

**Trauma, Exile and Hybrid Identity in Shafi's
Leaves from Kashmir**

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Abstract:

This study highlights the political scenario of Indian occupied Kashmir that forces the people to migrate from their native land to new land and their struggle to modify themselves in a new environment. The larger collective understanding as responses to a political conflict governs and at times directs or even overpowers the individual's sense of who they are or what they stand for and thus there is a potential dichotomy or split that holds one back. Shafi in her novel *Leaves from Kashmir* shows how power affects the identity of victims and leaves the catastrophic impacts on their psyche. She beautifully blends the events of trauma, exile and hybridity as diasporic people always relate themselves with their roots. Pain becomes the innate part of their personality as they become unaware of the fact that what the pleasure is. The present research also throws light on the brutality of Indian military due to which many people lost their loved ones and how they are living a repressed, agonizing life in their own region. Even though they live in their own state, still they are not secure as they are afraid of when this will be their last moment because they are treated inhumanly. Cathy Caruth and Bhabha's theory helps to analyze and understand the catastrophic traumatic effects of the imposition of migration on the people in the selected novel *Leaves from Kashmir* and their dreams to see the valley as it used to be, 'The Paradise on Earth'.

Keywords: *Trauma, Psychological Trauma, Cultural Trauma, Hybrid Identity, Cultural Hybridity, Othering, Diaspora*

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INTRODUCTION

Leaves from Kashmir is the first novel written by a Kashmiri author, Saba Shafi. It shows the sufferings of a Kashmiri girl who migrates from Kashmir to Delhi due to the prevalent political and security situation in Kashmir.

The novel is set in the context of a socio-political conflict in Kashmir. In July 2016, on Burhan Wani's execution, a series of persecutions and killings marked the height of political violence after the dreadful years of militancy.

The protagonist of the novel has been left unnamed and instead referred to as "She". In a series of shifts and movements back and forth, from past to present, the protagonist while handling the flux of modernity locking horns with traditions, attempts to make sense of all that has made her who she is. The narrative is in third person narration, where prose and poetry blend together, providing an insight into the identity of the protagonist who has spent her childhood growing up in a place torn by conflict and bloodshed. As a result, the protagonist suffer in the struggle of reconciling her own self, her own identity with the identity of that imposed by the collective grief, hence multiple imposed identities. The tussle therefore comes to be that of the political versus the personal where the protagonist deals with the dilemma of deciding whether the political identity would precede and thus supersede personal identity being defined by emotional experiences. "When the outside world seemed hopeless and despairing... for it was impossible to detach oneself from the darkness that was creeping in from all sides" (Shafi, p.1 2017).

The protagonist out on her path of ambitions lands in Delhi, the guilt of leaving behind her people in turbulence overpowers her personal sense of self. At the same time, the psychological undercurrents of personal grief and longing for belonging further mould her idea of self and identity. The time spent in Delhi, where life is fast-paced is contrasted with the slow paced life in Kashmir where stagnation is the only constant; hence the stagnation in identity is superimposed by the flux in identity. This results in a self-imposed exile within an exile, the latter being the time she spends in Delhi which is seen as another exile, imposed upon her due to the difficult circumstances back in Kashmir.

The title is as relevant to the theme of identity as is the question of symbolic exile. As the protagonist finds herself in a situation where she is about to begin a new chapter of her life. The title is suggestive of the leaves from her past life situated in the historical and politico-cultural configurations as well as in the emotional pain of belonging which she is bound to carry along throughout her life.

Trauma

Caruth (1996) in *Unclaimed experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* defines trauma as a wound of overwhelming violent experience by which the people have to suffer through unexpected circumstances and this “wound inflicts not upon the body but upon the mind” (Caruth, 1996 p.2).

Trauma is basically the transformation of self due to horrifying experience that leaves impact on the individual’s memory which continuously haunts one, ultimately leads towards hybrid identity. It can be any terrible event like child abuse, bullying, sexual assault, death of loved ones, or it may be result in the context of catastrophic historical events.

Caruth (1996) states that “trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way it’s very unassimilated nature.” Trauma is not the discovery of that tragic event as first, one is unaware of that event, but memories terrify later on, when one remembers the past because at that time, one is unable to describe that terrible experience but later on, when that event comes in one’s mind, memories create fear, ultimately resulting in destroying one mentally. The pain that one feels at that moment is actually trauma, and this feeling haunts one again and again as Cathy claims that “the experience of trauma repeats itself”.

