmir.

Haleema approaches the BBC journalist Izhar who helps her throughout her struggle. Izhar is the objective voice of Kashmir. He suggests Haleema to report her missing son at Jammu and Kashmir Human Rights Commission. Local news reporters are scared to depict the grim reality of Kashmir. They are shown not at liberty to represent the true Kashmir. Journalists are also bound as, they don't have complete freedom. They will only report superficial news concerning the conflicts and crises. Sometimes they manipulate news reports or exaggerate the available local news. Haleema doesn't believe in local news reporters who never depict the trauma of disappearance. She doesn't believe in the media representation of Kashmir. Further, she also approaches the radio station where she receives responses like, "Radio doesn't air this kind of news" (72). She also approaches a TV station where she is told that such news is "dangerous and unconventional".(73)

The author doesn't romanticize his narration. The narrator is so disturbed by the situation that his attention remains fixed on conflict and violence. There is no comic relief in the novel through which the reader can feel relieved. The author has an extremely serious tone. There is no digression in his plot. The characters in the novel are sincere and emotional. The novel touches upon the contemporary issues of Kashmir. It focuses on the suffering and pain of the Kashmiris. Though the novel doesn't have a happy ending, it is an appealing work.

The Social Identity of Haleema

Haleema's identity is affected by the conflict and violence she faces. The trauma of disappearance transforms her into a 'half mother'. There are thousands of women in Kashmir who have suffered from pain, trauma and agony for the past three decades. Their status in the society is merely that of 'half mothers' or 'half widows'. They are victims of trauma. Their life is in a state of crisis. They share their collective trauma among themselves. Kashmiri women are doubly victimised as they are suppressed first by patriarchy and then by violence and trauma they face as Kashmiris. Their trauma is also transferred to their children. In case of Haleema, her three generations have faced trauma and chaos. All 'half widows' and 'half mothers' are waiting for justice. We see how "... A daughter still waits for her father to wed her off. A wife searches for her husband. And a mother still pines for her son and waits for him to be a pallbearer when she dies" (177). Jan says in his article how Haleema "acquires a new identity as a half mother which is tormenting reality that torments her with the each passing day". (Pandit 324)

Kunan Poshpura mass rape left women with guilt and regret. It is a very traumatic incident which haunts the women of Kashmir. Their self-image is affected. Women find themselves isolated. Their loneliness without their son and husband triggers the memory. They are always suppressed and subjugated in the society. They remain voiceless in the conflict-ridden Kashmir.

The Dissociative Model of Trauma supports the claim that "one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another" (Arthur, Paul et al 6). Likewise, Parveena's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of the disappeared Imran, like a messenger for the voice of the disappeared persons. She accepts all challenges, in order to fight for justice for the women of Kashmir. Through APDP (Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons), she

speaks on behalf of all disappeared persons. It is the oldest human rights movement that fights for the justice of the disappeared. With the help of this organisation, victims find a collective platform and raise their voices. Family members of victims create and share podcasts and posters announcing their protests. It is a resistant group that is ready to face every challenge in seeking justice for the disappeared people. People share their collective emotion and trauma with the help of this platform.

This novel is very close to reality as it touches upon the real situation of thousands of 'half mothers' and 'half widows'. It depicts the real and sorrowful life of women in conflict-ridden Kashmir. The author tries to portray the agony and trauma of all the 'disappeared' in Kashmir. "With the vivid realism and purity of narration *The Half Mother* depicts an extraordinary and brilliant portrayal of a suffering mother" (Rather 58)

The novel, *The Half Mother* also depicts the insurgency which is a real incident that happened in Kashmir. The trauma of 'half mothers' and 'half widows' is also depicted with sincerity and emotion. Here Haleema's struggle and passion prove that the "greatest of suffering brings greatest of hopes, the greatest of miseries greatest patience, and the greatest uncertainties lead to the greatest quests". (69)