

# On Trauma and Traumatic Memory



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Edited by

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In memory of all massacred, oppressed, traumatised innocents  
around the world



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# INTRODUCTION: ON TRAUMA AND TRAUMATIC MEMORY

## BOOTHEINA MAJOUL

*"The story of trauma, then, as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality—the escape from a death, or from its referential force—rather attests to its endless impact on a life" (Carruth, 7)*

Trauma is inherently linked to any form of ingurgitated violence; people have tendencies to regurgitate what they have witnessed or experienced. Intellectuals in general and writers in particular find refuge in their texts. According to Edward Said: "The intellectual's role generally is to uncover and elucidate the contest, to challenge and defeat both an imposed silence and the normalized quiet of unseen power, wherever and whenever possible". Thus an intellectual gives voice to the silenced and unveils the hidden scars. In his article "The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals", Said explains:

In everyday usage in the languages and cultures with which I am familiar, a "writer" is a person who produces literature--that is, a novelist, poet, dramatist. I think it is generally true that in all cultures writers have a separate, perhaps even more honorific, place than do "intellectuals"; the aura of creativity and an almost sanctified capacity for originality (often vatic in scope and quality) accrues to writers as it doesn't at all to intellectuals, who with regard to literature belong to the slightly debased and parasitic class of "critics". Yet at the dawn of the twenty-first century the writer has taken on more and more of the intellectual's adversarial attributes in such activities as speaking the truth to power, being a witness to persecution and suffering, and supplying a dissenting voice in conflicts with authority.

So, it is the intellectual's role and responsibility to historicise truths, remember facts, and re-adjust the past for the sake of the post. Writing helps grasp the past and deconstruct it; it heals through narration and provides a sense of containment to memories. Deleuze says that writing is

“a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any livable or lived experience. It is a process, that is, a passage of life that traverses both the livable and the lived” (1); and texts become thus both receptacles and depositories of an ever-present past.

## On Trauma and Traumatic Memory

*On Trauma and Traumatic Memory* is concerned with the role of writing to preserve memories, to excavate traumas, and to heal the ever-present scars of the past. Hence, “the increasing interest in trauma was a response to concerns about memory, politics, representation and ethics that became prominent at the turn of the twentieth century, and which have mainly focused on the extreme forms of violence and victimisation that came to light after World War II” (Nadal & Calvo, 1). Miller and Tougaw claim: “Ours appears to be the age of trauma” (1) and Caruth asserts in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* that this is a “catastrophic age” (11).

The topic has attracted many scholars from different corners of the globe, both students and professors, and is taught in almost all universities, especially those specialising in the humanities. This monograph gathers research papers from different universities around the world: the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Sfax (Tunisia), the University of Rhode Island (US), Emory University (US), the University of North Bengal (India), Texas Christian University (University of Michigan, US), the University of Trento (Italy), St Xavier’s College (India), and the High Institute of Applied Languages in Béja (University of Jendouba, Tunisia).

## Part I: On Trauma in Film, Fiction and Non-Fiction

The first part of the book focuses on trauma recalled through films, fiction and documentaries. Dr. Argha Banerjee in “‘Refugee in My Own Country’: Trauma and Memory in the Writings of Kashmiri Pandits in Exile” explores the writings of Kashmiri Pandits haunted by political turmoil and terrorism in Kashmir. He focuses on a wide range of writings from fiction, to non-fiction, memoirs and poems.

In an article entitled “Atiq Rahimi’s *Syngué Sabour*: Adoption/Adaptation of the Wounds of a Nation”, Dr. Bootheina Majoul highlights the inherited agony of the Afghan writer Atiq Rahimi portrayed in his novel *Syngué Sabour* and its adapted version. The narrative and the movie resurrect the suffering and the struggle of the invisible all-in-burqa Afghan women to regain voice and freedom. And in a second research paper entitled

“Personal Wounds and Global Traumas in Doris Lessing’s *The Wind Blows Away Our Words*”, Dr. Majoul writes about the controversial visit of the Nobel laureate Doris Lessing to an Afghan refugee camp in Pakistan in 1987. The book reports on those Mujahidin in a time of Russian invasion and attempts to unveil another facet of that war and those people.

Similarly, Dr. Kylo-Patrick R. Hart in his paper entitled “On Witnessing and Representation: Trauma, Cultural Memory, and the Men with the Pink Triangle” sheds light on the hidden trauma of gay Jews under the Nazi regime; he defies memory with facts. The essay explores the long-ignored history of Nazi persecution of gay men by focusing on media representations of the men with the pink triangle, the tens of thousands of homosexual prisoners who were sent to the death camps (many of whom ultimately died there) as a result of their sexual orientation.

