## **CHAPTER-3**

## Portrayal of Trauma in *The Collaborator*

In his writings, Mirza reflects on the violence and conflict in contemporary Kashmir. The conflict-ridden Kashmir has consumed thousands of lives. This complex conflict has harmed several generations since 1947. This violence was not just witnessed at the time of partition, its consequences can be observed today as well, in the form of traumatic incidents which Kashmiris have to face every day. Waheed is clear about the subjugation and oppression of Kashmiri society. So, he is upset about the largest militarized zone (Kashmir) in the world, which makes for a very terrible situation for native Kashmiris. He represents the silence and suppression of Kashmiri people who lead numb lives.

The fictional account of Kashmir by Mirza Waheed depicts the grim reality of the insurgency in 1990. He represents several traumatic incidents in his debut novel, *The Collaborator* which is narrated in first person. He chooses his themes very brilliantly. This novel came out as a result of the traumatic memory of the writer himself, who was a witness to a search operation in his hometown in Kashmir during his childhood. Mirza recounts the trauma and distress that ordinary citizens undergo. His traumatic narration is sombre and overwhelming, and his experience remains indigenous in nature. He breaks through the silence and tries to raise the voice of Kashmiris.

The Collaborator (2011) is the first literary piece of fiction in English that narrates the painful story of insurgency. Mirza Waheed is the first emerging native writer from Kashmir, who began to write in the beginning of the twenty-first century. Before that, few writers could come out of their trauma to write about their suffering and express

in writing their poignant feelings. Many of them wrote in Kashmiri, Urdu, Hindi, Dogri, Gojri and a Phari. The works which talked about trauma and violence in Kashmir couldn't be recognised globally because of the language barriers. Therefore, Mirza Waheed attempted to write in English about the trauma of Kashmir, which is now recognised by intellectuals globally. His literary piece won the first Guardian Award for a realistic and accurate depiction of the traumatic life of Kashmir. The setting of the novel is a local town of Kashmir, Nowgam, which is located near the border of Pakistan. He draws the attention of the world to the war-like crisis and conflict in Kashmir.

As Whitehead observes, "fiction itself has been marked or changed by its encounter with trauma" (Bond and Stefs 6). Confronting the impact of trauma in survivors is also represented in such fiction. Recounting the trauma of the natives and the distress that ordinary citizens feel in the affected regions of the valley forms its basis. He became the true voice of Kashmir that represents Kashmir's conflict and violence through his imagination. There are many writers who write about the conflict and violence in Kashmir write on the basis of what they have read or heard about Kashmir, but native writers like Agha Shahid Ali, Shahnaz Bashir, Mirza Waheed and Siddharth Giggo Rahul Pandita share their personal sufferings and lived experiences in Kashmir. Kashmiri writers have personally experienced trauma, insecurity, fear and exile in the valley which forms the basis of their writings. These are true and honest voices which expose in their writings the brutality and atrocities the Kashmiris have to face in the Valley.

Mirza Waheed represents the cultural and collective trauma of Kashmiris, who are survivors of conflict and violence. When people are haunted by similar traumatic events, they represent a collective trauma. Later on, trauma appears in their culture. Alexander states about collective trauma as: "Experiencing trauma can be understood as a

sociological process that defines a painful injury to the collectivity, establishes the victim, attributes responsibility, and distributes the ideal and material consequences" (Alexander et al 22). Remembering traumatic events of the past generates collective consciousness. Neil argues that, "A cultural trauma refers to an invasive and overwhelming event that is believed to undermine or overwhelm one or several essential ingredients of a culture". (39)

The narrator in *The Collaborator* is an eponymous nineteen year old son of the village Sarpanch or headman. Basharat Shameem states about the anonymity of narrator in his article: "the anonymity of narrator makes him the representative image for the people" (Shameem 146). Ambiguities and contradictions are some of the postmodern elements that can be traced in the narrator's character and actions. He also narrates traumatic and horrific stories to the audience. He witnesses and resists the atrocities in Kashmir. He observes the complex trauma of Kashmir through a close lens. He confronts the trauma typically experienced by bordering area like Nowgam. Moreover, Hussain's disappearance also generates trauma in the narrator's mind. He merges facts with fiction. Waheed portrays the dark side of insurgency in *The Collaborator* on the basis of his personal experiences during 1990s. There is a feeling of nostalgia and fear among people who face terrorism. People of Nowgam are feel insecure at border side. Waheed presents a nameless protagonist who becomes a testimony for the victims, and establishes a 'voice' in writing. The protagonist mourns his missing friends whose memories remain with him forever. The protagonist is assigned a job of collecting ID cards and other things from dead bodies. He also encounters dead militants on a daily basis. It is a risky job that generates constant trauma. (Shameem)

