

Trauma, Torture and Loss: Tracing Painful Tales Through Mirza Waheed's *The Collaborator*

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ABSTRACT: Trauma, torture and crumbling of psychological landscape is as old as human civilizations. The historical backdrop of the congruities between social instability, chaos and destruction and its effect on the mental and psychological makeup of people is observed throughout the world. The rundown of incidences can be stemmed from the interplay of multiple factors, be it from natural disasters, intra and inter-community violence, war related trauma, domestic violence, child maltreatment or medical, ethnic, racial, political, cultural and religious radicalism. The themes of literature from Kashmir have shifted and are shifting from maxims and sufi poetry or 'vakhs' to narrativizing pain, traumatic memory writing, nostalgic dilemmas and tragic loss. This paper attempts to study, Mirza Waheed's *The Collaborator*, particularly his portrayal of 'Ma' as a female traumatic voice.

Key Words: Trauma, Loss, Female Voices, Kashmir Insurgency, Conflict, turmoil etc.

I. Introduction:

The world has witnessed the conflicts and turmoil in myriad instances right from territorial expansion, colonialism or trade wars or racial superiority. Such is the case of a once paradise on the Earth. The narratives of trauma, exile and nostalgic dilemma one after the other captivate readers and researchers of the field of trauma studies innumerable. Besides the lush green topography and magical sight-seeing, Kashmir is considered to be a spot of interstate rivalry and a deadly war zone. Militarization of the land and terrorizing its people, persecution and exodus of millions is a tragic testimony that not just water, sometimes blood glides through rivers of Kashmir. The book under study is written by Mirza Waheed, one of the leading writers of literature from Kashmir. Waheed being born and brought up in the valley, recounts the horrific transformations in literary as well as topographical landscape.

THE COLLABORATOR: AN ACCOUNT OF FEMALE TRAUMA

The Collaborator, the first book by Mirza Waheed, is generally considered as a "masculinized" story in which women are relegated to the "margins of print." The ladies in the story are presented as "ghosts" and "shadows" rather than as actual, suffering people. Their voices are hardly audible in the narration, and their mouths have been severed. While the narrative describes how the narrator is forced to participate with the oppressor, patriarchy and colonizers are also seen as accomplices in the perpetuation of violence against women. In Mirza Waheed's *The Collaborator*, an unnamed narrator, a 19-year-old teenager, battles to maintain his sanity through trying situations that may drive anybody insane. The Gujjars (nomadic people) who came there after Sheikh Abdullah's land reforms in the 1950s, we are informed, gave *Nowgam* its life barely five decades ago. When violent resistance against Indian control breaks out in Kashmir, the inhabitants of this hamlet are forced back onto the roadways. They flee the village to avoid the military's anger. The sole remaining family is that of the storyteller, whose father is the village's headman (sarpanch). The narrator describes how his four pals Hussain, Gul, Mohammed, and Ashfaq travelled to Pakistan without ever telling him to undergo training in weaponry. He feels deceived and abandoned.

However, he misses them terribly. His attempt to accompany his companions to Pakistan is prevented by Khadim Hussain, the father of one of his friends. During this time, a military camp was built in the region. The army captain, Kadian, employs the narrator against his will to collect Id cards, guns, and other items from the hundreds of dead corpses littering the valley surrounding the settlement. The corpses are those of youths who were slain during encounters while returning from Pakistan. Many individuals are arrested, tortured, and eventually executed. Every time he goes down to collect things, he is horrified at the prospect of encountering the dead bodies of his friends, while at the same time he is filled with longing for the days when they used to play in this valley, listening to Husain's Rafi songs, playing cricket, and swimming in the stream. The task disturbs him, and he has a desire to murder the "swearing" captain. However, as he prepares to do so, the captain plays a song on his transistor, which fills the narrator with yearning for his companion and sorrow for the captain. To free himself of his nightmares, he ultimately decides to cremate the dead. enormous quantities. This

is the only means through which he can sleep peacefully. The fact that all of the deceased had been males suggests that no women participated in the conflict. Women are excluded from the armed conflict solely in the sense that they do not pick up guns against colonial domination.