## **Part II: On Trauma in Novel and Drama**

The second chapter of this book is devoted to analysing trauma in fiction. Chiara Polli in “*Blood Upon the Rose: Easter Rising and Historical Trauma through the Lens of Comics*” analyses the work of the Irish author Gerry Hunt *Blood Upon the Rose*. The scholar focuses on the comic flashback narration of the rebellion fought in the streets of Dublin in 1916 and examines how this capital event in the history of Ireland can be reconstructed and the new possibilities for representing trauma and memory provided by comics.

Jimmy Worthy II in “‘She Comes in the Daytime’: The Unconscious Work of Melancholia in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*” deals with how the African American novelist Toni Morrison explores in *Beloved* the psychological reality of slaves and self-freed people by linking the characters’ intolerable present to their unbearable past.

In “On the Road of Hobohemia and Traumatic Oblivion”, Mongia Besbes explains the concept of Hobohemia as an attempt to break away from social institutions through an artistic and hedonistic lifestyle. She analyses Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* and shows that behind this way of life lay a latent trauma of the post-depression generation. She explains how Hobohemia is an articulation of a post-traumatic syndrome of dislocated youngsters whose values clashed with those of the predominant conservatism.

Sarra Balti in her article “Trauma in Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible: Between Abigail Williams’ Traumatic Life Experiences and McCarthyist*

Hysteria in America in the 1950s” establishes an analogy between Miller’s dramatic work and the spirit of the age.

### Part III: On Trauma in Poetry

The third chapter of this book is on trauma in poetry. In “The Traumatic Silence of Paul Celan: ‘The Real’, ‘The Sublime’, and ‘Negative Romanticism’ in Pre-Sensory Poetry”, Ritwik Balo focuses on the poetry of the German Jewish poet Paul Celan and attempts to explore how trauma caused by the Holocaust can result in poetry that can be classed as what Morse Peckham has called “Negative Romanticism”.

Susan Munson in “Wartime Trauma: World War I Poetry as Cultural Coping Mechanism” explores trauma and traumatic time at the personal and cultural levels as exhibited in the World War I poetry of Siegfried Sassoon (“Suicide in the Trenches” and “Died of Wounds”) and John McCrae (“In Flanders Fields”).

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**PART I**

**ON TRAUMA IN FILM,  
FICTION AND NON-FICTION**

You, exiles of the mountains of oblivion  
You, diamonds of your names sleeping in quagmire of silence  
You the ones your memories faded, memories of light blue  
    In the mind of muddy waves of forgotten sea  
    Where are your clear flowing thoughts?  
Where did your peace-marked silver boat moon craft go?  
    After this death-giving freeze, the sea clams  
    The clouds, if they clear heart from bitterness  
If daughter of moonlight brings kindness, induces smiles  
    If the mountain softens heart, grows green and  
        Turns fruitful  
One of your names, above the mountain peaks  
    Will become the sun?  
    Sunrise of your memories  
    Memories of light blue  
In the eyes of tired-of-flood-water fish and  
    Scared of rain of darkness  
    Will it become a sight of hope?  
**(Nadia Anjuman, *Memories of Light Blue*)**



# ‘REFUGEE IN MY OWN COUNTRY’: TRAUMA AND MEMORY IN THE WRITINGS OF KASHMIRI PANDITS IN EXILE

ARGHA BANERJEE

*‘At fourteen we knew we were refugees, but we had no idea what family meant. And I don’t think we realized then that we would never have a home again’ -Rahul Pandita in ‘Our Moon Has Blood Clots: A Memoir of a Lost Home in Kashmir’ (Pandita, 4)*

In *Shalimar the Clown* Salman Rushdie sets a fictional world against the background of Kashmir as he tries to portray characters that are trapped in the vicious vortex of sub-continental politics. His rendering of violence inflicted on Kashmiri Pandits in the novel is gruesome and chilling. Against the omniscient backdrop of “loot, plunder, arson, mayhem” (Rushdie, 295), and “exodus” (Rushdie, 295) in the valley, the dread of ‘ethnic cleansing’ has been captured poignantly by Rushdie. More than death and dying, it is the looming fear, panic and apprehension that capture the readers’ mind, as the novelist evokes a pastoral analogy to describe the imminent spectre of doom. The fall of apples in the orchard, doomed to rot in the ground is equated with the appalling rotten state of existence of the Pandits in the valley:

Loot, plunder, arson, mayhem, murder, exodus: these words recurred day after day, and a phrase from another part of the world that had flown many thousands of miles to find a new home in Kashmir.

“Ethnic cleansing.”

“Kill one, scare ten. Kill one, scare ten.”