Tal (1996) in *Worlds of Hurt* says that trauma can’t be defined in one word or in one line as it is the history of past and it varies from person to person. Although traumatic experience of any kind creates hurdles in defining one’s personality. It is such an experience which is a transformable and more about those people who have changed themselves but never completely come out of that pain.

Herman (1992) in *Trauma and Discovery* talks about psychological trauma and says that it destroys the victims and everything becomes meaningless to them. They can also suffer from severe disorders as one of them is described by the Herman ‘Intrusion disorder’ in which a traumatized person cannot live a normal life due to the recalling of traumatic experiences. In their fear and intensity, traumatic events are unbearable, they often exist as those memories that can’t be interpreted easily. For Herman, emotional occurrences damage a person. A personality develops when one has the strong bond with h/her people, but when that bond is broken by tragic events, then one’s identity is definitely wasted.

Freedman (2006) in “The Epistemological Significance of Psychic Trauma” says that a traumatic person suffers from intense alienation as there are two consequences of trauma; one is destruction of identity, other is one’s shattered

belief about worldview. Because a traumatic victim not only carries burden of h/her beliefs, knowledge but also h/she has to accept the social norms and values of the other society. That's why a person feels oneself unprotected in such an involuntary pattern of psychological repetition.

Hybridity

Bhabha (1994) talks about the 'third space of enunciation'. He doesn't interpret the hybridity as blending of cultures. He goes beyond all these notions and tells how identity can be formed without any fixed culture. He celebrates the hybridity where a person neither bounds to colonial culture, nor he remains colonized but one considers oneself as other, something new. In that phase, one can live peacefully because he decides to receive cultural influences and interpret them by h/herself.

Hall (1983) in *Cultural Studies* talks about cultural hybridization and says that cultural identity is a matter of becoming as it is a process of continuous transformation. When one moves to another place, one should be familiar with all the circumstances so h/she can adjust without feeling being an exile. He says that identity is not something we define by ourselves but it is defined by the one who has the power. In this way we get recognition. Cultural identity has its own history and memories.

Latour (1991) in *We Have Never Been Modern* talks about ambivalence in the context of hybridization. He is against in defining hybridity in terms of two opposite cultures or objects. He sees the process of hybridization in the larger perspective and says it is not about the two cultures, infect it makes connection between two cultures. By saying that he denies all the arguments about any boarder in cultures as a problem of showing cultural differences.

Bhabha (1994) in *Of Mimicry and Man* explains that mimicry can be taken as positive as it gives the opportunity to the native person to reach the level of his master by copying them. With the passage of time, he learns all their rules and becomes confident enough to exert all those rules on their own people. He can challenge the authority for unequal behavior to their people. In this way that person can be a threat to colonial people.

Canclini (1995) in *Hybrid cultures: strategies for entering and leaving modernity* says that hybridity makes us free to think about the fundamentalist tendencies as it creates a soft corner in our hearts for the people of different cultures because hybridization is all about the sharing cultures. Although sometimes it is very difficult to cope up with all the circumstances as the history of colonialism is

known to everyone. Still people have to negotiate their differences in order to avoid war.

Exile

Fanon (1961) in *The Wretched of the Earth* explains the concept of nationalism, diaspora and estrangement that one feels under colonial rule. He says that a colonized person can't go back due to colonial power. He divides the colonial world into 'light' and 'dark' where light is considered as colonial people who have power while darkness is presented as colonized people who have no power and are considered primitive. He says that they should not accept their teachings instead they should fight with force and bring something new. Those who do not support their culture, they are in favor of other cultures.

Safran (1991) in "Diaspora in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return" states that home is the representation of identity as one feels comfort and secure at home. So when one has to move from one place to another unwillingly, one always feels insecure and always wishes to go back.

Simpson (1995) in *The Oxford Book of Exile* says that an exilic experience is the loss of personality. The world appears meaningless, absurd to that person. Estrangement reaches to such a point that one is unable to adjust oneself in a new world, and think oneself as outsider.