However, they are not excluded from the pain and suffering inflicted on the populace in order to quell the uprising. Their despotism is cloaked in the quiet they wear as though it were a necessary clothing. One is left wondering how they survived and battled the stormy days of death and devastation. Their brains are manufactured to seem impenetrable and impregnable, yet Patriarchy and Colonization are as evident as the enormous and towering mountains that surround *Nowgam*. In the story, patriarchy and colonialism combine discreetly to reinforce what Peterson and Rutherford have termed "double colonization." They have used the word to "allude to the manner in which women have simultaneously suffered colonialism and patriarchy oppression" (McLeod 2010). We can see throughout the narrative that patriarchy and colonialism have suppressed and mistreated women. While the narrator's mental suffering and the decomposing remains of the young boys in the valley weigh heavily on the narrative, the women's silence, especially that of the narrator's mother, hovers like a gloomy cloud over the story's patriarchal patterns. In the tale, women's voices are never heard. They are an apparition in motion. Women are reduced to a conundrum that transcends patriarchal comprehension patterns.

The mother of the narrator is the sole woman remaining in the deserted community. Both the colonizer, who drove people to leave the hamlet, and her controlling husband, who refuses to go with the other villagers, contribute to her unpleasant solitude. Her kid interprets her stillness as 'peace' despite the fact that it is partially a consequence of her isolation, as, "Ma hasn't gone out in the last couple of years, apart from collecting firewood.... I can't believe it—all these months and she's perfectly at peace with this life" (Waheed 32).

What the narrator doesn't seem to understand, is the fact that, the father, who is positioned to represent the societal forces that forcefully coerced the mother's confinement in a community that has now collapsed, fails to provide her with real peace even after his death. The colonizer could be symbolized as the controlling father, who cannot break out of his own imprisonment, the mother is like a young woman trapped within a marriage with a controlling husband. The narrator, who at the beginning of the story seems overly focused on spatial aspects and too concerned with how the plot will develop, does not realize until almost halfway through that he is missing the real significance of his mother's life. The colonial state transforms the female body into a place of political intimidation.

Dasrath Singh, whom the narrator misidentifies as a peon in captain Kadian's office, is revealed to be a brutal interrogator. Kadian informs the narrator that he was an army Subedar. During a search operation, he repeatedly kicked a pregnant woman in the abdomen. The infant was consequently delivered with shattered limbs. Dasrath Singh was relocated to Kadian's camp following an investigation by an NGO that managed to bring the case to the Lok Sabha of the Parliament. He tells the narrator:

"...from time to time we have these inquiries and cases against our men for violations of fucking human rights, et cetera. Bloody fucking civilians—really, they just don't get it sometimes. You know, a lot of times it's just some procedural error, some silly, logistical, technical mistake, some simple human fucking error, in short. These things happen during operations, we have to meet our objectives and we go about it purely as a Business." (Waheed, 55)

Ironically, all of this cruelty is perpetrated in the name of Bharat Mata (Mother India), the country portrayed as a woman, a mother. The governor closes his statement on India's Republic Day by proclaiming, "Namaste Saradevi, Kashmira Mandala Vasin" (I honor the Goddess of Sarada who resides in Kashmir), as the ladies who have been subjected to a three-day crackdown sit there listless and suffering. In fact, the narrator describes how a woman who was menstruating wailed during the crackdown.

The mention of various erasures and aporias in Kashmiri society does not necessarily lessen Waheed's literary imagination's capacity for emancipation. Even though Waheed's politics are governed by *Kashmiriyat* principles, they bear absolutely no resemblance to the Indian state or its official discourse on Kashmir. Therein lies his disagreement with Kashmiri society's pro-India factions, who support Kashmir's political union with the Indian state. In Waheed's novels, the Indian state is portrayed as a monstrous entity. In *The Collaborator*, an Indian army officer named Kadian describes India as follows:

India, my dear, is a sisterfucking giant, a colossus with countless arms and limbs and tongues and claws and hands and mouths and fucking everything else. . . . Even if you have these small ulcers festering in various places and crevices, they don't matter to it; it uses one of its many hands or claws to scratch at the sore, soothing the irritation, and then waits until the ulcer dies on its own, or just plucks it off and throws it away. It is a huge fucking jinn (29).

Given the intense nationalistic discourses that Indian army officers are immersed in, it is incredibly unlikely that they will think of India as a monster. Bharat Mata, or Mother India, is how the Indian nation is pictured in the popular imagination of the country, including in the army.