Hindu community houses, temples, private homes and whole neighbourhoods were being destroyed. Pyarelal repeated, like a prayer, the names of the places struck by calamity...

Kill one, scare ten, the Muslim mobs chanted, and ten were, indeed, scared. More than ten. Three hundred and fifty thousand pandits, almost the entire pandit population of Kashmir, fled from their homes and headed south to the refugee camps where they would rot, like bitter fallen apples, like the unloved, undead dead they had become. In the so-called

Bangladeshi Markets in the Iqbal Park-Hazuri Bagh area of Srinagar the things looted from temples and homes were being openly bought and sold. The shoppers hummed the most popular song of the times as they bought their pretty pieces of Hindu Kashmir...

(Rushdie, 295-96)

Rushdie's fictional account of trauma and displacement almost finds a literal extension in the writings of Kashmiri Pandits in exile. Be it exploration of memoirs or other forms of creative expressions, the agonising memories of persecution and exodus continue to haunt and torment the community of Kashmiri Pandits even today. Most of these writings, as this essay tries to analyse, reflect upon the insecurity, nostalgia, anguish and anger at being uprooted from homeland. In their perennial quest to re-connect with the roots most writings reflect on the past as they carry the encumbrance of history and re-negotiate with the old memories of loss and trauma.

The association of violence and trauma with the beautiful Kashmir valley is indeed an ironic one. Since time immemorial, the beauty of Kashmir as an idyllic paradise has been celebrated by poets, singers, travel writers and historians alike. As Rahul Pandita mentions in his memoir *Our Moon Has Blood Clots: A Memoir of a Lost Home in Kashmir*: "Kashmir is so beautiful, my grandfather used to say, even the gods are jealous of it. Not only of its beauty, but also of its contribution to art and scholarship" (Pandita, 12). Even European visitors and travel writers of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have waxed eloquent about this terrestrial paradise. European travel writers like Bernier François (1625-1688), Thomas Maurice (1754-1824), James Rennell (1742-1830), and Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779-1859) have all been enthralled and mesmerised by the luxuriant beauty and splendour of the valley. In his poem 'The Light of the Harem' (1817), Thomas Moore (1779-1852) extolled the pristine verdant beauty of the valley: "Who has not heard of the Vale of Cashmere/ With its roses the brightest the earth ever gave, / Its temples, and grottos, and fountains as clear/ As the love-lighted eyes that hang over their wave?" (Moore, 235-36). Yet the portrait of paradisiac bliss and serene beauty has been transformed in modern times. A persistent flashpoint of political turmoil, especially in the post-independence period of India, Kashmir today is a fractured state. The last few decades of the twentieth century, especially the nineties, saw the rapturous valley get rapidly transformed into a barbaric stage of prolonged ethnic cleansing of the native Kashmiri Pandits. As the writer Rahul Pandita pointed out, though just around three and a half Lakh pandits were affected and around 700 killed, the act of ethnic cleansing is comparable to

the shocking violence in Bosnia. What is tragic is that most of the Kashmiri Pandits have been forced into permanent exile following their persecution and displacement from the valley. Rahul Pandita, a victim of displacement and the writer of the memoir *Our Moon has Blood Clots* uses the word 'home' only in the context of Kashmir: "It's only in Kashmir's context that I use the word 'home'. I now have a flat in Gurgaon but I use the word 'house' for that" (Narayan, *Hindustan Times* 19 January 2013). As he asserted in the interview: "The idea of home is lost forever" (*Hindustan Times* 19 January 2013). It is this loss of the "idea of home" (Narayan, *Hindustan Times* 19 January 2013) that keeps on recurring in the writings of Pandits in exile.

The oppression of the Pandits or the Hindus in Kashmir is not a nascent phenomenon. In fact, a close reading of history confirms that the native Hindus have been victimised by successive Muslim/Afghan rulers in the valley leading to mass exodus in various phases over the centuries to Jammu and other parts of northern India. In the late fourteenth century, the sixth Sultan of Shah Miri dynasty, Sultan Sikandar, who was infamously referred to as 'Butshikan' or the demolisher of idols, spearheaded the cult of persecution of the Pandits that was to continue for centuries. Besides destruction of temples, he also ordered prohibition of Hindu rites, rituals, festivals and various traditional customs. As a ruthless intolerant ruler he imposed *jizya* or taxes on the Pandits besides trying desperately to convert them to Islam. In order to avoid conversion, thousands of Pandits had to flee to the Jammu region. Bhatta Mazar or the graveyard of the Pandits (near Rainawari in Srinagar), is a living testimony even today of the ruthlessness of the tyrannical Sultan Sikandar, as those Pandits who refused to leave or resisted conversion of faith were burned alive here. However, not all rulers were intolerant. Butshikan's son Zain-ul-Abidin, who ruled for half a century, succeeding to the throne in 1420, had a compassionate attitude towards the native Kashmiri Pandits. His accommodative kind of governance based on justice, tolerance and altruism renewed confidence among the indigenous Hindu population. He not only abolished earlier taxes imposed by his father but also allowed a great deal of freedom in worship and building of temples of worship. He even banned cow slaughter and granted lands to the learned Brahmins. To facilitate pilgrimage of the Hindus he opened a royal kitchen at Rainawari, well known for a long time as Jogi Lanker. As a tolerant ruler he also established a translation department where significant works were translated from Sanskrit into Persian and Arabic. Abidin's glorious rule was followed by a sharp decline in peace and prosperity for the Pandits during the reign of his son Haider Shah (1470-1472).

