



RESEARCH PAPER

Exploring Identity in Kashmiri Trauma Narratives: A Study of "The Half Mother" by Shahnaz Bashir

Ghulam Abbas¹ Dr. Moazzam Ali Malik*²

1. PhD Scholar, Department of English, University of Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan

2. Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan

*Corresponding Author | moazzam.ali@uog.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

The current study explores how "The Half Mother" presents the impact of the Kashmir conflict on the fragmented identities of the characters and demonstrates how their trauma has individual and collective facets. By delving into this inquiry through the analysis of the text of "The Half Mother" the objective of this research is not solely to enhance the comprehension of the interplay between trauma and identity within the novel but also to contribute to the broader conversation concerning the profound reverberations of trauma on human self-perception and the fabric of society. Guided by LaCapra's (2001) trauma theory, the nuanced textual analysis helps us to understand how trauma shapes individual and collective identities and how the characters in "The Half Mother" negotiate their identities in the backdrop of the conflict-ridden Kashmir region. The study challenges the Eurocentric understanding of trauma and draws the attention of the civilized world to the extent of traumatic upheaval experienced by marginalized third-world nations.

KEYWORDS Collective Identity, Individual Identity, Kashmir, Narratives, Trauma

Introduction

Throughout the course of history, humanity has consistently faced moments of adversity, which have resulted in both causing suffering among individuals and communities and experiencing it themselves. Suffering has left its mark on various individuals and groups to varying degrees, often extending its consequences across generations. When a certain threshold of perceived severity or extremity is crossed – whether it be in the context of slavery, genocide, exclusion, abuse, or assault – it can lead to the fragmentation of identities, paving the way for the emergence of trauma. If not adequately addressed, trauma has the potential to hinder personal and collective growth, corrode self-esteem, and obstruct the preservation of individual or group identities.

Instead of positive emotions, individuals or groups grappling with pain often find themselves burdened by feelings of shame, detachment, and self-disdain, which frequently impede their pursuit of lives commonly considered significant. Importantly, with time, the scholarship in trauma has evolved its understanding of trauma as a psychological disorder and a cultural phenomenon rather than that of physical wounds, as understood earlier (Arva, 2011, p.5). Alexander et al. (2004) explain 'cultural trauma' as a phenomenon experienced by the group members collectively. It is a communal experience of a traumatic event that permanently affects the group's consciousness, resulting in irrevocable change in their identities.

Within this study, the researcher goes deeper into the intricate connections between the socio-political landscape of Kashmir, which encompasses both individual and collective trauma, and how it interacts with the dynamics of a region marked by conflict. The central focus of the researcher's investigation revolves around how contemporary Kashmiri novelists utilize the conventions of traumatic fiction to illustrate what Schachter (2004) describes as 'identity configuration' and the strategies employed for healing during and after traumatic events. The study also explores various underlying themes within this subject, including the importance of 'Kashmirism' as a means of conveying crucial messages of recovery and consequences of the conflict trauma experienced by the Kashmiris. The study also relates trauma to living in the socio-political context of Kashmir at the macro level, and at the micro level, the study explores the psychological journeys reflecting what Tedeschi et al. (2018) have explained as 'posttraumatic growth'.

To address these issues, the researcher draws on perspectives from trauma theory regarding identity formation and dissolution, memory, and trauma.

Literature Review

From a broader perspective, the researcher explores how the Kashmiri narratives engage with themselves within the discourse surrounding trauma, identities, and the process of healing from trauma. Through an examination of Kashmiri fictional works, the researcher aims to construct what MacLeod (1997) has referred to as "an account of how 'otherness' is constructed and experienced," all the while introducing a concept of identity disruption that challenges cultural nationalism (p. 58). MacLeod (1997) opines that they "find ways of being responsible to their history without remaining trapped by it" (p. 65).