The women of the village of *Poshpur* are raped collectively during a night-long military search operation, while their males are held captive in a field. In the narrative, these women are Milk Beggars. Their faces are 'unusually weak, even anaemic', giving them a shrivelled' appearance. They travel to *Nowgam* in search of milk for their starving children after being under curfew for more than three months. Desperation and helplessness have pushed them to the breaking point, where a mother is willing to sell her daughter in order to feed her other child. "My baby will die; my baby will die". The woman at the back shrieked and broke down. 'If you give me milk, I will give you one of my girls" (Waheed 11).

When the narrator encounters the men of *Poshpur* during a crackdown, he comes to believe that Noor Khan did not exaggerate the tragedy of *Poshpur*. The shame that the raping of women has caused to their men infuriates him. He narrates: "I had taken it with a pinch of salt, thought of it as yet another Noor Khan's exaggeration, but now, looking at these men- there is not a single boy here-I believe everything at once, know it was true then, know it is true now, and in so doing feel guilty again and am filled with a rage both past and current! You have no idea what people look like when their women-all their women-have been raped. I realize I can't see a single raised eyebrow now" (Waheed 8).

It's odd that he doesn't realize it when he sees the abused women brought to *Nowgam* to beg for milk. He observes that they are 'unusually frail... drained of all colour as if someone had squeezed all the blood out of them' with 'scared lifeless eyes', 'frayed hair', and 'ruined red cheeks', but he does not suspect that they have been physically tortured. However, a simple glance at the men's faces reveals the truth. The 'fast colouring' Molvi exhorts men in the name of violence to women: "My dear brothers, these are testing times, troubled times indeed. Everywhere you see, there is death and destruction. Minor girls, your daughters and sisters, are raped every day by filthy Indian soldiers just imagine! Just imagine!" (Waheed 19).

This research paper finds out that wartime rape is a pervasive and cruel feature of warfare, both during and after conflicts. Sexual enslavement and other types of sexual assault, which are sometimes systemic and pervasive, are among the most repulsive aspects of ethnic warfare. Regularly, the adversary, who views women as their opponents' property, as well as police officers and peacekeepers who exploit their helplessness and displacement. It has been and will continue to be a crucial component of the masculine war strategy. As a display of hostility, it joins a lengthy list of weapons and strategies used to control, humiliate, conquer, and kill the masculine opponent. The history of rape during war is a long and tragic one. Since World War I, rape of women and girls has been used as a political weapon of war and a form of gender-based persecution in a number of domestic and international wars. Core values of patriarchal and militaristic civilizations are dominion and destruction of the other. Accept the concept of a dominant-submissive relationship between men and women; in fact, women are an integral component of the military institution, and admit the use of force and violence to manage society and maintain social stability.

This ideology, which is founded on power and oppression, institutionalizes and justifies women's marginalization, discrimination, and organized violence. Furthermore, even in non-militarized civilizations, the ideological framework of patriarchy and military ideals influences notions of manhood, masculinity, and the social superiority of maleness. Feminists perceive an explicit link between militarism and violence against women; they regard women's subjugation and wartime rape as key components of the warrior's ideology and view it as a sexual manifestation of aggression as opposed to an aggressive display of sexuality. In this way, wartime rape of the enemy's women became an acceptable form of masculine dominance and exercise of power. This research paper testifies that wartime rape is a pervasive and cruel feature of warfare, both during and after conflicts. Sexual enslavement and other types of sexual assault, which are sometimes systemic and pervasive, are among the most repulsive aspects of ethnic warfare. Regularly, the adversary, who views women as their opponents' property, as well as police officers and peacekeepers who exploit their helplessness and displacement, have attacked women. Rape and other sexual assaults had been regarded as a natural outcome and standard operating procedure of warfare. It has been and will continue to be a crucial component of the masculine war strategy. As a display of hostility, it joins a lengthy list of weapons and strategies used to control, humiliate, conquer, and kill the masculine opponent. The history of rape during war is a long and tragic one. Since World War I, rape of women and girls has been used as a political weapon of war and a form of gender-based persecution in a number of domestic and international wars.