Roger Luckhurt says that a "Traumatic event is persistently re-experienced through intrusive flashback, recurring dream or later situations that represent or echo the original" (Luckhurt 01). Waheed shares his experience of turmoil during insurgency. One of the famous slogans that the troops use for young boys is 'catch and kill', which is not only terrifying but also sorrowful (7). Waheed gives a description of the corpses that lie bleeding on the ground. The stream of their blood flows on the streets of the valley which reminds one of the time of partition. Further, the author describes the situation: "There are bare wounds, holes dark and visceral and limbless, armless, even headless torso. Dead bodies found with identify cards" (8). It is very difficult to separate the victims and the witnesses of attacks from the lying corpses. In this militarized wilderness, no one remains happy. The change in the colour of flowers represents traffic environ of the place.

Maarji talks about the nature of traumatic experiences in his article: "Discoveries about the nature of traumatic experience as overwhelming, alien, amnesiac and often incomprehensible have necessitated new historiographic, testimonial, and representational approaches to help interpret the enigmatic traces of evidence and memory" (Shakoor 6). The narrator shares the militant's names and their stories. For instance, Ghazi Nasiruddin (14) is a Commander of Laksher, a militant group. There are many militant groups which disturb the peaceful environment of Kashmir. Another one is Zulfikaq Ali (92) that poses a threat to the people. Under their threat, young boys are compelled to join their agenda. The narrator says, "One day masked militants came home, threatened us and said if I didn't join them, they would kill my family." (48)

Hussain, from the fictional town of Nowgam, disappears, generating trauma in the mind of the narrator. The narrator also narrates the incident of Poshpura that took place at the time of insurgency. The narrator emphasizes these lines: "Everywhere you see there is

death and destruction. Minor girls, daughters, sisters are raped everyday" (32). The smell of dead people, hunger, mother's silence and bad dreams of lost friend haunt the writer, and he describes all these tragic deaths himself.

If anyone questions Kashmiris about what is happening in Kashmir or why people continue to be punished, killed and tortured, they remain silent on this question. This numbness and silence shows their helplessness and trauma. Having suffered, they share their collective traumatic memories to others who want to listen to Kashmiri narratives. "The traumatic texts tend to position their readers in ethical dilemmas analogous to those of trauma survivors." (Shakoor 6)

Captain Kadian, who is the collaborator in the novel, is interested in collecting ID cards from civilians. His job is to collect the weapons and identification cards from dead bodies. "It's not easy, picking stuff off dead people" (8), he says. If he finds anyone without Id cards, that person is punished and not allowed to go anywhere. Still, Id parade practices continue in the Valley for decades. Everywhere, one can find the security forces and check posts including the border check posts where, while travelling, everyone is required to get their Id cards checked and then frisked. The security forces ask common questions to the travellers such as 'Do you belong to any Tanzeem (organization) or terrorist group?' Such interrogation generates trauma among the people. Terrible situation of Kashmir is explained by Mirza Waheed as below:

There were people dying everywhere getting massacred in every town and village, there were people being picked up and thrown into dark jails in unknown parts, there were dungeons in the city where hundreds of young men were kept in heavy chains and from where many never emerged alive, there were thousands who had disappeared leaving behind women with

photographs and perennial waiting there were multitudes of dead bodies on the roads, in hospitals beds, in fresh martyrs' graveyards and scattered casually on the snow of mindless borders. (250)

Kadian's four childhood friends Hussain, Gul, Ashafaq and Mohammed cross the border to Pakistan for training. He is left alone in a terrible situation. It is very difficult for narrator to stay alone without friends. After this incident, the narrator mentions how the "Army have started capturing and killing hundreds of boys attempting to cross over to Azad Kashmir. They saw, they shot. They saw more, they shot more" (117). The fight between terrorists and army continues in the valley which disturbs the life of natives.