Tsaaier (2011) in "Exile, exilic consciousness and the poetic imagination in Tanure Ojaide's poetry" talks about the difference between the internal exile and external exile. In internal exile, one does not move to another country, one lives in another part in one's own country. While in external exile, a person suffers because h/she has to live in another country with full of strangers. There, he feels insecure. Physical displacement creates problems and it is a painful experience. So exile can be a person's own decision or it can also be a tragic experience.

Representation of Trauma, Hybridity, Nostalgia, Exile in Fiction

Bashir (2014) in *Half Mother* shows the trauma of Kashmiri people to the world. Due to inhuman rule of government, a mother reaches to that point where she turns into half mother. It presents the sufferings of a mother that how she loses her father and son and how she struggles to find out her son. She hears his voice in her dreams, looks towards window with this hope that one day her son will come back. After an each unsuccessful attempt to search him, she makes hope. At the end, she becomes a tragic figure due to the misfortunes and died uttering these words: 'Have you come Imran'. The author tries to bring awareness to the world that this is not only a pain of a single mother but also a story of thousand mothers

who has lost her dear ones due to the brutality of Indian army...

Lahiri (2003) in *The Namesake* throws light on the nostalgia and cultural hybridity of the immigrants. The protagonist Ashima Ganguli moves from India to America and tries to adjust herself there but she constantly recalls her past in new land. During her pregnancy, she wants local snacks that is not available in New York. This was not only craving for a specific food but it also shows the association of her with her culture and home. She decides to spend half year in India and half year in America as she was unable to forget her past. It is said that diasporic people have no settled home, Ashima proves this true, and because with the passage of time, America also becomes important for her as once India was. Although sometimes she thinks that how she will raise her children in a foreign country but over time, she overcomes her fears, pains and started to consider both homes as her own homes.

Aslam (2004) in *Maps for Lost Lovers* highlights exile and hybridity through his characters. The story revolves around two characters Shams and Kaukab. They move from Pakistan to England. Kaukab, due to her lack of knowledge, feels isolated there. In this regard, she wishes to go back to her homeland as that is the only place to feel safe for herself. She does not know how to deal the people of another country and this inability to interact with different people makes her feel uncomfortable.

Similarly, Shams is split between two worlds, that is east and west. He is not able to forget his past and to move on to the west. But he faces the challenges. He realizes that he has to prepare himself to adjust in a new world. So, he makes good relations with the people of different cultures and in this way he defines his hybrid identity, as hybridity does not mean the two opposite cultures but its all about third space where new perspectives come to exist and it should be separated.

Peer (2008) in *Curfewed Night* talks about the emotional trauma of Kashmiri people at the time of insurgency. Kashmir, a place, which was known for its beauty, calmness, and peace, now has become a place of terror, brutality, and horror. It is not only about the author but it also shows the traumatic life of any ordinary man. A reader connects h/herself to Kashmir while reading. He tells us that how Kashmiri people are living in Kashmir, they are always in traumatic, constant phase of fear. As we also hear in news that how inhuman Indian army kill the people of Kashmir including children. And if they move from their place then it leaves a painful impact on their memory which ultimately detach them from everything.

Waheed (2011) in *The Collaborator* depicts the trauma of Kashmiri people and shows the brutality of Indian army that how they were forced to do work for them. And if someone goes against them, they just kill them. So in order to protect his own life, and lives of his beloved ones, he has to follow them. Although one in Kashmir does not know that when he will be killed without any reason. In such atmosphere of fear, horror, Kashmiris have forgotten to live their own lives which they deserve.

Brewin (2018) in “Memory and Forgetting” sheds light on the treatment of trauma and suggests various ways including EMDR and standard exposure therapy in order to heal the pain of traumatic memories. The purpose of all these therapeutic measures is to address the most agonizing event or moment. When many sessions are conducted, victims by frequent communication share their loss, they start to observe the things from new perspectives as well. Because before sharing they know only what they know, their thinking is restricted to the one point but when they share with another one, they talk about most of the untouched things too that are valuable in the healing process.

Different reviewers gave different reviews on the chosen text. Different perspectives has been presented by many theorists and authors on the issues of trauma, hybridity, exile, displacement in their novels and also addressed the problems of Kashmir. But still there are some gaps while addressing Kashmiri issues that can be explored in this research. This study discusses the novel with the concepts of displacement, hybridity and trauma issues and throws light on the sufferings of immigrants, their dilemma to construct their identity. It further shows the ways in which indigenous culture drives the action of people that are living in new regions.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

This section deals with the major paradigms regarding trauma and hybridity put forth by Caruth and Bhabha respectively, in order to understand the complicated issues of Kashmiri people. This research is descriptive and qualitative in approach and presents the complex working of identity politics and psychological trauma.