In the similar way, core values of patriarchal and militaristic civilizations are dominion and destruction of the other. Accept the concept of a dominant-submissive relationship between men and women; in fact, women are an integral component of the military institution, and admit the use of force and violence to manage society and maintain social stability. This ideology, which is founded on power and oppression, institutionalizes and justifies women's marginalization, discrimination, and organized violence. Furthermore, even in non-militarized civilizations, the ideological framework of patriarchy and military ideals influences notions of manhood, masculinity, and the social superiority of maleness. Feminists perceive an explicit link between militarism and violence against women; they regard women's subjugation and wartime rape as key components of the warrior's ideology and view it as a sexual manifestation of aggression as opposed to an aggressive display

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The 'painful double disorientation' is brought about by the complementary functions of patriarchy and colonial oppressor in this case. The ideal womanhood has been imposed on women by patriarchal society, and its attainment is rendered impossible by the colonizer's physical abuse of women. Therefore, the concept of "Ideal Womanhood" is another sort of psychological damage inflicted upon women. The military also instills fear and worry in women by removing or killing their sons. Farooq is detained and tortured because his brother entered Pakistan. Later, his head is thrown into his home's courtyard, while his headless corpse is discovered in a nearby stream. This is one of the reasons why people are silenced/traumatized. The narrator describes:

After Farooq's death, she (Ma) had assumed a sad, quietly disapproving stance. And after the crackdown, she had become even quieter. It hurt me deeply to think of the humiliation she must have suffered (Waheed 21).

He further goes on to tell, "Ma had by now absorbed, or appeared to have done so, the shock and the distress all mothers in Nowgam must have felt after Hussain and the others disappeared." (Waheed 26). Moreover, women do not simply suffer at the hands of colonizers. Those who seek to liberate them from oppression are the very ones who brutalize them. When the army confiscates the guns and arms from the jungle, the militants suspect that Rehman, Shaban's son, is the informant. Consequently, he was punished for his alleged act of treason. His entire family has been mutilated, including his mother, whose tongue has been removed.

Even though she is extremely concerned about her son's safety and education, the narrator's mother remains silent. She cannot criticize the decision made by her spouse. Ironically, however, she is referred to as "Chief Matriarch." "When the narrator's mother scolds him for his determination on leaving the village, he insists on going anyhow, this becomes clear:

Your father doesn't want us to go, so we won't go. That is how it is; we must stay" (Waheed) "When everyone left, Baba had made his decision known ever so firmly, and neither Ma nor I could question it. But now maybe it's time to quit, may be that's what Ma also wants to leave, to run away, to escape her prison of loneliness. She hasn't seen another woman for more than a year now. Ma's stories dried up some time ago." (Waheed 47). Since she has no responsibility in making significant family decisions, she is similarly powerless to oppose her son's job by Army Captain Kadian, in which he is forced to confront maimed corpses. The narrator tells us, "She hovered around in the corridor, perhaps to stay in tune with what was happening in her house, perhaps to stay close to the action in the faint hope that she might be in a position to intervene" (Waheed 45). And we can see, she never interrupted. And this is the reality of any society- colonized or not, militarized or not.

The narrator's wish to meet women similar to his mother stays unfulfilled. Without inquiring about his mother's emotions, he concludes, "there is no purpose." When a person with an unhappy existence dies, it is said that he has been released from the burdens of this world. Similarly, this lady, his mother, is listed among the deceased. To him, she is thus "beyond concern now," as if she were dead. The wife of Shaban is characterized as a component of the gloomy hut in which she resides. The narrator returns to this location twice and portrays Shaban's wife as dumbfounded. While serving the narrator and his companion lunch, he compliments her beauty "a set of white teeth in order behind the leather face" and stares at them without blinking. because he did not hear her name during his only two visits to Shaban's hut and neither asked her, he concludes that she lacks a name and philosophically ruminates on the matter: "I can't recall how long I sat there. Shaban's wife, no one called her by any name, no one told me her name—it's strange, some people can get on just fine without names..." (Waheed 42).

Therefore, he essentially confines her to anonymity. While women are hushed into the confined 'domestic area,' they nourish it with their creativity, which men see as a waste of time. The kitchen garden of the narrator's mother is the artistic manifestation of an unschooled mind. The patriarchal confinement of solitude denies her the delight and pleasure derived from cultivating plants. The plants in the kitchen garden are her closest buddies. While gathering chilies from the garden, his mother hums a melody. She takes great pleasure in gardening. She finds enjoyment in it. Or rather he thinks she finds enjoyment in it. "The first thing Ma does in the morning is check her vegetable garden. She examines every plant and the big bed of greens and walkinal back into the house satisfied." Nobody can escape the violence that has accompanied many events in Kashmir when considering their occurrence and effects. The most common occurrences that have brought about a complete stop to life have been shooting, explosions, and exposure to combat zones.

