

## Chapter-1

### Kashmiri Prison Narratives

Oh morning breeze bring me a breath of fresh air

I have been signed in this prison in many ways

A touch of cool breeze will revive me

Why has the fragrance of my Valley forsaken me?

– Anjum Zamarud Habib, *Prisoner No. 100*

All the stories constructed in our daily life provide a sense of meaning, purpose, and challenges. People construct their life history in the form of narratives from past to present that give meaning and coherence. In literature or literary discourse, narratives play an important role. Kashmir was known for the stories of Lal Ded and Noor Jahan but the tense situation turned the literary writing towards resistance and trauma. Now writers have started writing about sufferings, disappearance, and detentions. Several Kashmiri people are languishing in different jails but it is difficult for them to narrate their stories. It is unfortunate that only a few Kashmiri prisoners narrate their jail experience in the form of text. Due to lack of education and knowledge, inmates keep jail stories inside their mind; only few of them can narrate orally. In general, narratives are images, music, language, and their combination which makes sense in the form of a story. M.H. Abrams and Geoffrey G.H. define narratives as “A ‘narrative’ is a story, whether told in prose or verse, involving events, character and what the characters say and do” (233).

In recent times, the word narrative leads everyone towards the literary structure like written material in the form of a story, novel, poetry, etc. Narrative does not mean only a written text rather everything happening in our life on daily basis are narratives. Things that exist in the whole world have historical background and are associated with different narratives. Every conversation in our life is a form of narrative either written or oral. Every human activity in the entire world is woven in different narratives. M. Fludernik has written in her book *An Introduction to Narratology* that “the human brain is constructed in such a way that it captures many complex relationships in the form of narrative structures, metaphors, or analogies” (1).

Narratives are of two types- historical and fictional. Historical narratives mostly depend on facts or things which already happened in the past. Every narrator will narrate the story in such a way that it depicts the historical background of the contemporary era. The way of interpretation would be quite different from each other but the theme of the story will remain the same. Secondly, the fictional narratives depend on the author or writer’s own fictional world. He/she will narrate the story in the form of fables, novels, fairy tales, etc.

Narratology deals with the structure of the narrative which helps in understanding the opinion of the reader; it refers to the study of narratives. It also explicates the typical narratives of the text to contrast the instruction, description, etc. Several writers have given the meaning of narratology as the structural analysis of narratives. The term ‘Narratology’ (Narratologie) was first given by French writer Todorov in 1969. It was brought under discussion at the end of the twentieth century by Gerald Prince, Monika Fludernik, Chatman, Ryan, etc. Several critics and authors

have given the definitions of the term narratology. G. Prince defines narratology as “The study of the form and functioning of narrative” (7). M. Amerian and L. Jofi have written in an article, “The beginnings of narratology like the roots of all western theories of fiction go back to Plato’s (428-348 BC) and Aristotle’s (384-322 BC) distinction between ‘mimesis’(imitation) and diegesis (narration)” (183). Its classification is based on Ferdinand de Saussure’s concept of ‘Signified’ and ‘Signifier’. It shows that signifier is a form and signified is meaning. It is to be understood that the presentation of a narrative text is signifier and its story that depicts some sort of meaning is signified. M. Amerian and L. Jofi wrote “Story and discourse are the backbones of the narrative investigations. Discourse refers to stylistic innovations and choices that make up the ultimate realization of a narrative text which is unique to every writer”(184).