Cataclysmic Colonialism

India's political partition in 1947 is one of the rare events in world history. About twelve million people were forced to move to unknown locations. The separation between India and Pakistan has not only led to geographical separation, but also resulted the loss of loved ones, grief, trauma and fear. Kashmir was once a heavenly place where two communities of different beliefs used to be live in

harmony but soon, it became the place of horror and terror. Since 1947, neither India nor Pakistan have reached a consensus on Kashmir's territory. This conflict reflects colonialism and after so many years, Kashmiris continue to identify themselves between Pakistan and India as a nation. Indian government's power politics and authoritative role in the creation of chaos, torture, the use of power, and hegemonic behavior with innocent indigenous people.

The novel *Leaves from Kashmir* is about the socio-political conflict in Kashmir. However, the moral conflict arises because of the personal experiences of the protagonist that arise from a personalized emotional source rooted in its past that reflects on her identity as she longs for her homeland where gardens had once bloomed but there is nothing now. "Chinar blazes no more, its dried up, withered leaves fall" (Shafi, 2017 p. 23). She depicts through pictorial presentation that how the effects of war has created an imbalance in nature. Nature is challenged and destroyed by human activities that resulted in imbalance and climatic change throughout the world.

As the protagonist draws two lines on the sand that runs parallel to each other and these two lines are different. The one is peaceful, and the other one is pitiless. Indian army is just like a ghost who can't make them to sleep at night. They torture us. She says that there is no life in Kashmir as they always live in the fear of their power. "Ghost with sunken eyes walk in the nights" (p.52). She is waiting for that sun which comes from dark cloud and shines everything. In this way the burden will lighten in a while. Streets of Kashmir are laden with smoke, corpses and blood. Ruins are everywhere, broken windows, burnt houses and crying people are everywhere. A picture of beauty is now a living and breathing picture of brutality and torment.

Splintered Identity

Splintered identity is one of the dominating features of modern world and due to intermingling of different people from all over the world. Exile, colonialism, migration and industrialization resulted in splintered identities. It creates a rush and tension among the people as they have hybrid identities, they spend their whole life in searching and discovering their identity and after that proving it, is quiet difficult task. "Like all of them, she too desired freedom, freedom from her own thoughts" (p.14)

Identity is not something that is socially or politically constructed. It changes over time. That's why when people go away from their original place, they feel themselves insecure, strange in a new place. It creates nostalgia and

homesickness among the departed ones. They keep on tracing the past life that creates a tension between their past and present that influence their future. There are several instances in the novel which show the construction of the protagonist's hybrid identity as she is struggling with her past and present. Sometimes she thinks that everything is fine in the world, she tries to accept the reality but in the next moment, the sufferings of Kashmiri people, the face of her parents comes in front of her eyes and everything turns into trauma.

She is somehow spending her life between everything and nothingness. She is divided between Kashmir and Delhi. She tries to link herself with Kashmir through music, aroma, dishes and dressing. It makes her more vulnerable to stay. She feels as she is evaporating in space. Every passing day brings her the roaring and thundering flashbacks of wailing Kashmir. "Life. Death. Rebirth. This cycle needed to be broken for the sake of sanity!" (p.54). She keeps on questioning herself and authorities for this departure that made her soul cold and stiff. She poses a question that "Can warmth penetrate those icy cold hearts?" (p.9). It shows her inner chaos and quest to recover through the traumatic existence of displacement and massacre that pushed her into the pageant of longings to revisit, capture and stay adherent to her roots and thus there is split that hold her back. "Splintered pieces or split into halves," (p.102). It seemed that Kashmir is drenched in pain and their sufferings are incarnated in their hearts and become a permanent source of pain that now turned into a sweet and bitter happiness.

Schizophrenia

A psychological disorder that blurs the line between imagination and reality. It is a dream like situation in which one finds comfort in one's own constructed reality. Hallucination and inability to distinguish between fact and dream makes a person frantic physically and psychologically.