The following century roughly from 1476 to 1586 was a time period of extreme tyranny and oppression for the Hindus of Kashmir. This ruthless oppression was spearheaded by a Shia preacher Shamsud-Din Iraqi, Malik Musa Raina, and Shamas Chak. This glorious interlude of Zain-ul-Abidin suffered further reversal under the Chak and the Mughal dynasties. The tyrannical authoritarianism of perpetrating violence culminated under the rule of Aurangzeb from 1658 to 1707. The Mughal governors or Subedars of Kashmir ruthlessly initiated a policy of religious prejudice and fanaticism, paving the way for forced conversion of Hindus to Islam. From mid eighteenth to early nineteenth century, Kashmir, largely under the rule of the Afghans continued the oppression and subjugation of the native Hindu population. In fact for most Afghan rulers, tyranny, persecution and repression of the Pandits was an integral part of their political stratagem. In his book *The Valley of Kashmir*, Walter R. Lawrence commented on one of the Afghan governors, Assad Khan: "It was his practice to tie up the Pandits, two and two, in grass sacks and sink them in the Dal lake. As an amusement, a pitcher filled with ordure would be placed on a Pandit's head and Musalmans would pelt the pitcher with stones till it broke, the unfortunate Hindu being blinded with filth" (Lawrence, 197). Besides such humiliation, as Lawrence affirms in his book, the Pandits were subjected to other forms of oppression as well:

The Pandits, who formerly wore moustaches, were forced to grow beards, turbans and shoes were forbidden, and the tika or forehead mark was interdicted. It is said that the exaggerated forehead marks and the absurdly long turbans now affected by the Pandits still serve to keep alive the memories of the tyranny of Pathan times. The jazia or poll tax on Hindus was revived, and many Brahmans either fled the country, were killed or converted to Islam. (Lawrence, 197-98)

During the rule of another Afghan governor, Atta Muhammaud Khan, Lawrence writes: "In those days any Musalman who met a Pandit would jump on his back, and take a ride and the saying '*Buta chukta Khosa dita*', which means in Kashmiri, 'You are a Brahman and I will mount you', is still quoted. It would be wearisome to recount instances of the brutal cruelty of the Pathans, but at last, the oppression became so unendurable that Kashmir turned with hope to the rising power of Ranjit Singh, the Lion of Punjab" (Lawrence, 198). It was only under the rule of the Sikhs and the Dogra regimes that the socio-economic position of the Pandits relatively improved. In October 1947, in the post-independence period, during the reign of Maharaja Hari Singh, tribal militants from Pakistan's North West Frontier Province, aided by Pakistani soldiers attacked Kashmir, butchering hundreds of Pandits. It was at this juncture that

Maharaja Hari Singh signed the Instrument of Accession with India on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1947, paving the way for the Indian army to drive away the aggressors.

In the later decades, Kashmiri Pandits became more vulnerable with the rise of militancy in the valley during the late 1980s. In their quest for the liberation of Kashmir the militants wanted to obliterate the Pandits from the valley. In July 1988 the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front, a terrorist organization, officially launched its jihad or armed struggle for freedom from India. They initiated the ethnic cleansing with the gruesome murder of the leading Hindu community leader, Pandit Tika Lal Taploo in Srinagar on 14 September 1989. The subsequent months witnessed assassinations of several high profile Hindu personalities. These killings included Justice N.K Ganju of the Srinagar High Court and the veteran poet Sarwanand Kaul Premi. A Gandhian who had participated in the Quit India Movement against the British rule, Sarwanand Premi had also played a significant role in the Quit Kashmir movement against the Dogra Maharaja of Kashmir in 1946-47. An outstanding scholar, he had translated Tagore's *Gitanjali* and the *Bhagwad Gita* into Urdu, Hindi and Kashmiri. A deeply secular personality, he even treasured a rare manuscript of the *Koran* in his prayer room. Besides advocating the need of a secular Kashmir he became famous with his writings on the biographies of the poet Saint Mata Roopa Bhawani, Swami Mirza-Kakji among others. Both Sarwanand and his son Virender were killed by militants in the most gruesome manner. Besides being shot, the police "found their bodies hanging from a tree a day later" (Pandita, 117). The terrorists had "hammered nails between their eyebrows, where the tilak is applied" besides mutilating their bodies with cigarette burns (Pandita, 117). Alongside these killings, atrocities on Pandits were perpetrated relentlessly as kidnappings and physical torture multiplied. As Shaleen Kumar Singh observes in his memoir 'Pandits and Dogras':