In recent times, narrative and narratology play an important role to contrast the meaning of the text. Different scholars are working in this field of literature. At the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century, researchers showed the relevance of narrative and narration. Every social and humanistic research is related to narrative texts. So, the method of narration deals with the concept of narratology. Narratives are the series of events or incidents that we can experience through the narrative texts or from the oral stories. The whole description of these events in a parallel way makes a well-structured plot. Marie-Laure Ryan wrote:

The narratives of the world are numberless...Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy,

comedy, mime, painting, Stained glass windows, cinema, comic, news items, conversation, etc. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society. (517)

The story narrated in front of the audience is called a narrative and the method which is used to narrate the story is called narratology. According to Marie- Laure Ryan: “Defining narrative means defining the conditions under which the content of a text can be regarded as a story”(518). Narratology is the study of narrative structures. It shows the existence of common narratives and their meaning. It is based on Ferdinand De Saussure’s concept of linguistics that the word is a combination of morphemes, phonemes, and syntagmatic, etc. In a similar way narrative theory works as how sentences make narrative and how narratives are formed from text. There are two ways to represent narratives, the first one is oral and the second is written. The verbal communication among the individuals is known as oral narratives. They can narrate their stories verbally or verbal communication that develops the image in the receiver’s mind is called an oral narrative. All the texts or written material that portrays story or historical documents like biographies, autobiographies are known as written narratives.

In ancient times when paper and printing machines were not found, people used to narrate oral stories. Even teachers used to teach their students orally. Everyone must have heard about the ancient Gurukul system in India; teachers used to deliver lectures in front of pupils without any text rather they taught in the form of narratives. It was a common practice among the people that the knowledge gained orally from one individual to another and from that another individual to a group of

individuals. After the invention of the printing machine and paper, written narratives overcame oral narratives. After the flourishing of language and script, all oral narratives were printed on paper.

Narration can also be divided into two distinct categories; concrete and abstract. The factual events that already happened like autobiographies, biographies, annals, and historical diaries are known as concrete narratives. Abstract narratives are those narratives that are based on an individual belief, ideas, and perception, including poetry, fiction, and story. Historical documents, biographies, and autobiographies are the actual experiences of the individual based on facts. It brings the reader to his/her past which makes a real image in his/her mind. It is based on the Aristotelian concept of tragedy and comedy which defines the meaning of the story. The 'story' has a beginning, middle and end along with coherence. Every narrative has a theme on which the whole story revolves. The theme of the narration depends on the reader's response, but it also depends on the structure of the story. As the narrative has a direct link to the mind of the individual. Every narrative revolves around the events which surrounds it. There are different narratives that belong to our daily life activities. People are suffering from several problems and they portray their grief and hardship through narrative. In recent times every human being is suffering from trauma differently. The traumatic narratives generally revolve around marginalized groups, war victims, terrorism, sexual violence, etc.

Several scholars and authors have recorded the agony and suffering of people who are struggling for their lives. Countries which are going under war-like situations, conflicted zones and resistance causes trauma among the people. Terrorism in recent times is a crucial issue and is a threat that causes terror in certain areas and

ends up with the killing of innocent people. Kashmir is one of the conflicted and violent areas in India. People are struggling in Jammu and Kashmir and the situation of uncertainty is there for the last three decades. Every third person in the valley of Kashmir is suffering from trauma. Infiltration, insurgency, terror, bloodshed, causes trauma among the common people but it is more terrible for children and women. Atrocious incidents, daily life conflicts, firing, and unprecedented raiding on different places leave long life impression on the minds of children. They wanted to go outside to meet their friends and relatives but are scared to go outside because of the tense situation. The news of disappearance and putting behind the bar is very common inside the valley because of terrorism for the last three decades. People are put inside jail on the basis of suspicion but the process to come out of prison takes a long time. Haley Duschinski has written in his article “Kashmiris have become permanent prisoners of the state, subjected in their everyday lives to exceptional brutality and punishment that have become the normal state of affairs” (22).