While it is undeniable that trauma leads to reorientation and disruption, the researcher argues that the interpretation, if not the significance, ascribed to the traumatic experience is influenced by a variety of individual and cultural factors that undergo evolution over time, as articulated by Balaev (2014, p. 4). Similarly, Vickroy (2002) contends that the origin of trauma, particularly in colonial and postcolonial contexts, often stems from cultural conflicts and attempts to erase certain cultural elements, erasing individuals' identities within these cultures. Consequently, gaining an understanding of these conflicts and historical missteps becomes increasingly vital (p. 221).

In discussing trauma, Kurtz (2014) argues that numerous African writers and critics like Achebe, Fanon, Du Bois, etc., are "fully aware of, and focused on, the fragmenting effects of trauma" (p. 425). As a result, African and Afrodiasporic authors have made trauma a central thematic concern, with some even theorizing that a significant portion of African literature in the latter half of the twentieth century is deeply rooted in trauma (Eaglestone, 2008, p. 76). The endeavor to convey suffering and trauma in written form has given rise to what is commonly referred to as "trauma narratives." According to Vickroy (2002), the objective of these narratives is not merely to provide readers with an experiential understanding reserved for those who have lived through such situations but rather to communicate and voice the trauma of the marginalized individuals (p. xvi).

Chris N. van der Merwe and Gobodo-Madikizela (2007) argue that "[t]he void created by trauma needs words to be transformed into something meaningful" (p. 15). They refer to this process as transforming traumatic memory into narrative

memory. Crossley (2002) suggests that narratives can restore a sense of order and connection, thereby re-establishing meaning in an individual's life. Crossley (2002) conceives that "through the interrelated processes of story-plotting and storytelling we partially determine the stories of our lives" (p. 8). LaCapra (2001) proposes that 'conventional narrative inherently carries redemptive qualities, applicable to individual and collective trauma.

LaCapra (2001) illustrates:

"On the question of examples of redemptive narratives, if you take the conventional narrative structures itself—with a beginning, a middle, and an end, whereby the end recapitulates the beginning after the trails of the middle and gives you (at least on the level of insight) some realization of what it was all about—there's a sense in which the conventional narrative is redemptive." (p. 156)

In the current data analysis, the researcher underscores the importance of literary narratives in addressing social, cultural, and structural trauma. These narratives serve as platforms for rebellion, change, confrontation, coping mechanisms, and the advocacy for social revolution and political activism in individual and collective trauma recovery. The researcher aligns with Stocks (2007), who challenges the idea that traumatic experiences inevitably lead to fragmentation and dissociation, a perspective that resonates with Eurocentric viewpoints that consider a "healthy" sense of self as unified and complete (p. 74). The researcher acknowledges that multiplicity in identity extends beyond individuals or specific groups, encompassing various dimensions such as gender, race, class, age, and sexuality (p. 89).

The narratives are crafted to provide a means to alleviate the weight of traumatic memories by expressing them in written form, simultaneously facilitating healing for future generations by addressing transgenerational trauma. The challenge for Kashmiri novelists lies in navigating traumatic memories with a hopeful outlook, transforming them into forward-looking and restorative reminiscences, as overlooking trauma only perpetuates distress.

As a result, Kashmiri texts contribute to dismantling ethnic and racial barriers, suppression, bias, and prejudices and play a pivotal role in navigating communal trauma. The quest for memory in Kashmiri narratives aligns with the pursuit of history and identity. One cannot genuinely comprehend oneself without acknowledging the past and gaining a clear understanding of the present.

Material and Methods

The research methodology sketched in this study employs a qualitative research approach for conducting the textual analysis of the novel "The Half Mother" by Shahnaz Bashir. The chief endeavour of the research is to look into and achieve depth into the complex affairs amid memory, identity, and trauma within the background of the conflict in Kashmir, as depicted in the proposed novel.

Qualitative study is a practical move toward taking hold of the profundity and fine distinction of experiences of human beings, behavior and viewpoint. This plan is chiefly compatible for discovering multifaceted matters like identity and trauma as it permits the investigators to investigate well-suited data that the quantitative techniques may not completely grab. In this respect, qualitative study offers ways for methodically

discovering the ideas portrayed in the novel "The Half Mother" especially concerning their significance to the divergence in Kashmir.