Mirza Waheed also mentions the Gawkal massacre (1990) in the novel. Likewise, several other massacres and fake encounters are faced by the Kashmiris. A number of innocent people have lost their lives. The soldiers' description with SLR and RR is also haunting: "Mr. Raouf carrying two Kalashnikov, 6 grenades and 500 rounds of ammunition" (150). It is again a traumatising situation.

The novel depicts as to how the Kashmiri residents spend their terrible life in curfews and encounters which continue for long period of time. Many a times, they face over six months of curfew. They are suppressed by the so-called power and governance. One such instance is revocation of article 370, and imposition of lockdown in valley for more than six months. It was a complete shutdown, and no means of communication could be used to interact. Mirza Waheed tries to express the pain of a mother under curfew. He said "It will end someday. It will, one day there will be no curfew and then there will be milk. One day the curfew king will die and there will be milk" (181). Mothers are not allowed to fetch milk for their kids. The helplessness of a mother is shown in these lines: "Down east mothers with no milk left in their breast, angry babies

and moaning old men and women leaning against each other" (235). The desperation of the mother reaches such an extent that she is ready to sell her daughter to feed her other child. The mother says "my baby will die, my baby will die...if you give me milk, I will give you one of my girls" (181). Women become milk beggars in order to survive in such a critical situation.

A full caravan of vehicles that marches round during a search operation or an encounter in the valley can also be traumatic and horrible. Sound of gunshots, mortar shelling, grenade, rat-tat of SLR and loud burst of gun fire generate fear and trauma among the people. Continuous firing across border is also a haunting phenomenon. Moreover, careless firing by unknown people during ceasefire violation across border is dangerous for inhabitants. Farooq's mother becomes a half-mother after her son Hussain disappears. She is uncertain about him whether he is alive or dead. Firdous's mother is also upset after her son's disappearance. "Mothers sank deeper into silence and spent more and more time in garden." (213)

Now, the beauty of Kashmir has faded away due to the setback of violence and psychological disorders. There is always a terrible fear of danger and tragedy. People don't get a chance to revel in the beauty of this heavenly place. Mirza said about his father, "Baba's thick figure in the centre of the field and couldn't help smiling a faint smile at my father's enduring sense of self-importance even in the times of complete uncertainty" (219). Baba is extremely worried about the situation in Kashmir. Kashmiris are half dead with anxiety, depression and trauma. Baba has grown weaker due to traumatic incidents.

Children are continuously watching tankers, caravan of troops and militants which imprints traumatic memories on their psyche. Parents pray for their disappeared children

and ask for God's mercy. Mothers have to be careful for the survival of their children. They are always conscious of their children during cross firing across borders. The inhabitants and security forces are helpless about the situation of Kashmir. They say "Haalat hi Kuch Ase hain", which means that the situation is such where nothing is normal.

In *The Collaborator*, Mirza Waheed gives a glimpse of the Poshpur tragedy: "All boys from Poshpur are gone, no one left in the village it's empty now, all empty" (24). This emptiness and hollowness also generates trauma and chaos among the people. Many homes are empty due to the loss of their children. Many people survive across the border of Jammu and Kashmir as half-body survivors because people lose essential body parts like legs or arms due to landmine blasts. There are many landmine amputees struggling for their survival. These survivors are silent and live with regret. One of the reasons behind the silence and numbness explained by the narrator as: "After Farooq's death she (Ma) has assumed a sad, quietly disapproving stance. And after the crackdown, she had become even quieten. It hurt me deeply to think of the humiliation she must have suffered." (240)

Trauma disrupts memory and affects an individual's identity. There is a sorrowful and pathetic voice that lies in traumatic narration and the reader forgets about their surroundings while reading tragic stories. Such stories generate trauma among readers. "Traumatic Narratology is the pathetic and heart touching voice that cries out in narration to make reader weep and emotional" (Shakoor 8). Fright, fear, desperation and numbness can be observed in the voice of the protagonist who feels alienated in the dark and devastated valley. He describes how the smell of carcasses causes people to faint and is

enough to make any normal human being neurotic. The situation of the carcasses in the novel is as below:

There are bare wounds, holes dark and visceral, and limbless, armless, even headless, torsos. A loan moan struggles, screeches inside...Bodies after bodies- some huddled together, others forlorn and lonesome- in various stages of decay. Wretched human remains lie like cracked toys. Teeth, shoes...Macabre, horrid ghouls on either side of the brook watch me from their melancholic black-hole eye sockets. Carcasses with indefinable expressions on what remains of their faces-I hope I don't recognize anyone... The smell, the smell, the smell... You just stop breathing. That is it. (8)

Kashmiris carry a hidden trauma in their mind which triggers their psyche. After facing violence, people possess a "traumatic memory (which) is puzzling" (Luckhurst 8). They suffer from nervous shocks and are troubled with psycho-neurosis. There is no linearity in the narration of trauma, survivors share their feelings and pain in a fragmented form. The painful suffering of people in valley is so traumatising that the protagonist shares some more descriptions of the carcasses: "These are erstwhile legs and arms and backbones and ribcages surrounded by sparking swathes of yellow created by the thousands and thousands of flowers all across the valley...and decaying...it makes me cry, it makes me want to run away, to disappear". (14)

The youth of Kashmir faces the trauma of disappearance. The narrator says, "All the boys...are gone, gone no one left in the village, it's empty now, all empty! It's all happening, dear, happening everywhere... the story of the sixteen boys (some said twenty, some thirty) who had apparently disappeared together" (24). Enforced disappearance is a

very critical issue in Kashmir which goes against human rights. People are victims of enforced disappearance from the last three decades. Moreover, "Young and old, men and children, dead, all dead, dead on a bridge: blood, washed with fire-brigade hoses, ran down copiously into the muddy waters of rivers". (117)

When Farooq disappears, the Kashmir valley becomes "The River of Blood" (117) because thousands of Kashmiri and security forces have lost their lives during encounters, protests and cease-fire violations. Many lose their lives in massacres. For instance, in the Gowkal massacre, narrator states that around fifty people were killed.

Waheed's *The collaborator* also evokes border trauma of Jammu and Kashmir. The narrator is in a dilemma because of the uncertain situation across the border. About border shelling, the narrator says, "This ikka-duka-gola-barri, this damned sporadic shelling on the LOC, I'm sick of it" (129). Heavy shelling in Nowgam represents the usual cross firing across the border of Jammu and Kashmir. The border is also one of the main sources of trauma. It is very difficult and challenging to survive and live near the borders. People who live near the borders are victims of ceasefire violations, which also triggers the memory of the survivors. There is threat, terror and fear among the people throughout the border area. Since there can be no movement, during shelling people try to hide themselves in their bunkers along with family members. These bunkers are the only hope for their survival. It is very difficult to spend their lives in these dark and haunted bunkers. The way these bunkers are constructed for the survivors generates cultural trauma among people.

The effect of this trauma on the personality of people is evident in their constant tension about their survival. They are mentally unstable, and always recall traumatic life experiences in their dreams. Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is the disorder which is found among the people of borders. The horror of firing across the border has shaken every individual who lives at the LOC. The mortar shelling echoes the whole environment of borderlines. Border residents are also deprived of network and internet facility, and even if it is available, the range and speed of network is very slow. People are suspicious of border residents in case they're conspiring with Pakistan. There are many landmine survivors living across the border of Jammu and Kashmir. Moreover, it is very difficult to understand the trauma of landmines. There is also a problem to be found Pir-Panjal range of Poonch and Rajouri regions. The border at 'Darandazi'(infiltration) (13) is very dangerous for the natives. The horrible act of ceasefire violation is haunted and terrible for people. It appears like Guerrila warfare (16). Sometimes we find skeletons near borders. The narrator mentions how "Four skeletons (were) discovered near the LoC." (16)

Khuram Parvez said in an interview, "Hundreds of thousands of APM (antipersonal mines) were laid along 734 kilometre area of Line of Control of India and Pakistan. No specific data is available on the total area under landmines but in 2013 Govt told in Jammu and Kashmir Assembly that approximately 3,512 acre land is spoiled by landmines in various villages near the bordering area. Due to these landmine explosion not only kill the civilian but also the army soldiers. There is also report by Indian parliamentary panel in 2005 which states that 1776 Indian soldiers died while laying and removing mines from 2001-2005. Moreover, according to Landmine and Cluster Munitions Monitor, a total of 1091 people were killed and 2638 injured between 1999-2016" (Mir). Landmine strategy was initially applied from across the border but it has now become a problem for civilians and soldiers.