People of border areas are also facing problems and struggling for their lives. They have the only source of bunkers to keep their life out of risk. Particularly the people of Rajouri, Poonch, Kupwara, and R.S. Pura of the Jammu region are affected. It results in people’s detention on the basis of suspicion, bloodshed, destruction of houses, and loss of domestic animals. So, the insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir after 1989 leads to torture and more traumatic effects. The most affected community during the time of 1989 was Kashmiri Pundits. They were targeted by the terrorists and Militants and exiled from the valley of Kashmir. The mass exodus of the minority communities took place in the valley. They are in a state of trauma and homesickness and are seeking help from the government of Jammu and Kashmir to settle back in the

valley. They had lost their family members on their way to Jammu and other regions of the country. Some of them are in foreign lands because of security measures, higher education, or for job security. The scenario of the whole state has changed drastically with the insurgency and rise of militancy. People who faced the traumatic events can experience the shallow feeling which is inside them. If the reader himself would be the victim of the incidents then he can feel the pain through the narratives.

There was a time once when people used to talk about the beauty of Kashmir. It was known for snow-clad mountains, freshwater springs, different species of gardens, and varieties of fruits were also cultivated in the valley. It was considered to be the hub of tourist industries. People from different countries over the globe were eager to see the beauty of Kashmir. At that time Kashmir was just the valley of tourists and the place of satisfaction. It was ruled by different rulers and had a huge historical background. Every narrative of Kashmir is associated with different mythological origins. So, intellects have given their own opinion that Kashmir is associated with the Hindu mythology or Muslim. There are several authors in Kashmir who had given several interpretations of the word 'Kashmir'. According to folk etymology, the word 'Kashmir' means 'desiccated land' (In Sanskrit: *Ka* means water and *shimeera* means desiccate). It means a small continent that is made up of water bodies and dry land.

Throughout the ancient times, the beautiful piece of land known as Jammu and Kashmir was famous for peaceful contemplation, religious diversity, and intellectual advancement in an atmosphere of tolerance. The state was famous for Sufis and Rishis and known as 'paradise on earth'. Sufis and Rishis both were serving and

preaching in Jammu and Kashmir with the motive to make people well-educated and knowledgeable individuals beyond any religious conflict.

Lal Ded was a famous poet of Kashmir. She wrote literature at the time when Chaucer was writing in English Literature around the 14th century. There were two famous authors in Kashmir, Lal Ded, and Sheikh Noor-u-din Noorani, they were not only known for their religious practices but for their writings as well. Researchers have written that Lal Ded in Kashmir was also known by her name Lala-Arifa and Noor-u-din Noorani by his name as Nand Rishi. It shows communal harmony among the people of Kashmir.

Lal Ded was a well-known writer of Jammu and Kashmir along with her contemporary Sheikh Noor-u-din Noorani. There were other famous writers in Kashmir like Kalhan, Anandvardan, Abhinavagupta, etc. but two were very famous for their mystical writings. Sheikh Noor-u-din Noorani wrote that we all belong to the same breed and there is no difference among human beings. All the Hindus and Muslims should live together and enjoy life. The same thing was written by Lala-Arifa, that there is one and only God (Allah), and the entire universe was created by Him. Lal Ded talks about the presence of Lord Shiva. Shiva is everywhere; and we should not divide Muslims from Hindus. A true way to find God is to recognize oneself to reach the destination (Akbar).

Since 1989, the situation in Jammu and Kashmir started deteriorating and causing conflict between India and Pakistan. It was not just the political partition of India and Pakistan which caused distress and upheavals in Jammu and Kashmir. The territory of Jammu and Kashmir was free from conflict before the partition. Post-



partition, the Indian sub-continent brought the state of Jammu and Kashmir under resistance and caused different conflicts. For the last two decades, China also created conflict in Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir.

It was not the geographical separation rather the unprecedented change among the people that caused the loss of their family members, friends, loved ones, etc. It also brought fear, trauma, pain, and grief over the whole sub-continent. Many innocent people were either killed or they themselves died because of malnutrition. Several women were killed and raped on the basis of their caste, religion, or community. Urvashi Butalia, had written about the painful life of women in her article, “About 75000 women were abducted and raped by men of other religions and sometimes men of their own religion. Thousands of families were divided, homes were destroyed, crops left to rot, villages abandoned” (3).