According to the findings of related studies, nearly 62% of people claimed to have witnessed traumatic events at least four times. The violence took many different forms, including torture, rape, shooting, physical abuse, roundup raids, mine explosions, property damage, crossfire, house burning, arrests, kidnapping, forced labor, injury, and modesty violations. At the same time, the occurrences of these events don't seem to be specific; it is just as possible for a housewife or an old man to be witness to these things as anyone else. But throughout, in every text we had discussed we can witness the PTSD victims as more women. This can further lead to complicating the understanding of the trauma and suffering.

It is reflected that Nowgam is a patriarchal society, it views women as a body. Even if they have different names, this does not indicate that they have distinct personalities. Men are men. They have responsibilities such as combating tyranny and achieving freedom from the oppressor. They are not identified as dads, brothers, etc. But because their existence is viewed in connection to men, women are simply mothers, daughters, wives, and sisters. The terms that are nearly indistinguishable from one another, as though they are a homogenous mass lacking individuality. They are usually always described as "fragile" and "submissive." The mother of Hussain is described as "modestly built, frail, and pale-faced." The wife of Shaban is "as demure as ever." Rubbaya Syed, an abducted woman whose photograph the narrator sees in the media, appears "reserved" and "still." Consequently, the male consciousness regards women as invariably subhuman. They appear identical as both real women and in newspaper pictures. They appear more like dead portraits than living individuals.

In addition, they are the target of masculine gaze. "Gul had taken a liking to Nuzhat, compounder Chechii's dimwit daughter, or more accurately, her swelling chest and was trying hard to make his anecdote funny to give us impression that he wasn't too serious about the girl." (Waheed 32). She contributes to their gossiping. The narrator recalls his last encounter with his friend Gul before he departed for Pakistan, as:

One evening we were chatting away in the street- Gul khan doling out fresh gossip about Compounder Chichi's daughter and how she still didn't wear anything under her loose pheran, revealing her pear-shaped breasts, (Gul's phrase) one bigger than the other (Gul's view) ..." (Waheed) "In a way, one can say without doubt that these religious representatives, as one carrier group, present the traumatic experience before the rest. "These are testing times, troubled times, indeed . . . , everywhere you can see there is death and destruction! . . . hundreds of us fall to the bullets of the oppressor, to the guns of the kafir every day. We die in hundreds, not thousands . . . all across the land . . . crackdown after crackdown . . . our patience is put to the ultimate test, my dear brothers (33).

And then the molvis make them believe that whatever is happening is because of the sins. "Allah Ta'ala is punishing us for our sins . . ." (34). Given the time period depicted in the novel *Nowgam*, Waheed continues in *The Collaborator* by listing the governor's speech, which articulates the official Indian discourse about Kashmir and was likely given by Jagmohan Malhotra: "My dear brothers and sisters, let me tell you something. The bond between Kashmir and Mother India is based not just on your king Maharaja Hari Singh's Instrument of Accession and the articles and clauses of India's great constitution; it is held together by far more tenacious and lasting forces that neither the convulsions, tribulations, and tremors of history, nor the anarchy and cynicism of contemporary politics, can break up! "It is a bond of soul and spirit that has survived for millennia and found demonstration in shared emotional and intellectual output, art and literature, metaphysics and worldview, clothing, and, hmm... food"! (Waheed 2011: 232–233).

II. Conclusion:

Therefore, the text represents an emotionally charged stump speech in an ironic attempt that alternately appeals to the Kashmiris' emotional attachment to their homeland, which is then projected as Indian soil. Massive military deployment along the Line of Control is shown in the novel and is portrayed as the foundation of the Indian state's power in Kashmir. It also depicts the military's repression of the villagers as an essential component of the Indian state's official policy. Waheed does not attempt to confine the discourse of "azadi" and its hegemony over the Kashmiri people, in contrast to most pro-Azadi narratives. *The Collaborator* show Kashmiris colluding with the political agenda of both the Indian and Pakistani states, whether out of necessity or voluntarily, even though Waheed undoubtedly believes in the existence of a separate Kashmiri nation and distinct Kashmiri identity. The novel depicts Kashmiris who are actively involved in sabotaging the movement for azadi and are thus a representation of those Kashmiri populations that are loyal to the Indian state. Waheed this way symbolizes the range of political affiliations in modern Kashmiri society. The novel has renders immense scope for future scholarly research projects and intellectual debates across regions and ages.

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