The examination of the text broadly scrutinizes verbal or printed stuff to discover fundamental moulds, ideas and significance. In this study, the center of attention is on examining the proposed text of the novel "The Half Mother". After carefully reviewing the discourses and storyline fundamentals that bring forth the interaction within memory, identity, and trauma, the researcher has minutely examined the said fiction and scrutinised the selected text. The study highlights a general assessment of the description and a much more thoughtful examination of the fundamental ideas in the texts. The spirit of the research highlights the attempt to understand the complex associations and links within the paradigm of memory, identity, and trauma as highlighted in the present novel. The researcher has investigated how trauma affects the characters' memories, manipulates their individuality, and outlines their alternative and connections. This investigation intends to proffer deep-rooted approach to the versatile consequence of trauma occurring from divergences, both at private and public levels.

The study is located within the socio-political and cultural background of the clashes prevailing in Kashmir. This backdrop serves as a foundation that informs and shapes the experiences of the novel's characters. The researchers will scrutinize how the Kashmir conflict contributes to the trauma experienced by these characters and how it intersects with their memories and identities.

Theoretical Framework

The research is grounded in LaCapra's (2001) theorization of trauma and identities. LaCapra's (2001) model offers a comprehensive perspective for delving into trauma and identity's psychological, emotional, and socio-political dimensions. The theory's emphasis on concepts such as identity politics, witnessing, memory, and individual and collective identities closely aligns with the research questions.

LaCapra (2001) opines:

"Politics in a necessary sense, may be defined in terms of subject positions and one's work with them. identity politics in a dubious sense may be defined as simply repeating and further legitimating or acting out the subject positions with which one begins without subjecting them to critical testing that may either change or in certain ways validate them." (p.41).

Individual and Collective identities

Trauma theory proposed by LaCapra (2001) provides a foundational framework for achieving our research questions. LaCapra (2001) approaches identity and trauma in a structured and nuanced manner by examining their intricate relationships with memory and empathy. LaCapra (2001) approaches trauma from individual and societal perspectives and highlights how psychological and cultural structures emerge in social narratives.

LaCapra's (2001) trauma theory presents a nuanced, distinctive examination of individual and collective identity within the traumatic background. LaCapra's (2001) ideas are profoundly ingrained in the trauma theory. It intends to grasp how trauma

experiences affect memory, particularly with reference to the configuration and distortion of personal and collective identities.

LaCapra (2001) has emphasized the transfigurative aspect of trauma, particularly on the individual. In his opinion, trauma interrupts the stability of an individual's life. It directs to the disintegration of one's self. When encountering a traumatic shock, one passes through a disintegrated identity. The traumatic occurrences change the identity pattern at both levels. The traumatic memories are always fragmented, therefore, they entail disrupted identities.

The concept of historical trauma in LaCapra's (2001) trauma theory is associated with collective identity. Traumatic occurrences that have a lasting impact on society can shape communal recollection and identity. Trauma occurrences are an essential element of communal awareness and manipulate how a particular class or a section classifies itself regarding the traumatic occurrences. In this background, the group identity occurs within the collective knowledge of trauma and the discourses that evolve in the reaction to those happenings. LaCapra (2001) does not favour a uniform identity. In his opinion, identity is always multifarious. The different personage in a group or class construe and respond to the similar traumatic occurrence in a different pattern and style, as a result of multilayer patterns and structures of the society.

LaCapra (2001) has highlighted the implication of "witnessing and empathy" in the trauma paradigm, particularly concerning individual and collective identities. Both witnessing and empathy engage in understanding and realizing the sentiments of those who undergo traumatic occurrences, whereas witnessing involves familiarity and confirmity. Both procedures are essential for the individuals to realize the intensity of trauma and resultantly build discourses that bring their practices into a body of literature.