The tension between India and Pakistan increased after the partition regarding who would exercise control over the land of Jammu and Kashmir. It caused conflict over Jammu and Kashmir and brought both the countries into a situation of lifetime of wars, an instance of such wars which occurred in 1965, 1971 and 1999. The book *Kashmir Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace*, written about the origin of conflict in Jammu and Kashmir started from 1949 mainly after the partition of India and Pakistan causing ceasefire violation between them.

Sumantra Bose has written:

The dividing line between India and Pakistan, which originated as a ceasefire line in 1949 and was marginally altered during India-Pakistan

wars in 1965 and 1971, was renamed the Line of Control (LOC) by Indi a-Pakistan agreement in July 1972. (2)

Conflict and Kashmir are both intertwined by the images of the media that the conflict was related to politics and political leaders were making use of people for their benefits. It was a multidimensional conflict and we can articulate it from various perspectives.

The unprecedented rise of infiltration, insurgency, and militancy created such drastic incidents that broke the harmony among the people and a sense of panic was in the state. The diverse culture of Kashmir was the reason for communal harmony among the people as it went beyond caste, religion, and color, in a way it is this 'Kashmiriyat' which united the people of the valley. The conflict, insurgency and infiltration, particularly in Kashmir province changed the whole scenario and a wave of war was running inside the valley. Armed conflict created unprecedented tension among the people of Kashmir that led to trauma among women and children. Soudiya Qutab has written in her article about the 'Half Widows' of Kashmir, "Conflict involving arms is a ubiquitous phenomenon. Since the dawn of the 21st century, armed conflicts have become more internal, long-drawn, and complex, with civilians increasingly becoming the targets" (1).

Several people in Jammu and Kashmir were tortured during the time of insurgency, it causes conflict within the valley and people were being targeted. The significant rise of militancy spread in the whole state in a very short time. People were targeted on the of basis suspicion and several of them disappeared from the valley. They were found in different detention camps and jails after the investigation. People

who were innocent were sent back to their homes after the trial period. Many people are still missing from the valley and their family members are searching for them everywhere. In various houses, male members of the family were the only source of income and as a result their family members are still struggling for livelihood.

In recent times women of Jammu and Kashmir are the main victims studied from alternating perspectives. They are in constant search for food and shelter for their children and seeking peace in the valley. They are always thinking about their family members because women are more attached to everyone and are soft-hearted and woven in one relation or other like a mother, sister, wife, friend, daughter, etc. Every mother is crying for her child, woman for her husband, sister for her brother, and daughter for her father. There are several women in the valley as 'half widows' because their husbands disappeared and did not return to their homes. Newlywed Wives are still waiting for their husbands to return with only an ounce of hope. The horrible thing for such women is that their husbands disappeared years ago but still they hope of their return which is traumatizing in many ways. They were not allowed to marry another man until their husbands' death report reached home and people of the society have declared the woman as 'Widow'. The article, *'The dilemma of Kashmir's half-widows'* shows that there are several odd widows or half widows in Kashmir who still share a deep bond with their missing husbands without losing hope. One of the women named Fatima said that "I searched him for months. Except for the army camps I searched for him everywhere. And one day I just gave up," Fatima says, adding, "We are illiterate people. In this far-away unreported world we do not have any information on how to proceed with the case legally" (*Al Jazeera*). Since their husbands have disappeared and not confirmed dead, they are not officially widowed

and that is the reason they are called half-widows. It leads to trauma among the people of Kashmir which starts at a very young age.

Trauma is not only a result of pain or struggle, rather there are different types of trauma in society which make people depressed and are the root cause of many diseases and death. The collateral damage and suffering of the people adversely affects all aspects and spheres of life like psychological, cultural, economic, environmental, social, etc.

Women and children are the main victims of trauma in Jammu and Kashmir because of different reasons. When Kashmiri pundits were exiled from the valley: their women were raped and harassed during the insurgency. Asia Nelofar case of Shopian and the mass rape of Konan had shaken the innocent people of Kashmir. The whole village of Konan Poshpora is facing the problem of alienation, and nobody wants to go to this village and socialize which results into a village where women are unmarried and no marriage ceremony takes place.