The whole Kashmir scenario changed in the 1990s, when 3,50,000 Pandits migrated from the valley and sought refuge in Jammu. Men, women, children were dazed when they found themselves housed in classrooms, temples, inns, sheds, tents and dormitories. They were perplexed and aghast to see the condition they were in. The old presented a pitiable sight. Bleak future, uncertainty and a sense of loss were writ large on the faces of all the Pandits. (Singh, 184)

The sudden splurge of violence and fundamentalism came as a rude shock to most dwellers of the valley. As Subhash Kak expressed in his poem 'Snow in Srinagar': "Who knew then that decades later a terror will come to Srinagar/ and I will be unable to see my home where I was born/

where we had played cowries on any new snows” (Kak, 10). In the early days of January 1990, anti-India campaigns blossomed in the valley in multiple forms. As masked terrorists filled the streets in Srinagar, inflammatory speeches were made at the mosques and walls were defaced with posters promoting a strict Islamic way of life. 1990 indeed was a landmark year as the militant outfit Hizb-ul Mujahideen issued an ultimatum for the Pandits to vacate Kashmir or confront dire consequences. As editors Siddhartha Gigoo and Varad Sharma aptly summarise in their prefatory observation of *A Long Dream of Home: The Persecution, Exodus and Exile of Kashmiri Pandits*:

Suspicion, betrayal and mistrust divided the Muslims and the Pandits. Both the communities stood divided on religious and ideological lines. Militants kidnapped and killed several ordinary and prominent Kashmiri Pandits. This created so much panic and fear among the Pandit families that they started leaving their homes in Kashmir. Some, who didn't want to leave, sent their children away and lingered on in their homes for some time, hoping that the turmoil would end. Some of the Pandits managed to carry a few belongings while most left empty-handed in terror, unable to pack even their necessary household possessions. The security forces including the police were unable to provide protection to the minority community. The authorities in the state and the centre made no effort to prevent the atrocities committed against the Pandits. Targeted kidnappings and killings, rapes and massacres of Pandits who lingered on became a routine affair. The massacre of Pandits by militants in Sangrampora, Budgamin March 1997, Gool in June 1997, Wandhama near Ganderbal in January 1998 and Nadimarg, Pulwama in March 2003, made it clear that Pandits were not safe in their own land. (Siddhartha Gigoo, Sharma xiv-xv)

This atmosphere of suspicion also found an echo in verse. Poet Lalita Pandit immaculately captures this mood of suspicion and betrayal in her poem 'Anantnag' where nature (the apple trees) mourns at the exodus of its inhabitants. The poem concludes with an eerie picture, a haunted spectacle of uninhabited relics where fear looms at large and past visitors are no longer welcome.

A close reading of the memoirs of the Pandits in exile weaves a tale of horror and sheer desecration of basic human rights. Most narratives of displacement and suffering make it clear that women bore the brunt of the inflicted atrocities. In this context, Indu Bushan Zutshi's memoir 'She was killed because she was an informant; no harm will come to you' provides a poignant narrative of the persecution of a Pandit family in Anantnag in April 1990. The onset of spring, the season of socialising and 'picnics' has been ironically juxtaposed in the memoir with the declaration of curfew



and widespread infiltration of militants and terrorists into the Kashmir valley. The Pandit-majority mohalla as described in the memoir, is sparsely populated as most Pandit families had fled due to death threats issued by militants against them. In the midst of these circumstances Shambu Nath Bhat, a teacher by profession, mourns the death of her lone daughter Sarla Bhat (in her twenties), a staff nurse at the Sher-I Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences in Soura. Having been abducted from her hostel on 15 April, four days later, her mutilated dead body was found in the downtown area of Srinagar. A handwritten note attached to the body accused her of being a police informant. The trauma of confronting the reality is aptly summed up by Zutshi as the police force handed over the body of Sarla to her family: “We were horrified to see the body when it was handed over to Sambhu Nath. It was bullet ridden and covered with blood. There were torture marks all over the body. It became clear to us that she had been violated and sexually assaulted before being killed” (Zutshi, 6). The following night is described in the narrative as a terrifying one as the family members did not know how to arrange for the firewood and other necessary items that were required for her cremation. Denied dignity in life, Sarla’s funeral too, which was carried out under threatening circumstances, was a lacklustre and uninspiring one. Coming from a respectable family Sarla had been abducted, raped and brutally slaughtered, but even her family members were helpless in their inability to provide a dignified cremation:

Then we started preparing for cremation. There was no priest to perform the rites, no flowers or incense, no other material normally used during the last rites. We feared for ourselves. It was not safe to take the body to the cremation ground because the entire locality was infested with militants who had warned the local Muslims against helping us. So we decided to cremate Sarla Bhat on the bank of a rivulet near our mohalla. We gave her a last bath. We cleaned the blood on her body. We didn’t have any flowers to place on the body... As we were rushing through the rites, two youths came to the spot and instructed us to stop the cremation and go back to our houses. These youths told us that Sarla Bhat was a police informer and the militants didn’t want anyone to cremate her. All of us felt unnerved, and did not know what to do. We pleaded and begged... We rushed through the last rites and cremated Sarla Bhat in barely an hour. Performing all the rituals was not possible. To escape being noticed, we took a different route consisting of narrow and dingy lanes to go back to our mohalla. None of us wanted to be identified as the ones who cremated Sarla Bhat. (Zutshi, 6-7)

The impact of Sarla’s death is reminiscent of Rushdie’s portrayal of horror in *Shalimar the Clown*: “Kill one, scare ten...and ten were indeed

scared” (Rushdie, 295). Zutshi’s first person narrative provides a picture of fear and horror, as the locals were informed that the remaining *mukhbirs* or informants were to be meted out with the same destiny as Sarla by the militants. The looming spectre of apprehension culminates in the memoir with the exodus of the remaining Pandit families from the mohalla in Anantnag to Jammu: “On May 4 1990, the last two Pandit families (Dwarka Nath’s and mine) in our mohalla left. We went to Jammu and joined Shambu Nath and his family” (Zutshi, 8). By this time, the killings of Pandits in Kashmir had multiplied back home. As Rahul Pandita narrates: “In the name of Azadi, the Pandits were hounded on the streets and killed brutally. Killings of the Hindu minority had turned into an orgy; a kind of bloodlust. By April 1990, the mask was completely off. It was not only the armed terrorist who took pride in such killings—the common man on the streets participated in some of the heinous murders as well” (Pandita, 115).

For several other Pandit families, exile was an outcome of prolonged trial and slow smouldering protracted persecution. In the case of families, which did not provide any apparent signs of provocation, there were other means of intimidation. In fact it was not unusual for Pandit houses to be targets of random stone pelting by masked youngsters. Ironically, as some memoirs affirm, in several cases, the masked youngsters were mostly adjacent neighbours. As Meenakshi Raina recounts in her autobiographical “Nights of Terror”:

On a cold December night in 1989, a bunch of masked youngsters threw stones at our house in Srinagar. We suspected some of them to be our neighbours. They knew who we were and what we did. They shouted our names and jeered at us. We switched off the lights in the rooms and huddled inside. The din of the stones smashing against the rooftop was so loud that it felt as if it was raining stones from the sky. Most of the windowpanes shattered and pieces of glass lay scattered everywhere inside the house... That night none of us slept as fear gripped each one of us. Even before this incident, my father had received a threatening letter from a militant organisation, warning him to leave Kashmir. (62)

As fear gripped the entire family, most of the family members moved to the relative safety of Jammu. For most senior citizens, adjusting to displacement from home was even more traumatic. Meenakshi Raina captures the experience of her grandmother: “When my grandmother arrived in Jammu, the look on her face was horrific. I will never forget that look. I comforted her by telling her that we would be safe now” (Raina, 63). For most victims, escape implied clinging on to the last dregs of hope. Several families desperately tried to safeguard their traditional legacies. As