If viewed collectively, witnessing and empathy play a paramount role, especially in recognizing the common miseries of a trauma-ridden society. This acknowledgment is highly helpful in providing a coping mechanism in a traumatic situation. The shared pain in a traumatic situation are in dire need of empathy and witnessing. Witnessing in fact evoke empathy which ultimately results in normalizing the traumatic sufferings. Ultimately this state of affairs gives birth to Catharsis. It mitigates the traumatic agonies to a great extent. The concept of witnessing and empathy plays a paramount role in LaCapra's (2001) trauma theory.

LaCapra (2001) has highlighted the idea of the individual and collective identity, particularly in a trauma situation, and he stresses that traumatic occurrences leave lasting impacts on the individual narrative side by side communal recollection. In this respect he gives supreme importance to meditation side by side empathy and witnessing because they help in realizing traumatic occurrences, with reference to their complexities. The concept of integration in traumatic situation demands empathy, witnessing and meditation. In his opinion, empathy, meditation and witnessing lend a peculiar charm to the formulations of narratives, especially with reference to identity formation. The trauma theory of LaCapra (2001) brings to light the comprehension of complexity in the complex interaction between memory and identity. Identity formation is strictly tied to memory. If memory distorts, resultantly, it distorts identity.

Compilation of Data

The novel "The Half Mother" by Shahnaz Bashir is the primary source of data selection. The passages have been cautiously selected from proposed text for examination to examine occurrences of traumatic situations with reference to the interplay of memory, identity, empathy, witnessing, reminiscence, and forgetting. The textual data is beneficial in mapping themes, patterns and ideas. It helps understand the development of the plot and the art of characterization employed in the novel.

The selected passages from the text have been analyzed in line with the trauma theory of LaCapra (2001), especially keeping in mind the concepts of witnessing, empathy, meditation, reminiscence and forgetting to gauge the formation and disruption of identity. The attitude and behaviour of the characters are observed, particularly when they pass through a degenerating identity crisis in a traumatic situation. This situation is highly pain taking for the victim; he needs empathy in this state of affairs. LaCapra (2001), in this situation recommends ethical consideration. Ethical consideration is associated with a balanced attitude. In this situation, the witnessing must be appreciative of the traumatic situation.

Brief Sketch of "The Half Mother" by Shahnaz Bashir

"The Half Mother" by Shahnaz Bashir is a meticulous novel composed in the backdrop of the Kashmir conflict. The novel depicts a pathetic tale of suffering and misfortunes. Haleema is the novel's protagonist; she lives with her only son, Imran and her father, Ab Jaan, in the neighbourhood. She is a Kashmiri woman by birth. Kashmir is passing through a worst socio-political and cultural situation. A long-lasting conflict is going on in Kashmir. The oppressors occupy the whole of it. An unending war is waged everywhere in the land. The Kashmiris are fighting a war for their survival. In this miserable condition, Haleema, the protagonist, has to pay a heavy price for her survival.

Haleema is an individual in the novel but represents the common lot in Kashmir. Her troubles and worries are at the collective level; she passes through the misfortunes of the worst order. First, she is rendered a widow in the hay days of the marriage. Her husband deserts her. During the conflict, she loses her father. Her father is mercilessly killed by the Indian armed forces when they try to build Bunkers in the neighborhood. Her father tries to stop them from this practice. They kill him on the spot. This merciless killing of the father before the very eyes of a daughter is highly heartrending.

Worst comes to worst, the forces abduct her only son, Imran, on the plea that he is a spy against the troops. They alligate him for his hideous role and helping the militants. It is a baseless accusation on their part. Imran is not only a single boy who has been abducted but also a daily routine on the part of the oppressors. They invent every day new ways and means to persecute the local Kashmiris. The Kashmiris are on the verge of being exterminated. Killing, massacring, gang-raping, abducting and so on are the day's practices. The whole of Kashmir has become a conflicting war zone.