Waheed talks from the protagonist's point of view and uses his perception to convey the grim reality of Kashmir. The narrator's memory is now suppressed, as a result of a series of traumatic events. B. Shameem says, "Survival was more important than resistance as the narrator became the reluctant collaborator" (147). Mirza Waheed's writing comes under writing of resistance. He brilliantly narrates Kashmiri experiences in the conflict zone of Kashmir. Places are also important in trauma culture. One hears the names of Sopore and Pulwama in various encounters. Many places are repeatedly mentioned in news that reports cross-firing. For instance, Shahpur-Kirani Sector, Mandhar-Qasba sector, Digwar-Khari Sector and Mankote-Balakot sector from Poonch district are some examples. Nowshera-Laam Sector and Ghambir-Mughla from district Rajouri are other such places. RS Pura sector from Jammu district and other two districts called Samba and Kathua are also affected due to cross-firing. "Soldiers, militants, security men, policemen, mukhbirs, black-cat commandos, counter- insurgents, agents, bodyguard, informers thieves, guest- militants" (72) are all words that generate trauma among the people of Kashmir.

The narrator's state of uncertainty and the traumatic life that he leads in Kashmir is horrible. He is unsure whether he wants to continue with his life. Moreover, he is always in psychological trauma. On one hand, he cannot leave his parents alone in the village while on the other hand, he wants to join the insurgent group across the border.

In Kashmir, women are doubly victimised, suppressed first by patriarchy and secondly by conflict and violence. Women were mass-raped in the Poshpura incident. They face more violence than usual after the insurgency in Kashmir. In the novel, Dasrath Singh kicks the belly of a pregnant woman, who gives birth to a baby with fractured limbs. Later, after investigation it is proved that it's 'procedural error' (265). In another

incident is traumatising and haunting incident the narrator describes how the tongue of Shaban Khatana's wife is cut and her beloved son has disappeared. Women are silent and there is no space for them in the society. They remain voiceless, subjugated and suppressed because of patriarchy. The narrator once says, "I can't help thinking of this new group...Tigers, who broke video rental shops and torched cinemas in the city and dragged frightened little girls out of school buses and checked their hands for any signs of nail polish and sent them back home to wear floor-length burqas" (90). They are compelled to beg so they end up becoming 'milk beggars' in *The Collaborator*.

Survival is a struggle for existence. It is a universal struggle through which victims manage to be patient. In most cases, survivors are silent and numbed by their life conditions. Chahal says, "... a survivor is a determined and committed self to thwart any threat to his life and dignity. An elevated notion of identity and morality busts a survivor to fight the debilitating and destructive forces" (319). Mirza Waheed also narrates the story of war victims of Kashmir in his novel, *The collaborator*. Survivors have to tackle trauma, tension, separation, identity crisis, fear and terror. After insurgency, resistance is common among Kashmiri survivors who are victims of violence and conflict. They feel a psychic disequilibrium among themselves after encountering a traumatic incident. The narrator in *The Collaborator* is also a survivor of the Kashmir conflict, and the only way for him to survive is to collaborate with Captain Kadian. The narrator in *The Collaborator* becomes the voice of the survivors. Cathy states that "the crisis of survival is intimately bound to second crisis, a crisis of knowledge...As unclaimed experience, trauma remains essentially unknowable and by extension, irresolvable." (Bond and Stef 75)

Testimonies serve to show the nature of violence and how survivors resist their traumatic life situation. The stories of victims depict not only the reality of violent events, but also the reality of the way that violence is yet to be known. Survivors encounter trauma in their day to day lives. These testimonies offer us realistic and authentic proof of trauma which takes place in their life. The numbness and lack of speech in people has not been recognised and represented well. The testimony refers to the narrative of the victim who are witness to the massive trauma faced by the individual in traumatic situations. The testimony of trauma includes its listener and healer who try to understand the problem of memory. Therefore, testimony in trauma studies gives authenticity and validity to unclaimed experience. Shoshana Felman, who belongs to Yale school of Criticism, sees testimony as the literary or discursive mode of our times. In Mirza Waheed's debut novel, *The Collaborator*, Hussain, who disappeared from the Nowgam town of Kashmir, is also one of the testimonies of trauma from Kashmir.