Since the late 20th century, continuous violence and huge loss of human lives and property took place in Jammu and Kashmir on a routine basis. In 1989 the communal harmony among the people of Kashmir was disturbed because of the sudden rise of terrorism and infiltration. Kashmiri people are struggling for years and until now as well, whether they belong to one religion or another. Kashmiri pundits are still waiting to return to their homes but no one knows when this wait will end. From the last three decades people are in acute mental stress, trauma, depression, and anxiety. Several people are spending their lives in detention centers and jails because of the conflict. Undoubtedly, the population of Jammu and Kashmir is experiencing

trauma on a daily basis, especially in the valley of Kashmir. Azaan Javaid has written in his article ‘Kashmiri’s infamous prisons are destroying the state troubled youth’ that thousands of Kashmiri people are in different jails and several got bail but they are unable to heal their pain. The long-term incarceration and homesickness make all the prisoners dehumanize. Prisoners will get out of jail but they cannot change their minds. He says, “You may leave prison but it doesn’t leave you” (*HuffPost India*). Khurram Parvez, one of the detainees under the Public Safety Act (PSA) added his multi-layered ramification and agony of jail experience. He said that the majority of people in Jammu and Kashmir are suffering from conflict-related trauma. He says, “Those who suffer brutalization at detention and interrogation centers are particularly vulnerable” (*Huff Post India*).

There are several people in Jammu and Kashmir who are logged in different jails of the country. Different types of allegations have been thrust upon the people. Along with the convicts of crime, several other suspected people are spending their years in jails. Kamran Yousif has written in his article ‘Tales of Kashmiri Prisoner’s Dispatch’ that there are several Kashmiri people in jails, particularly the male members of the families, who are either missing or put in jail. Women of the community are searching for their husbands and children; they do not even have the source of income for their livelihood. He wrote, Ashfaq (prisoner) was the only member of the family who earned for the whole family. He was put behind the bar under the Public Safety Act (PSA) in Agra Jail. The entire family was suffering from trauma and Ishfaq was always busy recalling the welfare of his pregnant wife. He was lying in the jail and had a dream in which his wife delivered a baby boy. He has suggested a name for his son in the dream. He woke up in the morning and wrote the

suggested name on the paper and sent it back to his home. It was fortunate for him that he got bail after five months. Before reaching home, his wife delivered a baby boy and gave the same name to his son. He wrote that “sitting with his wife and his new born child, he recounts his days of detention in Agra. As my child grew in his mother’s womb, my worries also mounted” (*News Click*).

Ali Mohd. Bhat was one of the accused among six in a bomb blast incident in Rajasthan. He spent twenty four years of imprisonment in different jails. He was imprisoned at the age of twenty four and got bail when he was forty seven. He was searching home in his dream. After getting released from jail, he visited the graves of his parents. He said “I cried my heart out, I screamed, shouted, and wanted to tell them I have come. I thought they might answer back” (*Aljazeera*). He forgets his friends and other relatives because he feels alone everywhere and wants to be alone. He wrote his diary in the jail in which he re-collects the memories of his parents. He also wrote two copies of the holy book Quraan during his imprisonment.

Kashmiri Poet and writer Ghulam Nabi Khayal wrote a poetry collection in a Srinagar jail titled “Zanjir Haun Saaz” (1963) in vernacular language. He was imprisoned from the valley because of Sheikh Abdulla’s moment of plebiscite. He wrote around twenty nine books and was also awarded Sahitya Akademi Award for his book *Gaashiry Munaar*. He also translated Omer Khayyam’s Persian poetry into Kashmiri in jail.