In this precarious situation, Haleema is forced to lead a life of misery and misfortune. There is no peace and comfort in her life. Her life is a chain of strife, pain and agony. Especially, after the enforced missing of her son, she is facing the worst order of plight. She passes through unending traumas of life. The successive traumas in her life shattered her badly. Imran was the only ray of hope in her life. His abduction toll was heavy upon her. It looks as if her whole being was dashed to the dust.

She tries her level best to find Imran. She goes from place to place in her quest for his recovery. She visits every public place, such as market place, hospitals, bus stops, and meeting places, hoping to find him somewhere. So much so she visits the police stations, the army headquarters, and the places of the political leaders, but in vain, she is unable to have a clue about Imran. The days pass by, and his recovery remains a far cry.

She proves to be a resilient woman who sells everything in her household and, even property and cattle, for the safe recovery of her only son. But unfortunately, all of her efforts fall flat. Haleema, being a resilient Kashmiri Woman, continues her quest till she is lost. Her life is the worst of the traumatic type. She survives like a brilliant hero of the Kashmiri nation who has been fighting a war of survival for decades.

Investigation of Traumatic Identities in "The Half Mother"

In this study, the researcher has treated individual trauma in a broad scenario. Individual trauma reinforces the collective trauma. The trauma theory of Caruth (1996) alludes to this concept. People are implicated in one another's trauma, is the perception of Caruth's (1996) trauma theory. LaCapra (2001) promotes the trauma theory of Caruth (1996) in this context. In the present study, the individual trauma of the protagonist is the collective trauma of the greater populace in Kashmir. The traumatic plight of Haleema is not the case of a single ordinary woman fighting the war survivor in a traumatic zone. The fate of Haleema is the fate of the common people. Haleema is the incarnation of Kashmiri society. The researcher has investigated the case of Haleema in a broader socio-cultural paradigm. Haleema's trauma is in keeping with Brown's (1995) ideas about "incidious trauma" (p.107). It has been observed in the novel that collective trauma is the basis of oppressive societies worldwide. The oppressors inflict oppression upon the oppressed. Individual and collective traumas are inseparable. Where there befall individual or collective traumas, it is natural that the identities will be distorted at both levels. The impacts of individual and collective traumas are far-reaching on individual and collective identities. The proposed novel, in this respect, is a typical example. Haleema is not a single half-mother; instead, she is the epitome of the rest of the lot, who also lose their loved ones in this war of aggression.

The study further enhances the concept of intergenerational and structural trauma in the Kashmir region. Intergenerational trauma is a type that is inflicted on a particular sect, society or region over a long period of time. In this connection, the land of Kashmir is being usurped over a long period. Since the partition, the Kashmiris have faced the worst traumatic and frantic situations. The trauma is being transferred from one generation to the other. Their miseries are aggravating day by day. It looks as if there were no end to them. Generations after generations are facing the same dilemma.

Structured trauma is also being exercised in the land. Structured trauma is a well-planned traumatic design in a particular region. Kashmir, in this respect, is a living example of the type. The Indian Armed Forces, with a well-planned design, have inflicted structural trauma on the land. As a result of all these forms of trauma,, the individual and a collective lot, is suffering. Their identities are being fractured, and unfortunately, there is no remedy. Day by day, the aggravating traumatic situations in the land have given birth to an identity crisis.

The identity of Haleema is fractured at various levels. She is divorced and is rendered a widow. Her father is mercilessly killed, and she is rendered a fatherless daughter. She loses her son, and she is rendered a hal mother. Her identity is fractured

time and again. This situation befalls throughout the land. Haleema's subsequently changing identities align with LaCapra's (2001) trauma theory, which advocates that identity is fluid and not permanent.