There are various marks of trauma that we need to understand. The key feature of trauma is the feeling of loss, violence is one of the markers of trauma. The yellow flowers represent the smell of dead bodies. These yellow flowers are bedded on the dead bodies. One can find large number of graveyards in the valley with yellow flowers all over the graves. The collaborator's psychological state of mind is haunted by a terrible view of the dead:

I'm beginning to spend more and more time amidst the rotting dead now. The other day, I thought I'd started talking to my skeletal audience. You know, they look at you with their mid-sentence grins and teeth and you feel someone just said something. Some of them are in a very shape, with

bits of flesh hanging loose from their faces, necks, chests, arms. Sad dismissal demeaned reflections of their former selves." (10)

Due to trauma, people are fragmented and there is no organic unity in their selves. People are living with scattered souls. There is also a dissociation of psyche because of the frequency with which they face trauma. *The Collaborator* deals with the crisis in Kashmiri people's lives. Psychological trauma is embedded in the narrator's psyche. The protagonist screams these words at the end of novel: "to hell with the Pakistanis, to hell with the line of control...to hell with jihad, and to hell with, to burning, smouldering hell with everything." (301)

As Cary Caruth says, there are unclaimed experiences of trauma which need to be claimed, like the "unclaimed deads" (44) who are also not claimed by anyone in Kashmir. There is also threat from militants: "Go home, go home...Some day you might die in these parts and no one claim you" (74). Not even biodiversity remains safe due to these traumatic events. Beautiful sparrow tries to "hide when the sky rain fire". During firing, birds too seek a place to be safe from danger and terror. "The singing picks up, is joined by other birds' salutations to the earliest glimmer of light opening up sadly in the east, and soon, it's all over All over." (131)

Border crossing is also one of the elements that generates trauma among people. Due to border crossing, people are suspicious of militancy. The border residents are not considered trustworthy due to their intimacy with the border. Many lose their lives while crossing the border illegally. While crossing, landmines explode unexpectedly. Some of them become landmine amputees. Waheed says that "the Line of Control also curtailed bonding of the blood, prevented contact between brothers and sisters, mothers and daughters, fathers and sons as if it were a sin." (107)

## **Collective Memory and Trauma**

Mirza Waheed's intention is to focus completely on conflict and violence while writing this novel. He tries to represent the collective identity of Kashmir which is known as Kashmiriyat. The existential dilemma is the principal feature of novel. Waheed is trying to find the space for existence. The author tries to convey his message through the portrayal of trauma and its consequences on the lives of the people. The narrator first trips on to the mountain of sorrow (Koh-i-Gham) (82) and Ghost of Kohi-gham haunts him. This work also mourns over the loss Kashmiris have faced for the last three decades. People, especially the young generation, face the trauma of disappearance throughout the valley. It is a big challenge for the Kashmiris to escape from disappearance and kidnapping. The narrator is psychologically upset due to the trauma he faces due to the disappearance of his friends, Gul, Ashafaq and Mohammed. He is also bored with the duty he is assigned-collecting the identification cards from dead bodies.

The novel *The Collaborator* is open-ended and ambiguous. Mirza Waheed explains the surroundings and incidents vividly because he has personally witnessed the time of insurgency. This novel highlights the ruthlessness of militant attacks and the security forces to counter all activities. Waheed explores the trauma of Kashmir through the unnamed narrator. The author analyses the impact of conflict and violence in Kashmir. It is through his work that he speaks up against the atrocities and human right violations in Kashmir. Through his debut novel *The Collaborator*, he tries to depict the agony and traumatic memory of Kashmir after insurgency. He observes that peaceful life of Kashmir has become the site of trauma and disruption. He narrates his past reminiscences which depict the traumatic memory of past.

The Collaborator is first fictional text that makes the world aware of the conflict and violence in Kashmir. It provides the reader with more insight into the Kashmiri identity and their collective memory. There is the essence of Kashmiriyat in the novels of Mirza Waheed and Shahnaz Bashir. Very brilliantly, Mirza Waheed depicts the traumatic situation of Kashmiris which echoes the element of resistance. The discourse of trauma is well discussed in *The Collaborator*, which sketches a portrait of conflict in the valley that has lasted for decades. Waheed shares his personal experiences of Kashmir and also expresses anger over the terrible situation.