Meenakshi Raina points out, her father handed over a satchel containing her mother's jewellery to her grandmother: "My grandmother held the satchel close to her chest while travelling to Jammu. While handing it over to my mother she murmured 'Moklaye Kashmir' (Kashmir is finished)" (Raina, 63). For senior citizens, the trauma of displacement left an indelible imprint on the mind. As shared in this narrative, the grandmother reflected as to how they had spent the night of 19 January in terror, apprehension and deep insecurity. She was haunted by the slogans cried by the local militants to hassle the Kashmiri Pandits: "*Assi gacchi panunuy Pakistan, Batav rostuy batinen saan*" (We want our Pakistan, without the Pandit men, but with their women) (Raina, 63). Similarly, in her memoir "The Day I became a Tourist in My Own Home", Minakshi Watts reiterates the sufferings inflicted on the elderly: "What pains me the most is how it changed the lives of my elders – my parents and grandparents. The lives that once sparkled with adventure and laughter now carry unspoken stories of a gruesome past, the wounds, and the atrocities inflicted upon us by militants and their sympathisers and supporters" (Watts, 284). In her memoir "Impact of Exodus on Elderly Kashmiri Pandit Women", Veena Pandita Kaul reproduces the desperation of two elderly women in exile, Somawati (a septuagenarian) and Prabhawati (an octogenarian):

'I want to sit in the shade of the chinar. I want to cook on the hearth of my home. I want to lie down with all my limbs stretched' cries Somawati, seventy-five, who has been living in a camp at Mishriwala for the last twenty years. 'Take me to my home. Take me to Kashmir. I want to live and die there' says Prabhawati, eighty now, who is living in Muthi Camp. These and many other Kashmiri Pandit women cry and shed tears in isolation, which go unseen by most of us.

At the core of their being, they are deeply peaceful, loving, wise and could be profoundly contented as well but for this exodus. They are the descendants of the spiritual heritage of Lal Ded and Rupa Bhawani, saints carrying not only spiritual but also rich intellectual heritage. (Kaul, 132)

A deep sense of nostalgia pervades most of the memoirs. Memories flock back to hound their solitude, as the struggle continues to be reconciled with the trauma of displacement. As Ashok Pandit reminisces in his autobiographical "If we're killed, the gold buried in the earth under that apple tree belongs to you": "In 1991 I got married. The beautiful joint family that we had in Handwara is no more. I now live with my wife in Shalimar Garden in Uttar Pradesh. My son is doing engineering in Pune. But I can't stop my mind from thinking about our village, property,

orchards, the medical shop that we owned, cows, oxen, fruit trees and all the other things we had” (Pandit, 40).

A close perusal of the memoirs and other writings of the Kashmiri Pandits in exile reveal their prolonged exposure to trauma and pain in the relocated camps in Jammu as well. For Santosh Kumar Sani, a Doctor in Economics from the University of Jammu, the relative safety of displacement to Jammu is accompanied by the trauma of trying to acclimatize to life in the camps. Having carried out extensive research on the persecution, exodus and exile of Kashmiri pandits, including the economic impact of their migration, Dr. Sani in his memoir ‘From Home to Camp’ articulates the horrors of trying to adjust to camp life in Jammu: “The thought of our family’s life in the camp at Purkhoo shatters me. It calls up a nightmarish picture of degradation, humiliation and decline. I have been an unhappy spectator of the miseries of other displaced Pandits who were forced to run away from Kashmir for no fault of theirs. A peace-loving community suddenly found itself on the road” (Sani, 123). Most of these camps in Purkhoo, Mishriwala, Muthi and Nagrota were unhygienic, as they did not have proper sanitation, toilet facilities and water supply was scarce. As Rahul Pandita narrates in *Our Moon Has Blood Clots* describing his first visit to the camps: “When I went there for the first time, I remember being confronted with the turgid smell of despair emanating from the people who waited for their turn outside latrines, or taps” (Pandita, 2). As most of members living in the camps hailed from a rural agrarian background most struggled to adjust to the nascent urban lifestyle. Some male members were easy targets to social ills like gambling and alcoholism. As Arvind Gigoo, Adarsh Ajit and Shaleen Kumar Singh observe in their preface to *From Home to House: Writings of Kashmiri Pandits in Exile*:

Thousands of Pandits lived in tents from 1990 to 1995. Then they were shifted to one-room tenements (without bathrooms and kitchens) constructed at various places in Jammu and Udhampur. They lived in them till 2011. The government then constructed one-room flats (with bathrooms and kitchens) for them at different places in the Jammu province. Pandits have been living in them since 2011. These flats have only been allotted to the Pandits; they don’t own them.