The trauma theory is in keeping with such ordeals' psychological and emotional turmoils. The sufferings, the troubles, the cares and the worries she passes through know no bound. She the worst example of a traumatic figure. Her very being is on the verge of distortion. Every now and then, her roles are being changed. The sorrow and suffering overpower her, but despite all these traumatic situations, she does not yield. In these surmounting hardships, she emerges as a resilient figure. Her identities are being distorted, yet she does not lose hope. Every day, she emerges anew. In this precarious traumatic situation, she leans on coping mechanisms and confirms the concept of working through, which is the outcome of the trauma theory of LaCapra (2001). However much, she is caught up in a psychological and emotional state of mind; her resilience attitude renders her appreciative of the traumatic situations. Haleema is not a single individual in this traumatic zone who falls victim to fractured identities and passes through psychological and emotional predicaments. She is the representative of the traumatic zone.

LaCapra's (2001) concept of 'empathy and witnessing' is in keeping with the case of Haleema. She faces all the troubles of her life in an appreciative manner. Her courage and bravery is worth noting. She faces every trouble with a brave heart and stands by all difficulties. She leads the others and becomes a leader for all the times to come. Her case aligns with the theory of LaCapra (2001), which shines light on the perceptive aspect of trauma. LaCapra (2001) believes that 'traumatic narratives are redemptive.' Haleema, being a resilient woman, ultimately reconstructs her fractured identities when she leads the others in this world of misfortunes and troubles

Haleema becomes a source of inspiration for the rest of the characters in the novel. Haleema, for the rest of the figures in the novel, is a lesson of hope and optimism. She gives them new zest for life. She teaches a lesson to be courageous, bold and brave in hardships and inevitabilities of life. In case of inevitable situations, one must learn to live, in fact, the outcome of trauma, which is in line with coping mechanisms, catharsis and working through strategy.

The early distorted and later regained identity of Haleema spotlights on the concept of identity formation highlighted by LaCapra (2001). The trauma theory declares that identities are not fixed. Therefore, the changing identities of Haleema attest to the trauma theory of LaCapra (2001). Her reconciliation to her new role as a leader fulfills the parameters of the trauma theory. Excessive trauma situations help her reconstruct her fractured identities.

Various roles played by Haleema in the due course of her life, highlight multifaceted patterns. She appears in different roles. Her early role in the novel is entirely different from her later role. In the early part of the novel, she is a sentimental and emotional type of woman, every now and then appears in a changing status. But later on, with time, her character gets developed. She visualizes things in different situations. Now she is no longer a sentimental and emotional half mother but rather a brave and brilliant type. Her role is changed altogether; now, she is a role model for the rest of the folk, and she successfully regains the lost identity. Her struggles and those of the community she symbolizes underscore the complex interplay between personal and collective identities in the milieu of a war zone.

Textual Analysis

"Kill me, go ahead, I don't want to live in a world where I have to live with inhuman people like you," Ab Jaan dared, his brown eyes glinting with confidence." (Bashir, 2014, p. 48).

In the war-torn landscape of Kashmir, we can apply the concepts of identity crisis and LaCapra's (2001) trauma theories to analyze the emotional and psychological complexities exhibited by Haleema's father, Ab Jaan, as depicted in the provided excerpt from Shahnaz Bashir's "The Half Mother." Let's delve into how these trauma theories shed light on his actions and attitudes:

Kashmir's ongoing conflict and violence have created a pervasive atmosphere of fear, uncertainty, and loss. The people of Kashmir, including Ab Jaan and his family, constantly grapple with the repercussions of the conflict on their identities, self-perception, and sense of belonging. The region's unique amalgamation of cultural influences (Kashmiri, Indian, and Pakistani) further compounds the intricacies of identity formation in this war-ravaged setting.

LaCapra's (2001) trauma theory highlights the complicated interaction between history, memory, and trauma. It plays a vital role in shaping both individual and collective identities, significantly to intergenerational trauma within the historical and disputing background of Kashmir.