The Protagonist in *Leaves from Kashmir* suffers from the schizophrenia as she gets numbness, hallucinations and characters roaming into her house that make her scared. It is because of her past life and sufferings that make her suffer through psychosis. "All the doors and windows of that suffocating, bleak cage had been fiercely shut upon her, yet shadowed voices kept reverberating in her feverish head" (p. 50). Whenever she came across anything related to Kashmir either its news, parcel or another thing. She becomes so indulge in it that it becomes difficult for her to find out the reality. Her longings overpower her and she no more understands the reality of her very existence at that point of time.

Dreadful Past and Haunting Memories

The relationship of memory and in the context of exile is crucial. Memory and past incidents play a vital role in constructing the present identity of any person. Trauma is clearly shown in the novel after the death of 'Burhan Wani' as there was curfew in Kashmir. Many parts of the Kashmir were locked. No electric supply, no one was enough bold to walk in streets. Their bodies were just like a cage which couldn't move freely. Everything was destroyed. They were living but actually they were living a lifeless life. "Unborn, they die" (p.5). No one was there to listen their voices as their voices became voiceless. Their throats screamed so loudly that they retired from the capacity of voice. Being the mute spectator and witness to the events, she suffers from both physical tortures as well as mental or psychological agonies. She suffered from the guilt of silence and helplessness and blames herself for not helping her people in need and like a coward and self-centered person. She has left her people in pain and fear to rescue herself. Her guilt doesn't let her to move on in new society. She clings to her past self, memory and people either through pictures or news. She throws light on the inner catastrophe of Kashmiri people by saying that they don't laugh, if they laugh, there is a deep, hidden pain in their laughter. She made us speechless by putting question that, "Can we hope for the hope of a blessed ride again" (p.10) in this world where everyone is busy in making h/her own business. A wish to escape from all the shattered dreams and scattered pieces can be witnessed in her writing. She finds the reflection of Kashmir in Delhi. Like she sits along the bank of river but she does not feel happy because of the situation that is totally different as this river does not sing and dance. Whenever she is in grief, she is unable to find any place to relax herself. "I sit silently along its bank, head bowed down, bewildered, ashamed" (p.22)

Her voice is filled with fear, pain and a sort of deadness. They are dying for no reason. The painful bits embedding deeper and deeper within and still her heart is not breaking into million pieces. "Never-ending battle between heart and heartless, between words and wordless" (p.28) Every time she makes promises to herself that one last time she sing lullabies as she is portraying the sufferings of Kashmiri mothers where children becomes the victim to violence. "They are afraid they could die." (p.32)

Imagery

Shafi used imagery to convey her message more effectively. The very first chapter of novel describes a girl who is trying to force herself to put her thoughts into words. It seems that she is suffering from some disorder as she trembles, feels

dizzy and numb while trying to express her innermost realm where true life exists. She uses the imagery of lake that shows both vulnerability and strength of its inhabitants. It resonates the pleas and courage of mothers and innocence of their children who lost their lives. It also evidently shows the existence of life and rebirth. Nostalgia, death, force and sanity is presented through the flow and waves of water. “No shikara abandoned in the turbulent tide. No waves carrying the dead fish ashore” (p.15)

Pine trees are too long and high and it seems that these trees come down directly from heaven but their beauty has withered due to the excessive use of chemicals and cutting as she says, “Tonight, I pine for pines and conifers” (p.21). Chinar tree and its fragrance is important as its special tree in Kashmir and protagonist spent her most of life circling and playing under the tree, their leaves convey the message of love and peace and writer used this imagery in the novel very often. Chinar trees are enticing and seductive and a constant source of pleasure and fascination for the visitors. Shafi rewrites the history of pain, wailing of mothers, plea of sisters, funereal of loved ones and screams of children. She narrates how the blue color of sky turned into red, how gentle breeze turned into storm, how winter turned into sheer coldness of spirit. She revisits the mountains of unshaken faith and believe that kept its people strong and their fighting spirit didn’t diminish with time. They kept on fighting, surviving and retaining their identity. Sacrifices that watered their freedom.

Hennah and aromatic tea have pictorial representation in the novel. Hennah and its color brings her back to the state of trauma as she states, “No henna in our coarse, erinkled, veined hands” (p.15). Through all these imageries, the author shows the brutality of the Indian government who have always disregarded the rights of Kashmir and forced them to live lives full of danger and struggle. They kept on forcing them to surrender not only their right on land but also their religious practices.