There are neither tents nor one-room tenements now. The largest camp (known as Mini Township for Kashmiri Migrants) with one-room flats is at Jagti, 17 kilometres from Jammu city. Three thousand five hundred families live there... (Arvind Gigoo, Ajit, Singh xv)

In the closed world of the camp life, most dwellers became victims of inner void, agony and confusion. As Maharaj Krishen Koul Naqaib points

out in his memoir “Life in the Camp”: “we carried on with a life of psychological torture, humiliation, disgrace and conflict” (155). The medical facilities that were provided were by and large inadequate. Reports of mental stress related illnesses were common in the camps. In *Sociological Implications of Pandit Migration in Jammu and Kashmir*, Bashir Ahmad Dabla observes: “the people who suffered most in these conditions were old, women, children and disabled-handicapped. The extreme heat in Jammu, even up to 44 degrees Celsius, was not bearable for these categories of people. In actuality, many individuals belonging to these groups suffered/collapsed/died because of dehydration, sun-strokes, skin reactions, neurological disorders, cardiac attacks, snake bites and so on” (Dabla, 81). Further, in a study published in the *Indian Journal of Psychiatry* (2010 April- June, 52 (2), 154-158) entitled “Psychiatric morbidity in adult Kashmiri migrants living in a migrant camp at Jammu”, investigators Rakesh Banal, Jagdish Thappa, H.U. Shah, Arshid Hussain, Abhishek Chowhan, Hameet Kaur, Mala Bharti and Sushant Thappa conducted research on adults of Kashmiri migrant families residing in Muthi camp in Jammu. Nearly 300 families, consisting of 150 each from two camps were examined for the study with the inference that psychiatric morbidity was widely prevalent among the members of the migrant population. The common ailments included clinical depression, cases of post-traumatic stress and generalized anxiety disorders. The researchers further observed:

The trauma of forced exodus and the exposure to an alien and hostile environment are further compounded by the problems of acclimatization; lack of basic amenities like drinking water, drainage and sewerage, absence of proper lavatory facilities, poor housing, over-crowding, extremes of climate, lack of healthcare facilities and joblessness. All these have led to many psychological and behavioural disturbances in them. But to the best of our knowledge, there is no study which has assessed the magnitude of these psychological problems, which manifest in the form of various psychiatric disorders. This study aims to determine the prevalence of various psychiatric disorders among Kashmiri migrants settled in a migrant camp at Jammu. (*Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 154-58)

Even the youth were never spared the traumatic experience. As Meenakshi Raina points out: “The teenagers and youth had to go through trauma at a different level, at that stage of their life, one would expect them to be enjoying life, but they had to struggle along with their parents for space, food and schooling and social stigma” (69). In “Camp Schools and Colleges for the Displaced Students”, B.L. Zutshi observes: “The tragic and sudden migration of about four hundred thousand Pandits from

Kashmir to Jammu in 1990 put thousands of school and college students in a cesspool of hopelessness and despair. Like all other government employees the teachers, lecturers and professors found themselves in a slough of meaninglessness and insecurity” (B.L. Zutshi, 127).

Of all the memoirs written in recent times, the one that has got the most critical attention is Rahul Pandita’s *Our Moon Has Blood Clots: A Memoir of a Lost Home in Kashmir*. Pandita narrates his experience of growing up and his displacement through the prism of brutality and suffering that he, his family and other members of the community had to face: “Ours was a family of Kashmiri Pandits, and we had fled from Srinagar, in the Kashmir Valley, earlier that year. We had been forced to leave the land where our ancestors had lived for thousands of years. Most of us now sought refuge in the plains of Jammu, because of its proximity to home. I had just turned fourteen, and that June, I lived with my family in a small, damp room in a cheap hotel” (Pandita, 2). Pandita’s narrative constantly juxtaposes the past with the present with a deep sense of nostalgia. His memoir is a tale of growth as well and is emblematic of what the youth of Kashmir had to endure. His juxtaposition of current reality with memories of the past does indeed make for thought-provoking reading. For instance, the acute scarcity of tomatoes being supplied in the camps reminded him of the opulence of his kitchen garden back home in Srinagar, where he had wasted tomatoes, plucking them even before they could ripen and played cricket with them in a frivolous jocund mood. Pandita describes in detail the socio-political circumstances that transformed the situation in Kashmir by the end of 1989 with the separatists targeting and annihilating all forms of identity that had any remotest association with ‘India’ or ‘Indianness’:

That evening, father returned home with a neighbour and they told us they had witnessed the procession. The crowd was shouting slogans that had shocked them.

*Yahan kya chalega, Nizam-e- Mustafa*

*La sharqiya la garbiya, Islamia Islamia*

What will work here? The rule of Mustafa

No eastern, no western, only Islamic, only Islamic.

*Zalzala aaya hai kufr ke maidaan mein,*

*Lo mujahid aa gaye maidaan mein*

An earthquake has occurred in the realm of infidels,

The mujahids have come out to fight.

It was indeed an earthquake. It toppled everything in Kashmir in the next few weeks. Within a few days the whole scenario changed. There was another series of bomb blasts outside other symbols of ‘Indianness’—India