Anjum Zamarud Habib, a political activist, and writer from Jammu and Kashmir. She was a social activist but later on, she joined the Hurriyat conference. She was arrested under the draconian Prevention and Terrorism Act (POTA). She

spent five rigorous years in Tihar jail. After getting bail she recollects the memories of her jail experience and penned it on paper. She believed that the whole scenario causing conflict, trauma, and suffering among the people of Jammu and Kashmir was the communal mistrust and the militant situation. She has written about her jail experience and also talked about the cause of resistance and political conflict in Jammu and Kashmir. She locates the power politics and patriarchal system by highlighting the Hurriyat Conference, Jammu and Kashmir Bar Association, and ill mindset of political leaders. She unfolds the inside stories of her experience in the memoir *Prisoner No. 100: An Account of My Nights and Days in an Indian Prison*. This text has been written on her primary experience and her search for her homeland everywhere. Prison or detention center is a place which was made to isolate the criminal from society. Habib wrote, "Incarceration can bind physically but cannot bind one's conscience; no jail can cuff one's thoughts or imaginations" (Habib 9).

Media plays an important role and is considered the fourth pillar of democracy. It is the only source of communication through which one can see the whole situation of the world. But the situation in Jammu and Kashmir is quite different for the journalists to record and represent all the issues. There are several journalists and authors who are put behind bar because of different allegations.

Sahil Maqbool was a well-known journalist and writer from Kashmir. He was imprisoned for three and a half years because of espionage. He was invited by the Hurriyat Conference as a party worker but he denies the invitation. Being a journalist and author, he started working for his own aspirations. His job of journalism led him to jail because of espionage. He wrote seven books during the imprisonment. Among them, *Shabastan-e-Wajood* (Abode of Being) was his best diary of the jail ordeal.

Iftikhar Gilani was a Kashmiri based journalist in Delhi. He was working for the *Kashmir Times* as Jammu based English newspaper. He was imprisoned under the Official Secrets Act (OSA) for nine months in the Tihar Jail. His house was raided by the Income Tax Committee, Central Bureau of Investigation, and Delhi police. He was tortured and mentally harassed along with his entire family. His whole family was tortured and harassed but his children were very conscious about the raid at night. They were scared at their own home and felt helpless. It leads to childhood trauma that would be horrible for the entire life. He says “The treatment of my children by the police haunts me. They are scared, they are so young, this is the age when events leave deep impact” (*Hindu*). It was very difficult for the new inmates to adjust themselves in harsh conditions at the beginning of the incarceration. Gilani was also a new prisoner in the Tihar Jail and the tall walls of the prison always seemed horrible for him. Markanday Katju was the then chairman of the press council of India when Iftikhar Gilani was imprisoned. He took strict action against the illegal detention of Indian journalists. He (Katju) says, “They reveal great high handedness and outrageous behavior by Delhi policemen concerned in harassing and tormenting Mr. Gilani and his family, including his children. These were the undemocratic and abhorrent methods of Gestapo during Nazi rule” (*Hindu*).

Gilani narrates the terrifying tale of what he experienced for seven months in Tihar Jail. He discusses freedom of speech from the perspective of a journalist. He got support by the other media persons, journalists, and authors and got bail for his innocence. He was lucky that he was found not guilty after seven months of imprisonment but the same thing would not happen with any common man. He wrote that there are several other prisoners who are under this rigorous act but they are



helpless and are spending days in different jails. The false stories planted in the media and newspapers isolated his family and which leads to extreme mental harassment. Every person has a different narrative about the imprisonment of Iftikhar Gilani. A. Deepa has written about his memoir *My Days in Prison* that it was not just the ordeal of his own humiliation rather the other souls who are the victims of such suspicion. She has written that the narrative that was taken from his neighbors was strange to everyone. One of the shopkeepers said that Iftikhar was imprisoned because of keeping his light switched on till late night, “He might have to do his secret work at night!” Deepa wrote, “The *Dhobi* said that the lights were on in Gilani’s room till late in the night. This apparently, could be extrapolated to conclude that the journalist was indulging in suspicious activities” (Deepa).

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