The above example of Ab Jaan's rejoinder can be seen as a historical trauma faced by Kashmiri people for many generations. His determined response to sustaining his Kashmiri identity and struggle against the army's violence in his home echoes a long-lasting struggle to maintain a sense of identity and dignity in the face of oppression and a violent historical past. Moreover, Ab Jaan's conflict with the occupied forces soldiers summarizes the bitter realities of identity calamity in war-torn Kashmir. Caruth (1995, 1996) and LaCapra's (1994, 2001) theories of trauma percept into the emotive complications underlying his daring counterattack. His rebelliousness is seemed an attempt to regain agency and proclaim his native identity amidst traumatic incidents. Nevertheless, the profound impact of the trauma on his psyche and his capacity to process and incorporate the experience into his sense of self may remain unresolved and unexplored. Furthermore, the historical context of Kashmir's conflict adds to the intricate interplay between individual and collective identities in this conflict-ridden region.

The theme of identity formation and distortion is evident in the impactful speech delivered by Ab Jaan, Haleema's father, in the provided excerpt from Shahnaz Bashir's "The Half Mother." Let's explore how Ab Jaan's actions and words mirror the struggle for identity formation and the looming threat of distortion in the war-torn context of Kashmir.

Identity formation is an intricate and continuous process wherein individuals cultivate a perception of themselves influenced by various factors, including cultural heritage, life experiences, and relationships. In the context of Kashmir, the persistent conflict and violence have substantially impacted how individuals perceive their identities and roles within society. The Kashmiri identity is often deeply intertwined with the ongoing struggle for self-determination, as the region's inhabitants strive to preserve their unique cultural, social, and political identity.

Disfigurement of identity transpires when external forces, such as war and oppression, pose a menace to distorting or erasing an individual's sense of self and

cultural identity. The arrival of soldiers at Ab Jaan's residence signifies an encroachment into his private space and a violation of his dignity and autonomy. The actions of the soldiers challenge his self-perception as a Kashmiri man and undermine the integrity of his identity.

Ab Jaan's impassioned address to the soldiers underscores his profound distress and defiance in the face of the peril to his identity and dignity. Let's deconstruct his speech within the context of identity formation and distortion:

"Kill me, go ahead, I don't want to live in a world where I have to live with inhuman people like you." Ab Jaan's declaration reveals his refusal to tolerate the soldiers' inhumane conduct and their intrusion into his home. By daring them to end his life, he illustrates the depth of his conviction and the significance he places on his values and identity as a Kashmiri.

Ab Jaan's composed and confident demeanor in danger suggests resilience and inner strength derived from his sense of identity. His self-assuredness may find its roots in his cultural identity and the cherished values he upholds, which he is unwilling to compromise.

He behaves courageously and endeavors to repel their advance. Ab Jaan's brave actions symbolize his unwavering commitment to safeguarding his family, home, and way of life, all integral facets of his identity. His resistance against the soldiers' intrusion serves as a means of reasserting agency and preserving his identity amid potential distortion.

He perceives this intrusion as a violation of his identity, akin to the disfigurement of one's self-concept. Ab Jaan's reaction underscores the threat posed to his identity by the soldiers' actions. The encroachment and lack of respect exhibited by the soldiers challenge his self-perception as a respected and self-governing individual within his community.

Ab Jaan's words in the provided passage shed light on the profound impact of conflict on the process of identity formation and the apprehension of disfigurement experienced by the inhabitants of war-ravaged Kashmir. His courageous stance and resistance exemplify the struggle to safeguard and reaffirm his cultural identity and personal dignity in the face of external threats. The concept of identity formation and distortion aids in comprehending the emotional intricacies underlying Ab Jaan's response to the soldiers' arrival and his resolute determination to uphold his sense of self and his Kashmiri identity.

Highlighting the Kashmiri history and identity, "Ab Jaan sniggered. Until we stop oppressing ourselves, others will not stop oppressing ourselves. Remember we this. Mark my words.....Everything has a history and a firm history. Our history. Except it has never seen the light of the day" (Bashir, 2014, p. 34).

The provided extract from Bashir's work highlights the theme of Kashmiri identity in the context of trauma, and it can be analyzed through Dominick LaCapra's trauma theory (2001). LaCapra's explores traumatic events' psychological and cultural impacts on individuals and communities, including how trauma can distort and reshape identities.