An Imposed Exile

Diaspora is itself a very painful and traumatic experience but when it is imposed on anyone it becomes more intense and problematic. In an imposed exile, person’s heart and soul remain in the motherland while the body shifts. An exilic life is not a life of choice, it is a life of compulsion as an exilic person feels as his/her own cultural beliefs are being fractured. Because when one is forced to leave native land, it is not only the land h/she leaves but he/she also leaves behind culture, beauty and memories of that land.

The protagonist feels somewhere lost as she spent her childhood in Kashmir where life was slow, the latter being the time she spends in Delhi where life is fast is seen as a symbol of exile, imposed upon her due to the circumstances in Kashmir. Change in space and activities bring pain to her and she considers all this is due to exile. “Away from home, away from danger. Home was no longer ‘safe’, home signified danger now, she sighed sadly.” (p.18).

This novel also presents the significance of home as home stands for identity. In constructing one's identity home plays significant role. The sense of belonging and origin rooted a person to the home and home becomes the center of all the activities. It shows how immigrants on an unfamiliar land feel themselves outsiders and strangers. “As she sat struggling the sweltering heat in Delhi, she knew things were burning back home. At least the air conditioner worked here, while there, not even the lungs could draw in enough of that divine air” (p.19) Estrangement and aloofness doesn't let her intermingle with the new people, culture and land. It's difficult to throw one's belonging at back and move forward. Same happens with Shafi she couldn't get rid of her past and its memory stays deep inside her heart. It makes her stranger in new land.

Kashmir is in a condition where people don't have anyone to share their sorrows. Everyone is living in h/her own fear. They can't go anywhere and if they go, they don't know whether they'll come back or not. Under constant fear and trauma, people are losing themselves. Their composure turned into rage and peace into disruption. Kashmir was just like a paradise but now it has become a place of death where people die without any reason. Everybody has become insensitive towards everything. Even the children are not safe. They don't know when they are taking their last breath. They are not asking for anything but still world is not thinking about them. They just speak on their day but don't take step in the betterment of their place and against the Indian military. They don't know when there is day, when there is night. There is stillness in the atmosphere. “Bewildered children, motherless, orphaned” (p.38). Everyone is looking for happiness as they always pray to go back their peaceful place.

Shafi says that there is a strange link between happiness and Kashmir, it seems that evil eyes have penetrated deep down into the heart of Kashmir and take away peace and happiness from the valley and its people. They are creeping, begging, stinking, dying and trembling in the pool of blood. Blood of their loved ones, their own blood that has layered them with negative passion, it's because of this bloodshed that Kashmiris turned violent and aggressive. Their rebellious

attitude is due to this homelessness and homesickness.

Self-Narration and Intense Language

A traumatic person always feels need to narrate his life in order to minimize the catastrophic effects of horrible incidents. It is mandatory for them to express the melancholy of their chaotic life as a source of catharsis and a need to bring it in front of the world. It's their emotional need to pour their heart out of sac and let the world to know that how drastically their life has changed after the imbalance created by the other members of their own species. The inhuman activities in a world of humans result in construction of hostile environment. They express their feelings that they can't be the same as they used to be.

Everyone tries to describe h/her pain in own way as in the novel, the protagonist feels that the only thing that can absorb all her pain and understand her emotions is the act of writing. She prints her pages with traumatic language and use the words that are so powerful to pour heart down. Her pages screams loudly and bleed with pain and stillness. She uses words like "scorching, blazes, desolation, soaring, darkest depths, insanity, coarse and corpse" (p.37) to show her unending pain. The readers become disheartened by the vivid descriptions of trauma which make them weep as it is a narration of lifeless people. She portrays that how a body of life turns into a body of bones and flash when smashed under the advancing technology and political interests. She communicates to the readers in a language that is known to that supreme creature by birth, language of pain, trauma and emotions. Her pent up emotions and grief makes the reader cry as she has everything in Delhi but she wants to go back and wants to cherish each moment with her family. She uses words like "trembling, fragile, clenched fists, numbness and stillness" to show how helpless she feels in a land of people that are totally alien to her.