In this extract, several key points can be examined through the lens of trauma theory. The speaker, Ab Jaan, suggests that the Kashmiri people have been oppressed for a long time and have internalized this oppression. LaCapra's theory suggests that trauma can lead to a sense of victimhood and oppression. The extended conflict and violence in Kashmir have undeniably distressed the inhabitants, leading them to a slanted observation of their self-identity.

The phrase "oppressing ourselves" indicates that the people of Kashmir are sharing their trauma by themselves, possibly by prolonging sequences of brutishness or by not raising their voice for the fundamental problems. The theory of LaCapra (2001) points out that trauma can be evident communally, and it proves obviously in a disputing area of Kashmir, the collective trauma of an oppressed society distorted their identities and created a sense of hopelessness. The following declaration, "Everything has a history and a firm history. Our history. Except the fact that it has never seen the light of the day," promotes the idea that the true depiction of the history of Kashmir has been concealed or overlooked and it has not been given due consideration. LaCapra's (2001) theory highlights the position of antagonizing and recognizing historical sufferings to rectify and regain a sense of fraternity, solidarity, self-dignity and identity. The destruction or misrepresentation of historical chronicles could contribute to the trauma experienced by the Kashmiri community.

Trauma theory speculates that distressing events can extend to identity falsification. In the conflicting land of Kashmir, the long-lasting dispute, political uncertainty, and brutishness of occupied forces have possibly led to a distortion of the identities of Kashmir inhabitants. It may be evident as a profound feeling of loss, an effort to sustain their historical and cultural heritages, and emotions surrounding the traumatic series.

In a nutshell, these above extracts echo the theory of trauma by LaCapra (2001) in the framework of self-identity of Kashmiri community. It proposes that the suffering of extended conflict and subjugation has deeply squeezed Kashmir's inhabitants, leading them towards oppression, collective disturbance, and a partial sense of identity. It also asserts the vital role of admitting and addressing historical traumas as a footstep toward remedial and regaining a more authentic identity.

Conclusion

This research has carefully studied the complicated connections of memory, identity, and trauma within the narrative of "The Half Mother." Utilizing LaCapra's (2001) trauma theory as a guiding framework, the analysis of the novel's themes and characters has shed light on how trauma disrupts and reshapes both individual and collective identities, the vital role of witnessing and empathy in navigating trauma and identity, and the impact of memory and forgetting on the dialectical process of identity negotiation, particularly within the context of the Kashmir conflict.

Addressing the first research question, it has become abundantly clear that trauma catalyzes profound transformations in individual and collective identities. The characters in the novel, most notably Haleema, undergo significant shifts in their self-perception due to the traumatic and violent events of the Kashmir conflict. Their identities are profoundly molded by the losses, separations, and uncertainties that pervade their lives amidst the ongoing conflict.

Regarding the second question of the study, the researcher has stressed the essential role of critical mediators in observing and compassionating the characters' journeys through suffering and identity rebuilding. All the characters' have sympathetic associations with one another, and the readers have made possible a sense of justification and commonality for them. Witnessing and empathy have proved as bonds between the secluded practices of trauma, allowing the characters to realize a common sympathetic and active coping mechanism.

"The Half Mother" displays a distressing investigation of the complicated pattern of memory, identity, and trauma in the framework of the Kashmir conflict. LaCapra's (2001) trauma theory states a dynamic and enlightening outline that helps to comprehend the characters' practices, their trials in reconciliation, their past and present identities, and the reflective power of sympathy and beholding. The study adds valued awareness to the mysterious nature of trauma's impact and presents a thoughtful deliberation of how persons and societies find the way into their identities in the face of deep misfortunes.

The research also opens paths for more investigation. By looking into the depth of memory, identity, and trauma discussion within the conflicting narratives, future researchers can improve the perceptions of these intricate and noteworthy ideas, displaying appreciated insight into the human skill in the framework of trauma and harsh conditions.

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