She misses the smooth touch of winds, dancing flowers, fragrance of Chinar tree, aroma of tea and the games that children play at the bank of lake. Nothing else can be more painful than this that she wants the beauty of her homeland back as a birthday gift. "I want snow, I want spring, and will I be given this as a birthday gift?" (p.45-46). She is young but she is not asking for precious gifts. In fact she is praying for peace, she wants to sit under the tree, she wants to smell the flowers. She is longing for spring as spring is the symbol of rebirth, new beginning.

Throughout the novel, therefore the protagonist is seen in the act of writing. From the very opening scene in the book, "She" is seen engrossed in the act of letter writing and towards the end scribbling away in her journal. As children were being

blinded blatantly, impossible to save oneself from the shadows that kept lurking all around. All these things influences on her badly as she was far away from her parents. To somehow forget the reality of life is to 'write' as one forgets the pain for some time. "What you don't write will end up destroying you" (p.2). As it is a repetitive cycle of dying, you meet yourself by narrating all painful experiences. As a catharsis and an urge to connect and convey to her people compels her to pen down all that she feels, suffers and hopes to stand out of the worst.

She tries to narrate her own experience and put her traumatic life into some sort of shape, in order to alleviate her own pain and bitterness. She poses questions that would it be that silent tears could fetch? But she is also hopeful for better future as everybody says that if there is a dark time full of sorrow and pain, then surely a morning will also come with full of bright colours. Her hope is her strength that gives her courage to cope up with the harshness of situation. She survives and breathes because of the hope and surpasses all the ailments that paralyzed her in her journey of self-discovery and segregation.

She is eagerly waiting for that night when everyone will care about each other. Flowers will be raised in the garden. She does not know when that night will come but that night will surely come. One night will come...Some day some night, one night in a thousand and one nights". (p.35-36).She longs and prays for the peace and happiness in her homeland. She waits, waits and waits for a happy and beautiful morning to come and birds to sing the songs of peace, love and celebration.

On the whole this novel explores the displacement, memory, dislocation, identity crisis and atrocities under tyrannical rule and dictatorship. Vocabulary and expression that is used by Shafi gives glimpse of the damage caused by external factors. The words imprinted on the page narrates the story of such nation that struggled for its separate identity, roared through harsh and sever conditions, uplifted each other, sacrificed, stood tall, resisted and fighting back to rescue the honor and identity. Shafi retrieves the history that is buried behind massacre and layered with blood. She doesn't narrate the story of one woman but she narrates the story of whole nation. She is the voice of a mother who lost her son in the battle, voice of widow who saw shattering of her world in front of her eyes, voice of a girl who lost her voice due to fear and voice of millions of people who witnessed the loss of their loved ones, who trembled through the bloodshed, who blindly rushed into the streets to escape from the unholy things, to escape from the withering justice.

Shafi's choice of title is itself an evidence of displacement, separation,

memory and attachment. The title of the novel also throws light on the discovery and representation of history that is hidden and ignored by powerful nations. Shafi also throws light on the intolerance and insensitivity towards different opinion, religion and race. She also talks about the destructive aspect of modernity that contributed in presenting hyper reality but it failed in highlighting inhuman activities. She explains how political interests contributed in making a man inhuman and robotic in manners. Technology has given power to man by taking feelings and kindness from him. Use of shells, guns, poisonous gases and other tools have created more urge to attain power and lessen the desire to rescue.

CONCLUSION

This novel *Leaves from Kashmir* has been analyzed for the thematic representation of trauma, hybridity and exile, to represent the ways in which the memory and exile affects human psyche and notions of belonging. When we think about trauma in a perspective of post-colonial studies, then this process also turns into a resistance movement, since it saves erased stories and brings to the public consciousness voices which had previously been silenced.

The novel somehow reflects the trauma of the author too as she was struggling to find meaning at the personal level during the blinding summer of 2016, whereas her contemporaries in Kashmir were doing the same thing on the larger microcosmic level. She was asked in an interview that which thing compelled her to write and she replied that “I kept scribbling in my diary for about six months on end, randomly, incoherently at first, to assuage my yearning of home, mulling over the various shades of exile, ruminating over life, love, existentialism, until fact blurred with fiction. This study will be helpful for the new researchers to investigate the other works of literature and explore more different perspectives regarding the trauma, exile and hybridity in the context of Kashmir.

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